



TOWN OF LINCOLN

WATER DEPARTMENT

MIDDLESEX COUNTY MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN OF LINCOLN
WATER DEPARTMENT
16 Lincoln Road
Lincoln, MA 01773-6353
Phone: 781-259-2669

Board of Water Commissioners Meeting Agenda

Thursday, February 25, 2021 8:00 a.m.

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

Attendees:

Jim Hutchinson, Chairman

Michelle Barnes, Commissioner

Tom Sander, Finance Committee Liaison

Jennifer Glass, Select

Ruth Ann Hendrickson, Commissioner

Alison Boland, Administrative Assistant

Buzz Constable, Lincoln Land Conservation Trust, left meeting at 9:15 a.m.

Cindy Sheriff via cell phone 508-314-0912

Remote Participation Protocols: 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 will be 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. For this meeting, members of the public who wish to listen or watch the meeting may do so in the following manner:

Topic: Board of Water Commissioners Zoom Meeting

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Meeting ID: 933 9332 7939

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No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Town's website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

1. Chairman Hutchinson to update the Board on Superintendent search

Commissioner Hutchinson gave the Board a brief update on the Superintendent search noting that the Search Committee was still in negotiations with the candidates and this issue would need to be postponed.

2. Discuss draft report on the Long-Term Water Supply Evaluation Project (including "should we switch to MWRA?")

Chair Hutchinson suggested this meeting be used to gather questions regarding the Long-Term Water Supply Evaluation report and identify any issues the committee would like to address. Mr. Hutchinson will make a master list of the committees' questions and concerns and submit them to Tata & Howard.

Chairman Hutchinson gave a summary of the Long-Term Water Supply Evaluation report submitted by Tata & Howard. Mr. Hutchinson stated the report evaluated the following three options for the department's long term water supply:

1. Keep the Tower Road Well Water Treatment Plant and continue to make upgrades and improvements;
2. Design and construction of a new WTP; and
3. Join the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) get water from Quabbin reservoir and decommission the WTP and Tower Road Well. The department would become a distribution operation.

Chairman Hutchinson said the report also covered the capital needs, permitting needs and operating cost of each option. Mr. Hutchinson said in his opinion the report was skewed towards option one, that Tata and Howard felt this was the most inexpensive option. Mr. Hutchinson was not ready to reach the conclusion of Tata & Howard; in his opinion the draft is missing some critical elements to make that determination.

Chairman Hutchinson reminded the board that commissioner Hendrickson had previously contacted the MWRA to enquire about the Town of Lincoln's eligibility to join the MWRA, and that the probability of the Town being accepted was very low. Chairman Hutchinson went on to explain that MWRA traditionally based their acceptance on whether a town has an adequate supply of water, and not on a financial basis. The Town of Lincoln has an adequate water supply and therefore its request would be based solely on financial considerations.

Chairman Hutchinson said there was a statement in the report that he felt was not accurate. The statement said the Tower Road Well must maximize the output to keep the Total Trihalomethanes (TTHM) below the required levels. Chairman Hutchinson said he believed that based on the previous studies, the coagulation system that is being added to the Water Treatment Plant would reduce the Total Organic Carbon (TOC) by 50 percent and that by itself should make Flint's pond water test results within the TTHM Limits. For that reason, it is not accurate to imply that we must have higher capacity to get under the TTHM limits. Commissioner Hendrickson then pointed out that the TOC in Flint's may continue to rise in the future from any number of outside issues (global warming etc.) and what is adequate now may not be adequate in the future. Commissioner Barnes then asked if there is way to test around the pond for TOC to determine what might be causing the rise of the TOC. Commissioner Hendrickson said the former Water Superintendent said the TOCs in Flint's pond are twice the level that they were when the WTP was developed.

Commissioner Barnes asked if the pilot study was performed on the mixed water from both the Tower Road Well and Flint's pond? Mr. Hutchinson said it was not. Commissioner Barnes also asked about the timing of the pilot study, was it done when the TTHM levels were elevated? Chairman Hutchinson was not sure the timing of the testing regarding the TTHM levels was relevant and suggested that the other commissioners review the pilot study. Commissioner Barnes explained that she was trying to evaluate the need for redundancy around the TOC issue; if the pilot testing was done when TOC levels were relatively low, then the coagulation approach may have returned low TTHMs simply because TOC was relatively low during the testing period.

