

# WINNIPESAUKEE RIVER BASIN PROGRAM

## ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

January 18, 2023

**Members Present:** The meeting was called to order after an in-person quorum was confirmed by Wes Anderson (Laconia), chair, at 10:12 am. Donald Perrin (DAS), Sharon McMillin (DES), Rene Pelletier (DES), Troy Brown (Meredith), Glen Brown (Northfield), Justin Hanscom (Franklin), Alicia Jipson (Belmont), Meghan Theriault (Gilford) were present at that time, either in person or via Zoom. Donald Perrin (DAS) was present at 10:14 am. Guests included Craig Claremont (Public Works Director) and Ruth Mooney (Chair, Board of Selectman) from Belmont.

**Minutes:** Glen moved, seconded by Troy, to approve the December 15th meeting minutes as written. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried.

**Citizens Comments for Agenda Items:** Wes asked if there were any guests from the member communities, and if they had any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the agenda items. The two guests were present to discuss their concerns pertaining to the Belmont force main agenda item.

**Monthly Summary Report:** Sharon discussed the Monthly Summary Report for December 2022, which was distributed in the meeting packet ahead of the meeting. Updates include:

- Solids Handling Process Upgrades (Phase 2) – A draft of the 30 percent design has been reviewed and subsequent design phases are pending a draft task order from Brown & Caldwell (BC). WRBP and DES-WEB comments and BC responses were provided to the Advisory Board.
- Rate Assessment Formula – This item is discussed below.
- River Street access road – this item will be removed from the report until such time as changes are made or updates are available.

Sharon explained that she was working with BC to develop the task order for the next phases of the design for the Solid Handling Process Upgrades task. The DES-WEB will be reviewing the task order and the scope of services. There were Covid outbreaks at NHDES and BC after the holidays. Key review staff members have been out sick, which set the schedule back.

Wes asked about the 60% design. Sharon explained that this phase of the design will go through a similar process, and that many of the comments which have already been received from BC will be incorporated into subsequent designs. Being that this is a Clean Water SRF-funded project, each design must be reviewed by the WEB. Some site work, including a couple of borings, will be required. For example, there are no current condition borings local to the proposed, new installations for the elevated gas piping. This work will be incorporated into the 60% design. She anticipated seeing the 60% design sometime this coming summer.

**Biennial Budget Discussion:** Projections were distributed by email on January 4<sup>th</sup>. Sharon explained that they included FY23 6-month estimates for O&M shortfalls. There was a brief discussion about the shortfalls, during which Sharon explained how they were determined. Essentially, they are the

difference between the previous estimates and current forecasts that include increases in electricity, fuel, chemicals, and other materials affected by high inflation and increased transportation costs.

**Replacement Fund Update:** There were no updates.

**Rate Assessment Formula Update:** Wes announced that the four southern member communities will meet with Underwood after the Advisory Board meeting to discuss the contract and deliverables.

**Review of the Escrow Account:** There were no updates.

**Discussion of Necessary Repairs for the Belmont Force Main:** Sharon announced that a large section of ductile iron was failing along Route 140. There have been three leaks due to corrosion from the outside of the pipe. W-P will be providing an evaluation of alternatives and best options for its repair or replacement. River crossings along Route 140 and cross country will complicate the work. It is single force main (not a dual), and bypass pumping will be required during the pipeline work. Hauling would be astronomically expensive, logistically challenging, and is not considered a viable option.

The NHDES (wetlands), the NHDOT road right of way, Eversource utility poles, and a natural gas pipeline are involved and will need to provide input for W-P's review. W-P's evaluation should be ready for review this summer. A copy will be forwarded to the Advisory Board for review. Once there is a scope and budget, the WRBP will enter the bidding process for the pipeline contract work. The WRBP will also explore grants and loans. The design work (W-P) will be covered under the O&M budget.

Craig Claremont (Belmont Public Works Director) asked if the work could be done in phases to spread out the cost, and whether all the soil in the area was acidic or just some of it. He did not believe that the cross-country section was in the same poor condition as the failing pipeline along Route 140 where the leaks had occurred. Sharon explained that the soil conditions were similar along the entire length of the pipeline, and that the swampy areas, river crossings, and high water table were more of a problem. Those conditions occurred along Route 140 and the cross-country section over the entire pipeline length. The pipeline is also shallowly buried over its entire length. A piecemeal approach would likely cost more due to incremental cost of deployments, although W-P will be exploring alternatives and best options including phased implementation.

Ruth Mooney (Chair, Belmont Board of Selectman) asked what they should do if the taxpayers refused to approve the \$6M repair costs and whether a full replacement was truly necessary. Sharon asked if the member community was able to tap into independent funding sources to help with expenses or to flatten them out over time. The forcemain is failing and, if the WRBP does not take action to prevent future releases, the NHDES and the EPA may take a closer look at enforcement actions. The costs for the emergency response actions were beginning to add up, which is another concern. Wes confirmed that the Advisory Board would need to vote on any loan, bond, or capital project construction contract.

Chairwoman Mooney asked what would happen to the nearby public drinking water supply aquifer if there were any future releases. Sharon explained that NHDES was notified immediately and assessed the breaks. The NHDES also notified the member communities of its findings. However, the pipeline is

close to some private drinking water withdrawals and there is no guarantee that future breaks would not impact those supplies.

Chairwoman Mooney asked whether the old force main would be removed or abandoned in place. Sharon explained that it is expected to be abandoned in place after filling it with grout or flowable concrete fill to reduce costs and that doing so would not significantly impact the aquifer even if the ductile iron continued to corrode.

**Other Business:** The next AB meeting will be held on February 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am in Belmont Mill (4<sup>th</sup> floor), which is located at 14 Mill Street in Belmont. The meeting adjourned at 11:15 am. The minutes were prepared by Pro-Temp Staffing.