



# BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS MINUTES

Wednesday, October 7, 2020

Via teleconference

The regular meeting of the Medford Water Commission was called to order at 12:17 p.m. on the above date via teleconference with the following commissioners, staff, and guests present:

Acting Chair Greg Jones; Commissioners Jason Anderson, John Dailey, and Michael Smith; Commissioner Daniel Bunn was absent.

General Manager Brad Taylor; Executive Administrative Coordinator Yvette Finstad; Principal Engineer Eric Johnson; Information Technology Manager Kris Stitt; Water Treatment & Quality Director Ben Klayman; Human Resources Manager Tanya Haakinson; Water Maintenance Supervisor Lester McFall

Guest(s): Attorney Mark Bartholomew; Medford Council Liaison Tim D'Alessandro; Robert Annear

## 2. Comments from the Audience

None.

## 3. Consent Calendar

3.1 Approval or Correction of the Minutes of the Last Regular Meeting of September 16, 2020

3.2 Quarterly Letter to Mayor and Council

3.3 Resolution No. 1755, A RESOLUTION Adopting Findings, Authorizing an Exemption from Competitive Bidding and Awarding a Contract to HDR Engineering Inc. (HDR) for Water Rate Setting Assistance, Systems Development Charges, and 10-Year Financial Planning Services

Motion: Approve Consent Calendar

Moved by: Mr. Anderson

Seconded by: Mr. Smith

Roll Call: Commissioners Anderson, Dailey, Jones, and Smith voting yes.

Motion carried and so ordered.

## 4. Review of Vouchers

Commissioners reviewed the vouchers; Commissioner Anderson questioned the copier charges, First Interstate Bank fees, and Invoice Cloud fees. Staff will look into the charges and report back to the Board.

## 5. Water Service to Asante Court Temporary RV Parking for Alameda Fire Victims

Principal Engineer Johnson presented a proposal to provide water service to a temporary RV parking area for victims of the Alameda fire, located on Asante Court. This effort provides us the opportunity to assist an essential provider of healthcare services in our community by keeping valuable employees in the area. Staff has been approached by several entities and would like direction from the Board in determining the type and magnitude of relief to be granted. Possible considerations were provided, such as waiving the installation and removal fees for meters due to the temporary condition of the meters (an SDC fee would not apply for the same reason), and increasing the amount budgeted to the three charities (St. Vincent de Paul, ACCESS, and The Salvation Army) for bill payment assistance. Commissioner Anderson asked if the three charities had asked for more funding; Johnson affirmed they had not. In addition, our contracts with the Partner Cities may need to be

revisited and amended to ensure they can provide the relief they need to since most agreements are silent on the issue of emergency conditions.

Commissioner Anderson noted that the considerations make sense, as does evaluating each request on a case-by-case basis, and Commissioner Smith agreed. He added that the Board could meet off-cycle to authorize any requests and inquired if any emergency funding would be available to us to cover the fees that may be incurred. It is difficult to anticipate where help is coming from but will be coordinating with partners to do exactly that, stated Taylor. Commissioner Dailey commented that we owe it to our Partner Cities to give them guidance on what we are willing to consider. Taylor is meeting with them next week and will report back to the Board; contracts are up for renewal in 2021.

The Asante request would cost the Commission approximately \$11,200 for the installation and removal of two requested meters (1" and 1½"); over \$25,000 if the SDCs were included.

Motion: Approve water service to Asante Court for temporary RV parking for Alameda Fire victims.  
Moved by: Mr. Anderson Seconded by: Mr. Smith

Commissioner Smith requested clarification on the amount associated with the motion. Commissioners and staff agreed that waiving the meter charges in the amount of \$11,200 was appropriate, and that given the temporary nature of the service, SDC charges need not apply.

Roll Call: Commissioners Anderson, Dailey, Jones, and Smith voting yes.  
Motion carried and so ordered.

Commissioner Jones queried how these requests are being handled by the City; Taylor noted that Council gave Planning the latitude to move in a similar direction. When Commissioner Dailey questioned if the system could deliver enough to supply water to a large number of fire trucks at once, Taylor answered that it is actually the number of hydrants the trucks use that should be considered. If it came close to our system losing the ability to keep up, our staff would have to do some strategic system isolation to maintain pressure. This event has solidified our desire to continue to move forward with planning to develop our critical backbone, expanding Duff, adding capacity and backup power, and other projects. There is really no way to be fully prepared for what happened in September, as water systems are designed to fight limited structure fires, not wildland fires. We were fortunate regarding the location of our facilities and facilities remaining powered.

## 6. Management Reports

### 6.1 Engineering Report (Principal Engineer Eric Johnson)

- Rancheria UV Facility – Project is complete and functional; fence, gutters, eaves, painting, door hardware are left to do (supply chain issues are impacting this).
- Duff WTP 65MGD Expansion – Filter testing was completed this summer; high service pumping manifold, meters and yard piping being modeled for flow capacity.
- Duff WTP Emergency Backup Power – Preconstruction meeting held, Jackson County permits obtained, and project to break ground this month.
- WQIP – Black and Veatch to deliver 100% plan and specifications this month; on track for bidding in October. Engineering design underway on the new point of entry analyzer station and easement and agreement documents being finished.
- Lagoons – Nearing completion; much of interior slabs finished.
- Ozone Transformer Replacement – Location, space, and weight issue necessitated a temporary I-beam gantry crane to place and install.