Commissioner Hendrickson stated she would like a representative from Tata & Howard to come before the Board to answer questions that the commissioners have about this report. Chairman Hutchinson said he thought it would be more cost effective to gather any questions the Board might have and present them to Tata & Howard in an email.

Continuing her inquiry about redundancies, Commissioner Barnes said if the coagulation treatment system lowers the TTHM levels, then why would a new well be necessary? Mr. Hutchinson responded that it is Tata & Howard opinion, that the high-capacity Tower Road Well (TRW), would give us the option of mixing in more TRW water which does not have a TTHM problem. This is another form of redundancy. Commissioner Hendrickson said she would like to verify whether, should the WTP shut down for any reason, the well would be able to handle the full demand of the town.

Chairman Hutchinson then moved on to the statement in the report that refers to the MWRA being unlikely to be approved. Mr. Hutchinson said he would ask Tata & Howard to clarify whether they have any definitive indication on what the MWRA might rule, and, if so, what that might be. Mr. Hutchinson asked Commissioner Hendrickson if she had additional knowledge on this subject. Commissioner Hendrickson said she had no new information; only that the MWRA had never admitted a town for financial reasons only.

Mr. Constable questioned if the Massachusetts legislature has ever overridden the normal application process for the MWRA admittance application. Chairman Hutchinson said he would inquire with Tata & Howard.

Chairman Hutchinson said another issue with option number 2 above was the issue of adding an additional water operator. Mr. Hutchinson feels the current staff level is sufficient. Commissioner Hendrickson agreed that additional staffing should not be needed.

Commissioner Barnes said she felt that option number 2 has even more redundancy against TTHM than option number 1 has. Chairman Hutchinson asked why option 2 would be considered, since we are already under an Administrative Consent Order to add the Coagulation system to the Tower Road Well; it must be done by April and that would eliminate the TTHM and TOC issues. Commissioner Barnes responded that we may be in the position of deciding in the future between option numbers 2 and 3 should the TOCs continue to rise. Commissioner Barnes said she was evaluating the long-term effectiveness of the different options within the next 20-years, assuming we stay the course for now. While we may be locked into the current framework, within 20 years the Board may be looking at the MWRA decision again. With potential rising TOCs, then the choice could be between option numbers 2 and 3. Commissioner Barnes went on to say one of her concerns about option number 2 is that the more modern treatment plant has the potential for greater system failure. Mr. Hutchinson said option number 2 is a larger plant and therefore more costs are associated with it. Mr. Hutchinson went on to say he did not feel option number 2 was a viable option for the short term, the Board has already committed funds to improve the current plant for the next two years.

Commissioner Hendrickson raised the question of where the new WTP would be located. Mrs. Hendrickson reminded the committee that to build a new plant would require taking land out of conservation, and that is a very difficult process. Commissioner Barnes and Chairman Hutchinson agreed that it would be an extremely difficult process. Commissioner Barnes relayed that the former Conservation Director, Tom Gumbart, at his last Conservation Commission meeting, said he had been approached about taking land out of conservation for municipal service and that he strongly warned all present that conservation land is not meant to be "a municipal land bank."

Commissioner Hendrickson also noted that adding chloramine treatment is expensive; the former superintendent was against chloramines. Former Superintendent Wisner claimed that if you have a lot of organics in the water, chloramines are not a good solution to the TTHM problem. However, if we have removed a lot of the TOC by the coagulation pre-treatment, it might make sense to change from chlorine to chloramines. Chairman Hutchinson stated there are space constraints at the current pump house and WTP. Mr. Hutchinson agreed that the chloramines may be an option in the future. Commissioner Barnes suggested the Board do their own research regarding potential sources and trends in the TOC before deciding between option number 2 and option numbers 1 and 3 in the future.

Chairman Hutchinson then moved the discussion to finance questions within the report.

