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**CITY OF NORWALK
WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL
VIDEOCONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE
REGULAR MEETING
January 16, 2024**

Attendance: Darren Oustafine, Chairman
John Igneri
Barbara Smyth
John Bove
James Frayer
Chris Mannella

Staff: Ralph Kolb, WPCA Senior Environmental Engineer
Chris Torre, DPW Superintendent of Operations
Tom Ellis, Director, Office of Management and Budgets

Others: Mathew Brown, Project Manager, Veolia
Ross Gambino, Asst. Project Manager, Veolia
Jim Aiken, Woodard & Curran
Anthony Catalano, Woodard & Curran
Ken Kohlbrenner, Woodard & Curran

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. PUBLIC INPUT- (GUESTS AT WPCA MEETINGS MAY SPEAK TO ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA. COMMENTS SHALL BE LIMITED TO NO MORE THAN THREE (3) MINUTES PER SPEAKER)

There were no public comments this evening.

3. APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM WPCA MEETING HELD ON DECEMBER 18, 2023. (COPY INCLUDED)

On page 2, Item 2 change “AMY” to MAY”

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR AND TWO (2) ABSTENTIONS- MS. SMYTH AND MR. FRAYER**

4. AUTHORIZE THE CHIEF OF OPERATIONS AND PUBLIC WORKS TO ISSUE ORDERS ON CONTRACT WITH COLONNA CONCRETE & ASPHALT PAVING LLC. FOR THE PROJECT DRG 2021-1 DREAMY HOLLOW/ BETTS BROOK AREA DRAINAGE, SANITARY SEWER & WATER MAIN IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$250,000. (DRAWING INCLUDED)

ACCOUNT NO. 09244062-5777-C0361

Mr. Kolb said that DPW’s project in the Dreamy Hollow area is to improve stormwater drainage, but in addition to that they have been doing sanitary sewer improvements and the change order that is being requested will provide two catch basins on Dry Hill Road to be disconnected from the sanitary sewer and reconnected to the storm drain system. In addition to those two catch basins there are three dry wells by Rustic Lane and Dry Hill Road that will be tied to a new storm drainage system so additional drainage improvements will be made. Mr. Oustafine asked if there would be any funding from Public Works. Mr. Kolb said “no” and that this was a request made by WPCA staff because we are trying to disconnect catch basins that are tied to the sanitary sewer and meet our long-term goal with the state regarding the Consent Order.

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. SCHEDULE PUBLIC HEARING FOR PROPOSED FY 2024-25 SEWER USE RATES ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2024, AT 5:30PM.

**** MR. FRAYER MOVED TO APPROVE TO SCHEDULE A PUBLIC HEARING ON FEBRUARY 20, 2024, AT 5:30PM.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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

Mr. Kolb said the WPCA's financial model was created several years ago to take in our plan for the wastewater treatment plant, the collections system, and the pump stations. Woodard and Curran were contracted by the WPCA and have been doing updates annually and they have updated the financial model/rates for fiscal year 2024-2025 and the proposed rate is 4.5%.

Mr. Kohlbrenner presented the financial model and said the financial plan covers a forecast period of five years, from fiscal year 2025 through fiscal year 2029. The revenues and expenses in fiscal year 2024 were based on the WPCA's fiscal year 2024 approved budget, and operating reserve target equal to at least seven months of the annual operating budget. The debt service coverage is equal to at least 1.05 times the annual debt service on all outstanding debt, and the rate increase will be in effect the first day of the fiscal year. There is no projected growth or decline in customer accounts or flows and there was an update this year in terms of the Wilton interconnection increase to \$800,000 per year. He said they have projected a 3.5% increase for expenses going forward but are all adjustable with the model, and there will be two new hires in fiscal year 2025 that have been captured in the budget, and the large pieces in terms of the capital improvement program are just over \$37 million dollars for sanitary sewer collection rehabilitation work and \$30 million dollars for wastewater treatment plant work which have been built into the model over the next few years based on when the work will be anticipated.

