

**Capital Improvements Committee Meeting  
First Floor Conference Room**

**One Avenue A, Turners Falls MA 01376  
Wednesday, January 25, 2017**

Meeting was opened at 3:00 PM in the Town Hall First Floor Conference Room. Present were Capital Improvement Committee (CIC) members Fred Bowman, Don Valley, and Greg Garrison, and Town Administrator Steven Ellis. Also in attendance was Bob McDonald, WPCF Superintendent.

**Review and approval of minutes**

- Some members of committee did not receive the minutes in time to review them. Minutes will be approved at the February 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.

**Review and discussion of WPCF Capital Requests**

1. **Montague Process Pilot:** This is a special article request with capital project implications, so it is being discussed with the CIC for informational purposes. Mr. McDonald explained that this one-year pilot was required by DEP and that it requires the combined expertise of three engineers including former interim plant operator Grant Weaver, an engineer specializing in pilot studies, and a mechanical engineer with expertise in wastewater treatment. In addition, the department is working with Dr. Chule Park of UMass, who has extensive expertise in this realm.

Mr. McDonald submitted a state CEC grant for \$124,000 that may eliminate the need for this appropriation. Our request aligned with one of the key criteria for project focus – sludge reduction. We received and responded to questions from CEC this week, which he takes as a positive sign. It is notable that CEC asked whether Dr. Park was involved in the pilot, as he has a strong reputation in the field. In addition to our confirming this involvement, Dr. Park submitted a letter of support for our application. Rep. Steven Kulik also indicated he would send a letter of support when he met with us two weeks ago.

Mr. Valley noted that this is a research and development project so there is a risk to investment. Doing as much as you can through grants makes sense, but caution is needed. Mr. McDonald acknowledged this and also informed the committee that we are again accepting sludge from neighboring communities, which will generate \$10,000-15,000 in revenues and underwrite some of the operational expense of the pilot. Whether these revenues continue after 12/31/17 is unclear.

There was some brief discussion of written agreements that exist relative to the WPCF's obligations to use excess revenues to reduce sewer rates and the challenge of developing a strong capital program and saving for down budget years.

Mr. McDonald shared a vision for the post-pilot phase. We've agreed to take sludge from Franklin County towns first, up to what we deem to be our limit. In a mutually beneficial arrangement, he sees the need for those other towns to contribute to required capital to allow for plant maintenance. He sees the possibility of state investment in regional sludge facilities such as the one we find ourselves developing.

2. **Pickup (Utility Truck with Plow):** Mr. McDonald explained this \$48,500 investment would replace another truck with a frame is rotted and won't pass inspection. He intends to build out a 4wd utility truck with plow. It would be used to plow the facility, but also outfitted to carry the plant's air compressor and welder, allowing his staff to make on-site repairs throughout town. He expects this to reduce subcontracting expenses for routine repairs, though he could not put a firm number on potential cost avoidance.
3. **Increase Septage Tank Capacity:** Mr. McDonald withdrew his request for this \$785,000 tank, citing his belief that the pilot study may inform our best long term solution to problems the tank is intended to remedy. He explained that present issues with extraordinary surge of influent during even modest rain events creates a risk of flow in to the river. The tank would be part of ensuring against unintended flow into the river, but he is taking other steps to manage that challenge.

4. **Replace Underground Fuel Tanks:** Mr. McDonald explained that two single wall underground storage tanks exist on the site, one of which is hooked to a generator. The cost of removing and replacing these tanks is estimated at up to \$80,000. From previous testimony, the CIC understands that tanks hooked to a generator must be removed by August 2017. Mr. McDonald has priced replacement tanks at \$6,000 each (\$12,000 total). He has a great deal of experience with underground storage tank (UST) removal and estimates the excavation (in one case) and filling (in another that is under ducting) will be about \$60,000.

Mr. Ellis noted that this is far less expensive than estimate GMRSD received for removal of UST tanks on town property at the Sheffield and District Administration buildings. Without wanting to suggest either estimate is wrong, he wants to be sure we have a rational and accurate figure to work with.

Mr. Garrison requested a firmer price be established by the time WPCF presents at its finance committee presentation in early February. Mr. McDonald in touch with a certified UST excavator referred by Tom Bergeron and will consult with his contacts in the environmental field as well. This should firm up the work scope and price.

5. **Increase WPCF Stabilization Fund:** Mr. Garrison explained that this was submitted as part of the Town's effort to rebuild the WPCF's stabilization fund. This allows the plant to address urgent needs that may emerge. Establishment and funding of this stabilization account is part of the town's efforts to follow fiscally responsible management practice and properly funded stabilization account can have a positive impact on the Town's bond rating, which affects borrowing rates for future projects.

#### **Items not Anticipated**

- **WPCF Plant Upgrades, Engineering of Final Clarifier and Raw Influent Bypass Line:** Mr. McDonald submitted this final request on January 24. This engineering study would be a complementary component of the current Montague Process Pilot and would focus on the plant's final clarifier and raw influent bypass line. It is something that will help us to properly manage effluent water discharge in a controlled manner and we expect it to be a necessary upgrade after the pilot.
- In response to a question from Mr. Ellis, the committee noted that the joint DPW/WPCF sewer lining capital request, which may impact water flow rates to the plant, is part of a staged repair of ancient sewer lines in the town. Mr. McDonald also noted that he is working to identify flow rates at key point in town lines that may show him where the extra surge is coming from, with the area near the Farren Care Center being one of the locations to be looked at due to last summer's road construction.
- With regard to next week's agenda, there's a desire to hear more about the library's capital needs, an interest in discussing a possible bylaw change to allow a 5-person CIC, and efforts we might take to recruit members to CIC.

**Meeting adjourned at 4:15**