Chairman Hutchinson stated that Tata & Howard neglect to say when the capital items would be needed and were not that careful about discounting different quantities to the same base year for comparison. Mr. Hutchinson stated he would also like to see a proper debt service cost, that was based on a completion date of FY24. Currently the Board would need to do this calculation themselves. Chairman Hutchinson said he needs more data from Tata and Howard to do a useful financial analysis. Chairman Hutchinson and Commissioner Barnes agreed that they would ask for additional data and run their own financial analyses of the different options under consideration.

Mr. Sander said because of all of the previous statements he felt the choice was between option numbers 1 or 3.

Chairman Hutchinson said in the report the indirect operating budget covers everything in the operating budget that is not considered treatment. Tata & Howard are assuming the indirect costs are the same for all three options. Chairman Hutchinson said the costs would not be the same; if we joined the MWRA the current number of staff could be reduced. Commissioner Hendrickson said she had researched the Town of Weston staffing; the Town of Weston joined the MWRA 15 – 20 years ago. The Weston Water Department is currently under the DPW and has three operators. Chairman Hutchinson would like Tata & Howard to take a closer look at whether we could manage with a smaller staff than what is assumed in the report for the MWRA option, option number 3.

Chairman Hutchinson began to discuss the cost of connection to another town; Tata & Howard are estimating those cost between 7 and 8 million dollars with two connections. Chairman Hutchinson stated with two connections, the MWRA would offer more redundancy than our current system until we have established an emergency inter-town connection. The need for such redundancy was discussed, including, possibly, a further rise in TOCs over time. Commissioner Barnes again stated that eventuality if the TOCs continue to increase and the current approach is not sufficient, then we may have to decide at some point between option numbers 2 and 3.

Commissioner Hendrickson asked if an emergency connection to another Town would be required. Ms. Hendrickson asked if connecting with Lexington or Waltham would be preferred because a pressure reducing system is cheaper than a pressure elevating pump. Mr. Constable asked if the Town might be able to extend Lincoln service from Hanscom Air Force Base. Chairman Hutchinson asked Select Glass if she had any information on Hanscom Air Force base water. Ms. Glass suggested Mr. Hutchinson reach out to the Hanscom Area Town Committee (HATS) as they may have more information.

Commissioner Hendrickson said she would like to ask Tata & Howard if they have any knowledge of any possible future contamination that we might have to manage. Is there something we might not be able to manage should we stay with option number 1?

Commissioner Barnes questioned the cost of decommissioning the current facility as she didn't see that covered. Chairman Hutchinson said that was not covered in the scope of the report and he was unsure what would be needed to remove the old building.

Commissioner Barnes then asked about the inter-town path of connecting to the MWRA. How many points of negotiation between the Town of Lincoln and the MWRA are there - is there a direct connection between our donor towns and the MWRA? Commissioner Hendrickson stated Weston had direct access to the MWRA aqueducts, but she did not know about Lexington. Commissioner Barnes explained she was concerned about the ability of towns between Lincoln and the MWRA connection to interrupt supply or increase their service costs, and also that as the number of such towns increased, the likelihood that one of them has lead pipes could increase. Both Commissioners Hendrickson and Barnes would like information regarding inter- Municipal agreements (IMA); in particular, what would the donating town charge?

Commissioner Barnes also would like to know what the expected residual life of each option is at the end of the 20-year analysis period.

Chairman Hutchinson said he would compile all the questions and forward them to Tata & Howard for their response. Mr. Hutchinson said he was hopeful that he will get a response before the next board meeting.

3. Approve minutes from January 14, 2021 – vote expected

The latest draft of the February 2, 2021 minutes was approved as written.
Roll Call Vote: Hutchinson – aye. Hendrickson – aye. Barnes – aye.

- Other Business

Commissioner Hendrickson said we are looking for two representatives to attend the Anti-racist training in March and April. Commissioner Barnes said she had already registered to attend the meeting. Commissioner Hendrickson said she would also attend the meetings.

Future Meeting dates:

- March 11, 2021 via zoom at 8:00am

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:25 am. Moved: Chairman Hutchinson. Seconded: Hendrickson.
Roll Call Vote: Hutchinson – aye. Hendrickson – aye. Barnes – aye.

Respectfully Submitted,
Alison Boland, Administrative Assistant