Mr. Kohlbrenner said the objectives are to maintain a minimum operating cash reserve and debt service and fully fund the ongoing operating expenses, capital projects, and the future debt service with the current revenues. He said the proposed increases over the next five years are 4.5% for the next two years and 4.0% going forward and with the proposed rate structures a seven-month buffer will be maintained to plan effectively going forward. He said in terms of a single-family residence the current annual fee is \$396 and would increase \$18 to \$20 per year.

Ms. Smyth said last year she recalls the WPCA approving the sewer use fee increases and there was a forecast of five years or so and asked if anything has changed since then and if the percentage increases are the same as what were projected last year. Mr. Kohlbrenner said he believes they were in the same range of 4% but what has changed is projecting some of the wastewater treatment plant and collection system costs. Mr. Kolb said we have finalized and submitted the wastewater treatment plant facility plan update to the state at the end of September and those numbers were a little bit higher than what was anticipated last year mostly due to the cost of inflation.

Mr. Frayer asked if the capital expenditures that are built into the model include a provision for inflation. Mr. Kolb said that both the facility plan update for the wastewater treatment plant and collection system the projected projects that have been proposed to the state have fairly high contingencies and staff likes to run the model annually because there are a lot of different dynamics that go into the model to make adjustments as needed, and the model does not include any potential grants or low interest loans from the state that have been applied for and are hoping to receive in the near future. Mr. Frayer asked if there are any other funds available from the state. Mr. Kolb said "yes" there are through the Clean Water Fund and have just put in for seven projects this year, but they need to rank a certain priority and where they are ranked in comparison to other municipalities. Mr. Frayer asked if there is someone on staff that works on the grant applications. Mr. Kolb said the WPCA works with the city's grant coordinator and has consultants such as Brown and Caldwell and Woodard and Curran for collections and ARCADIS for the wastewater treatment plant which help to write the grant which is then run by the city's grant coordinator as that is the city policy. Mr. Catalano said if the city needs any support, they have a grant and funding team and would be happy to support the WPCA.

7. CONTRACT OPERATIONS REPORT:

- a. Veolia Monthly Operating Report-December 2023 (copy included)

Mr. Brown presented and said the Veolia collection system team completed 1.7 miles of TV inspections along with the cleaning of just under two miles of sewer lines, and 2 ½ miles of SL RAT inspections. He said the IPP inspection program conducted 45 inspections.

Mr. Brown said there is an ongoing instrumentation project for the aeration basins for further process control. The contractor has completed the installation of the conduit and devices and is currently waiting for Aaron Associates to install the panel, which should be completed in the next four to six weeks.

Mr. Brown said that December was a very wet month, and the facility did have two CSO events for the activation of Outfall 002 as the wastewater treatment plant flows exceeded 30 MGD. He said on December 18th the system activated for 8 hours and 30 minutes but only discharged approximately 1.07 million gallons over that duration and all sampling and reporting was completed in accordance with the permit. He said the second storm was on December 28th and the system activated for 7 hours and 19 minutes but only discharged 1.79 million gallons and all sampling and reporting was completed, and all of the sampling was in compliance.

Mr. Brown said that the average daily flow for the wastewater treatment plant was 16.9 and was elevated due to the rain events and the 180-day average flow is approximately 13 million gallons per day.

- b. Major Repair or Replacement/ Out of Scope Items:

- 1) Aeration Tank Stairs (copy included)

Mr. Brown said the current stairs that lead to that lead up to the primary tanks and aeration tanks at the facility are long out of code and are falling apart and have worked with WPCA staff and have procured prefabricated stairs and weather permitting AJ Penna will install a concrete pad and will have a new area of egress to aeration and primary tanks.

8. REPORTS

- a. FY 23/24 Revenues/Expenditures MUNIS Reports (copy included)

There was no discussion.