- 6.2 Operations Report (Water Maintenance Supervisor Lester McFall)
- Obenchain fire damage – Access Roads up at the Big Butte Springs were used by firefighters in order to battle the blaze; air stacks and guy wires were damaged.
  - A shunt panel at one of the cathodic points along the line will need work and fence posts replaced; several fences and gates were heavily damaged.
  - Leaks – Leak on Howard Avenue 1950's line initially thought to be typical leak but became more complicated due to two services in same area. Another repair to a steel main runs up Spring Street; it is a benefit that it can be welded.
  - Crews are working on maintaining and correcting valves and replacing meters.
- 6.3 Water Treatment & Quality Report (Water Treatment & Quality Director Ben Klayman)
- Springflow – Levels remains at 20-year minimum for the water year (Oct. 1 to Sep. 30). This is not unique to our source; groundwater levels are low all over the region.
  - One third of Oregon in extreme drought (including Jackson County) as water year ends Oct. 1; only 6 percent of the state is at normal precipitation levels.
  - Duff still operating 24 hours per day – Comparison of total system demand to total Duff production shows a spike in demand in September due to fires. Now that the Ozone project is complete, staff can prepare to go off of 24-hour operations.
  - Watershed – The Obenchain Fire burned 30,000 acres and 150-200 structures; 100% of this damage is in our watershed. This does represent risks to water quality, which we will mitigate through increased monitoring and restoration efforts. Phos-Chek fire retardant was used in firefighting efforts, and we have added those components to our monitoring plan. Restoration efforts are being led by JSWCD; federal funding is available for reseeding and revegetation.
  - MWC Duff source water monitoring plan – Designed to see changes in river water quality; added Reese Creek and a few parameters and sent ash samples to Washington State University. We are better positioned than other utilities in terms of risk, but we will continue to monitor.
  - Bear Creek cleanup update – participating in discussions and assisting with sampling; the focus has been on stormwater protection and treating stormwater.

Commissioner Dailey asked if the reported fire damage would change the Commission's forestry plan. Since this is the Duff watershed area and there were no impacts from the fire to the BBS watershed, Klayman replied that no changes would be necessary.

- Water Quality – To follow up on Radionuclide reporting issue previously brought to the Board's attention; the State will not be issuing a violation. With that matter closed, we are at 100% compliance.

Commissioner Anderson asked if Duff would have to stay online through rest of year. The plant has to stay online a little longer when we are at pipe and a half, until demand drops below the capacity of the Springs, but Klayman anticipates that once demand drops enough Duff can be taken offline.

- 6.4 Finance Report (Finance & Administration Services Director Tessa DeLine)  
None.

- 6.5 IT Report (IT Manager Kris Stitt)
- Emergency communications
    - Current communication methods – MWC-provided cell phone (12 Service Center Staff, 1 Engineering), group texts (challenges with different phones), hotspots, radio communications (Motorola system), traditional land lines/VoIP

- phones, and GETS calling (priority landline calls)
- Challenges (Alameda/Obenchain Fires) – Cell services were overloaded at times during the event and the phone lines were down at the Springs for several days. In addition, some areas do not have cell phone coverage, and not all MWC cell phones were enrolled in Priority Service calling.
- Currently in the works (post fire events) – MWC cell phones have been moved over to Verizon Public Safety network, currently configuring the addition of all cellular hotspots to Public Safety priority services and a backup cellular phone connection for BBS, and researching how to improve our radio network as well as enrolling other staff cell phones in priority voice and data plans. Satellite phones and data access devices are on order.
- Other Areas of Improvement/Consideration – Customer alerts via phone, text, and/or email, texting with automated text groups and communications logging to ICS software, ICS backup equipment including phones, data, and hardware, and ensuring we have backup data connections at key sites.

6.6 HR Report (Human Resources Manager Tanya Haakinson)

- Employee Commendation – A commendation for service during the fire events has been placed in each employee’s personnel file.
- Personal Manual Review & Update – Currently reviewing an updated version of the personnel manual; the goal is to roll out December or January 2021.
- Recruiting – Seeking additional candidates for Water Engineering Director through a recruitment firm. Recruitment has started for Water Resources Coordinator as well, and the first round of candidate review will take place next week.

6.7 General Manager’s Report (General Manager Brad Taylor)

- Working on Loan Program – WIFIA Letter of Interest due mid-October; if invited to proceed further to be considered for loan, this would be known in early 2021.
- RFP for bond counsel – Close to issuing the RFP. This will be a component of strategic funding for projects as WIFIA only covers 49 percent of the cost.
- Upcoming Board Schedule: 10/21 - Operations Update, 11/4 - Cost of Service Part I, 11/18 - Cost of Service Part II. Will bring an update from Jackson County on bulk water stations in either November or December.

**7. Propositions and Remarks from the Commissioners**

None.

**8. Adjourn**

There being no further business, this Commission meeting adjourned at 1:31 p.m. The proceedings of the Medford Water Commission meeting were recorded and are on file along with the complete agenda of this meeting.

Yvette Finstad  
Assistant Clerk of the Commission