



TOWN OF LINCOLN

WATER DEPARTMENT

MIDDLESEX COUNTY
MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN OF LINCOLN
WATER DEPARTMENT
16 Lincoln Road
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Water Commissioners Zoom Meeting

June 9, 2020, 9:00 AM

Virtual Meeting Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Lincoln Board of Water Commissioners was conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the www.lincolntown.org.

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Meeting ID: 911 1345 6424

Dial by your location: 646 876 9923 US (New York)

Attendees:

Ruth Ann Hendrickson, Chair

Jennifer Glass, Commissioner

Michelle Barnes, Commissioner

Colleen Wilkins, Finance Director

Jim Hutchinson, Finance Committee

Tom Sander, Finance Committee

MaryBeth Wiser, Water Superintendent

Monica Kacprzyk, Administrative Assistant

Rick Rundell, Resident at 76 Todd Pond Road

Alice Waugh, Resident at 178 Weston Road and Reporter from the Lincoln Squirrel

Chair Hendrickson called the meeting to order at 9:07 AM.

1. June 13, 2020 Annual Town Meeting Presentation and Public Comment

Ms. Hendrickson announced that this meeting was being recorded. She began her presentation by sharing that the Water Department has a \$1.84 million FY21 operating budget. She said that the Lincoln Water Department (LWD) has an aging water treatment plant (WTP) that was built in 2002, and the Tower Road Well is even older. She noted that due to LWD's aging infrastructure and budgeting issues, the rates recently increased, and a team was assembled to thoroughly review the department's operating budget. The team discovered that there were three main drivers for the increased costs:

1. There was a significant use of contracted services for necessary repairs, maintenance, and replacements of failed infrastructure. Also, the LWD was understaffed, so the department was forced to hire outside contractors for ongoing maintenance of the plant.
2. Substantial engineering assistance was needed to design and manage \$1.97 million worth of projects already approved by the Town.
3. Due to the lack of staff and MassDEP's (Department of Environmental Protection) mandated minimum staffing requirements, the LWD was forced to hire temporary contract operators at a higher cost. In addition, the department

needed to increase wages to attract new hires due to the statewide shortage of qualified water operators. This resulted in increased personnel costs.

Ms. Hendrickson continued to the next slide regarding the status of the LWD. She said that the department has hired three new highly experienced water operators and an excellent new administrative assistant. She added that there is still one vacant operator position left to be filled. Ms. Hendrickson said that the Commission identified the minimum capital investments needed to meet DEP mandates and ensure reliable, safe drinking water. She said that to meet the minimum requirements, the LWD needed to increase the water rates. She added that the department is completely funded from water revenue and does not draw on town property taxes.

Ms. Hendrickson stated that the Water Commissioners set an operation ratio of >1.0 and a debt service coverage ratio of 1.58, which was recommended by the New England Water Works Association (NEWWA). She noted that the debt service coverage ratio is the total revenue minus the operations and maintenance expenses, divided by the annual principal and interest charges. She added that the Water Commissioners are in the process of developing a long-term capital plan. Ms. Hendrickson stated that the following warrant request is the minimum prudent investment required.

Ms. Hendrickson shared the first warrant article in the amount of \$125,000 for chemical handling and ventilation system replacements at the WTP. She added that the LWD is mandated by MassDEP to address this issue. She noted that the approved budget was \$500,000 and the bids received were higher than expected. She added that an additional \$125,000 is needed to award the bid. Ms. Hendrickson noted that Mr. Hutchinson and the Water Commissioners went over the project line-by-line to try to bring costs down and cut \$125,000 worth of scope. She noted that they could not cut out enough tasks to get a lower bid, and the group decided that the cost of rebidding would be too high. Ms. Hendrickson stated that the Commissioners will be asking for \$125,000 in bonding for this project.

Next, Ms. Hendrickson shared the second warrant article in amount of \$100,000 for WTP residuals handling and neutralization system upgrades. She said that they are in the process of developing a new pretreatment process to reduce organics in the pond water before it enters the treatment plant. She noted that they have completed preliminary and pilot testing, and MassDEP has given the department approval to skip the full-scale demo phase. Ms. Hendrickson noted that the department will need to test the new effluent that is part of this process and that is a significant added cost to the project. Ms. Hendrickson stated that the Commissioners will be asking for \$100,000 in bonding for this project.

Lastly, Ms. Hendrickson shared the third warrant article in the amount of \$45,000 for programmable logic controllers (PLCs). She noted that PLCs are the controlling units for the WTP automated processes and the ones at the WTP are obsolete. She stated that a consultant recommended replacing all of the plant's PLCs and upgrading the software for an estimated cost of \$400,000. Ms. Hendrickson said that the Water Commissioners thought it would not be prudent to invest \$400,000 in new equipment until they have a long-term plan. She said that in the short-term, the group decided to stock a minimum set of spare parts and update the programming to address high priority operational issues. Ms. Hendrickson stated that the Commissioners will be asking for \$45,000 in bonding for this project. She noted that the group originally planned to request \$25,000 for the installation of security systems and a study to see if the existing wiring system can support a generator that can power the entire WTP in the case of an extended power outage (the existing generator can operate enough of the plant for a typical short-term outage). She said that this \$25,000 request was removed from the warrant and replaced with the \$45,000 PLCs request.

Ms. Hendrickson concluded that the total ask for borrowing is \$270,000. Mr. Hutchinson clarified that the department is deferring the \$25,000 project, not replacing it with the \$45,000 PLCs project. Ms. Glass thanked Ms. Hendrickson for working through technical difficulties during her presentation.

Mr. Rundell commented that a tremendous amount of thought went into this presentation, and he appreciates the work that has been done in preparation of Annual Town Meeting. He continued to ask a long-term question about encouraging more people to pursue water operation as a career and asked if there is an apprenticeship program or school that the town is involved with. Ms. Barnes commented that there is a program at the Minuteman School. She also mentioned that Superintendent Wisner has developed a plan for apprenticeships, but it has not been implemented yet due to budgeting constraints. Mr. Sander noted that this is not a short-term fix and we need people with credentials that can handle regular

water operator responsibilities. Mr. Hutchinson added that it can take a couple of years for a water operator to get licensure and gain enough credentials to work for the Town.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:46 AM. Motion made by Commissioner Glass, seconded by Commissioner Barnes. Roll call vote: Hendrickson, Aye; Glass, Aye; Barnes, Aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Monica Kacprzyk, Administrative Assistant