- b. Draft FY 24/25 Capital Budget and Operating Budget (copies included)

Mr. Kolb reported and said as noted in the draft operating budget the anticipated sewer use charges were increased by 4.5% from last year. He also noted that approximately \$800,000 will be collected from the Wilton Interlocal Agreement which is an increase from \$600,000 due to increased flow and the increase in the operating budget. There is a slight decrease in nitrogen credits as there is not much in nitrogen incentives or credits to convince municipalities to spend

millions of dollars to enhance nitrogen because they are achieving the Long Island Sound goals with the adjacent states.

Mr. Kolb reported on the capital budget and said as mentioned earlier for the collections system over the next five years is just over \$37 million dollars and \$30 million dollars for the wastewater treatment plant and for this coming fiscal year the collections system is \$13.35 million dollars, and the wastewater treatment plant is \$10 million dollars. Mr. Ellis asked if the \$23.35 million dollars will be spread over the next few years. Mr. Kolb said that is the budget request but not the cash flow so the wastewater treatment plant will be pushed out a few years because we have submitted both the collections system and facility plan for the wastewater treatment plant to the DEEP, but they have not responded on either reports so the first step is to get an approval letter from the state and once that is received we can then move into design which will also need to be submitted to the state for the approval to proceed with construction but will need to be ready to proceed as quickly as possible. Mr. Ellis said his concern is the approved but unbonded projects which there a quite a few of citywide and that is one of the limits the rating agencies look at and we are getting close to that limit. Mr. Frayer said that is also his concern and it is a delicate balancing job that Mr. Ellis and the finance team need to do to be sure we stay within a reasonable level.

c. Discussion on WPCA Engineering Projects:

1) Catch Basin Disconnect Program

Mr. Kolb said the WPCA board approved one project on Dry Hill Road earlier this evening so that is two catch basins and in total there are approximately 75 know catch basins that are connected to the sanitary sewer, and some are on state roads and CTDOT has been put on notice so they will be developing some projects to disconnect those from the city's sanitary design. He said we are also in design and took 38 critical catch basins that were identified and just completed the basis of design report which takes us to about 30% design for feasibility on disconnecting those 38 catch basins from the city's sanitary sewer and connect them to the city's stormwater system.

2) Hubbell's Lane Relief Sewer

Mr. Kolb said a 36" pipe will be installed down Hubble's Lane to take flow from East Avenue and East Wall Street to relieve sewer on Wall Street and Smith Street, and where it ties into Smith Street there is currently a 36" pipe and would increase it to a 60" pipe and are currently at 30% design and both of these projects are part of the five year Consent Order program with the state.

3) Keeler Brook PS Replacement

Mr. Kolb said the design is basically done and the legal team is currently working with Eversource for a new easement on their property so a new pump station can be built and once the station is completed the existing pump station would be demolished and the easement would be released back to Eversource.

d. Discussion on WPCA Construction Projects

1) Collection- Sammis and Bell Island Sewershed Rehabilitation (copy included)

Mr. Kolb said this is a lining project and will be lining approximately 48,000' of sanitary sewer mains up to 24" in diameter and are mostly in the Sammis and Bell Island Sewershed area, but there are other areas throughout the city at miscellaneous locations. He said Insituform will be doing the work on the project, and it is a 555-day construction project and there was a kickoff meeting held a few weeks ago and they will be bringing trucks in over the next few weeks to begin cleaning and televising the pipes to be lined. He said there are two associations in Belle Island that staff has been coordinating with.

2) Collection- Dreamy Hollow Project

Mr. Kolb said a majority of the work has been completed and the contractor is currently on Saddle Road finishing some of the sanitary sewer work and continuing to work on the storm drain system.

3) PS- Five Mile, Old Trolley Way, Karen Dr., and Woodward Ave. Rehabilitation

Mr. Kolb said that three out of the four pump stations are completed and are working at Woodward Avenue to repair a concrete wall, and the main work is at the Old Trolley Way pump station and Kovacs Construction and their subcontractors have mobilized and anticipate the work to be completed in approximately three to four months.

e. Sewer Use Bill Appeals/Adjustments Update

1) Appeal Status

Mr. Kolb said the appeals to date are \$ 52,421

f. Information Copies: None

9. ADJOURNMENT

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:11PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd