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**CITY OF NORWALK
WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL
VIDEOCONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE
REGULAR MEETING
January 17, 2023**

Attendance: Darren Oustafine, Chairman
 Barbara Smyth
 John Bove
 John Igneri
 Greg Burnett
 Neil Konstantin

Staff: Vanessa Valadares, Chief of Operations and Public Works
 Christopher Torre, Superintendent of Operations
 Ralph Kolb, WPCA Senior Environmental Engineer
 Neyla Bauer, Wastewater Systems Manager
 Henry Dachowitz, Chief Financial Officer
 Agnes R. Cawai, Assistant Director, Management and Budgets

Others: John Marcin, Project Manager, Veolia

Mathew Brown, Asst. Project Manager, Veolia
Anthony Catalano, Woodard and Curran
Jim Aiken, Woodard and Curran
Ken Kohlbrenner, Woodard and Curran
Attorney Todaro, Verrill Law

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Oustafine called the meeting to order at 5:30PM.

2. APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM WPCA MEETING HELD ON DECEMBER 19, 2022. **(COPY INCLUDED)**

**** MR.IGNERI MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. AUTHORIZE THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE FINAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE 260 LF OF SANITARY SEWER MAIN AND THREE (3) MANHOLE STRUCTURES ON SEIR HILL ROAD AS A PUBLIC CONDITION: A SANITARY SEWER EASEMENT FOR ACCESS AND MAINTENANCE OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE SHALL BE GRANTED BY THE PROPERTY OWNER TO THE CITY OF NORWALK FOR THE PORTION OF THE SANITARY SEWER MAIN AND MANHOLE SITUATED ON PRIVATE PROPERTY (LETTER AND DRAWING INCLUDED)

Ms. Valadares said that DPW has reviewed the drawings and supports the WPCA taking ownership of that part of the sewer and to make it public. She said there is a part of the lateral that is inside the private property, but the developer has already submitted drawings showing that an easement will be given to the city so that there is access for maintenance. Mr. Oustafine asked if there is a possibility that any other connections. Ms. Valadares said the original line already served everyone on the street and this part is on the dead-end part of the street and needs to be extended to be able to serve that parcel.

**** MR.IGNERI MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN OR VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY TO EXECUTE TH NOVEMBER 8, 2022, VEOLIA LETTER (COPY ATTACHED).

Mr. Kolb said this is an internal reorganization by Veolia but because the way the contract is worded anytime there are structural modifications, they are required to notify the WPCA and Verrill Law has reviewed it and there is no action that needs to be taken outside of authorizing the Chairman or the Vice Chairman to sign off on the letter.

****MS. SMYTH MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. SCHEDULE A PUBLIC HEARING FOR PROPOSED FY 2023-24 SEWER USE RATES ON FEBRUARY 21, 2023, AT 5:30PM.

**** MR. BOVE MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

6. FINANCIAL MODEL UPDATE (PRESENTATION BY WOODARD AND CURRAN)

Mr. Kohlbrenner presented and said the model was originally developed in 2021 for the 2022/23 fiscal year and have carried a lot of the same base assumptions for the 2023/2024 fiscal year for the debt service coverage ranges as well as the timing of the proposed rate increases, and will by paying for capital improvement projects using general obligation bonds that are modeled at a 4.1% rate for a 30-year term and have carried the escalation rate for some of the categories for annual expenses to account for some of the cost increases. He said they are adjustable and will continue to update the model going forward.

Mr. Kohlbrenner said the plan focuses on a five-year period beginning this fiscal year with the revenue and expenses that are in the WPCA approved budget, and also looks at the existing debt service that is being carried and building in the future capital costs. He said the capital improvement plan consists of \$25.9 million dollars in approved capital projects and \$46.8 million dollars for planned capital projects in the next five years, but there are additional needs that will be coming due as part of the consent order as well as the collections system master plan.

Mr. Kohlbrenner said the there are several objectives for the proposed rate increases that include meeting or exceeding a minimum operating reserve cash target, meeting, or exceeding minimum debt service coverage target and fully fund annual operating expenses, the replacement reserve, and debt service with current and future revenues. He said they have projected a 3.5% rate increase for fiscal year 2023/24 and 4.0% the following years.

Mr. Igneri said the debt will be doubled over the next 5-6 years and asked how that will impact the general obligation rating, and if 4% is enough to cover the costs. Ms. Valadares said that they are trying to establish a place holder for the future years that will give a good outcome of the model and are now focusing on is to understand what will be the minimal rate increase that will keep the WPCA in a healthy financial situation over the next few years, and are comfortable supporting a 3.5% rate increase and next year and having a placeholder of 4%, but that will most likely change with the update of the wastewater treatment plant. She also said that the finance department does the bonding for the WPCA and with the model they can predict how they will borrow the money but there is a chance that some grants may be applied to help minimize the capital costs to update the wastewater treatment plant but that is not yet

included in the model because they do not yet know the cost or if the grant will be awarded but will adjust the model next year. She said there is also an option from the water quality grant that the funds needed may be able to be borrowed on a 2% rate as of today and will be up to the finance department if they want to borrow the money through this type of grant at the fixed rate or if there are better rates throughout the AAA bond. Mr. Dachowitz said a distinction needs to be made between when a capital program is approved and when they borrow the funds so he now does a cash forecast that shows when the money will be spent. He said this model allows them to adjust the variables so that it can be framed properly.

Mr. Konstantin asked why the increase for the Wilton users is not reflected in the increases. Mr. Kolb said each year they provide the flow data and that along with the flow data of the wastewater treatment plant they look at a five-year average and that information is provided to the finance department, and they calculate the formula that determines their portion of the sewer use fee. Mr. Oustafine asked if the rate for Wilton will be raised or is it predetermined in the interlocal agreement. Mr. Kolb said it is already predetermined based on a formula of variables.

Mr. Burnett asked that a narrative be provided for the fiscal year 2026-2027 the \$23 million dollar projected capital expense. Mr. Kolb said due to the consent order and other anticipated capital expenditures they are looking to spend approximately \$50 million dollars within the next ten years and are in the process of updating the facility plan for the wastewater treatment plant which will be finalized in June of this year, and will finalize the projects and estimated costs and that information will go into the model at the end of next fiscal year so the \$50 million dollars is just a projection and may change depending on how they anticipate the expenditures.

Mr. Igneri asked if the increases are due to the modernization or updating of the equipment. He also asked how much is due to the increase of apartments and homes that there are in the city. Mr. Kolb said that the flow will be looked at as part of the facility plan, and as far as growth staff has met with Planning and Zoning and have documented the large redevelopment projects that will be going online and as they go online the flow does increase however, some of these areas is old infrastructure so the water use is actually less. He said they will also continue to rehabilitate the collection system to reduce the inflow and infiltration, so the goal is to reduce flow to the wastewater treatment plant over the next five to ten years and beyond. He said they also continue to invest in their biggest asset and that is why the facility plan update is being done to evaluate the aging infrastructure and want to reinvest with the latest technology and improvements to prolong the life of the wastewater treatment plant by 30-50 years. Mr. Igneri asked about the maximum capacity. Mr. Kolb said it is 18MGD and are currently just below 12MGD for the rolling average.

7. CONTRACT OPERATIONS REPORT:

a. Veolia Monthly Operating Report- December 2022 (copy included)

Mr. Marcin reported and said their pump station team was awarded a regional health and safety award for their excellence is safety and awareness.

Mr. Marcin said they continue to evaluate the drone inspection of the force mains and have received some preliminary information and will present some graphics of the imagery at the next meeting.

Mr. Marcin said the team completed two miles of TV inspections and under one mile of sewer cleaning but are doing well in both areas' year to date. He said that 31 IPP inspections were done, and they continue to take septage in from Stamford during their construction.

Mr. Marcin said the compliance was excellent for December and they were in compliance with all of the parameters. He said the flow was up slightly at 12.5MGD, but the 180-day rolling average was still 10.6MGD and there has been a downward trend over the past few months. Mr. Konstantin asked why the downward trend. Mr. Marcin said there are multiple factors but a lot is due to the lining projects and improvements that the city has been making on the collections system. Mr. Kolb said that last year they identified 13 catch basins that have been disconnected to the sanitary sewer and will have a catch basin disconnect program as part of the facility plan update and are looking to disconnect 38 catch basins from the sanitary sewer over the next five years. He also said that Green Mountain Pipeliners is closing out a lining project but are in design of another lining project in the Bell Island and Sammis Street sewer sheds and by lining it prolongs the life of the asset and reduces infiltration.

b. Orchard Street Sanitary Sewer Improvements Update

Mr. Marcin said they are finalizing the preparation for the Orchard Street lining project which will start in the next few weeks and there has been a lot of coordination with the residents and have been working with Green Mountain Pipeliners to be sure there is minimal impact to the residents and businesses. Mr. Kolb said the project should take approximately four weeks and the first liner insert should be installed next week.

c. Major Repair or Replacement/Out of Scope Items: None

8. REPORTS

a. FY 22/23 Revenues/Expenditures MUNIS Report (copy included)

There was no discussion.

b. Draft FY 23/24 Capital Budget and Operating Budget (copies included)

Mr. Kolb said for fiscal year 2023/2024 the WPCA is requesting \$10.85 million dollars related to the collection system rehabilitation and most of that money is linked to the consent order.

Mr. Kolb said on the revenue side there is a 3.5% increase and same with the expenditures for the most part and have assumed a 4% increase for the Veolia contract.

c. Discussion on WPCA Engineering Projects (photos included)

1) WPCF Facility Plan Update

Mr. Kolb said that staff from Arcadis, Veolia and the WPCA have been going through some process data of the wastewater treatment plant.

d. Discussion on WPCA Construction Projects (photos included):

1) Collection- Wall Street/ 2 Knight Street Relocation and Improvements

Ms. Bauer presented and said on the Wall Street/Knight Street project the concrete chamber has been constructed and acts as the stormwater pipe and a 30" sewer line has been constructed within the concrete chamber.

2) Collection- Dreamy Hollow Project

Ms. Bauer reported on the Dreamy Hollow project and said it consists of drainage and sanitary sewer improvements and the contractor has installed the RCP box culvert and is averaging three culvert stations per day along Friendly Road.

Mr. Burnett asked what the estimated completion dates are. Ms. Valadares said the Dreamy Hollow project is a DPW project and will be completed in December of this year. Mr. Kolb said they are anticipating most of the work to be completed early spring for the Wall Street/ 2 Knight Street Relocation and Improvements project.

e. Sewer Use Bill Appeals/Adjustments Update

1) Appeal status

Mr. Kolb said the adjustment to date are \$38,577.00

f. Information Copies: None

9. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR.IGNERI MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:34PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd