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**CITY OF NORWALK
WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL
VIDEOCONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE
REGULAR MEETING
February 22, 2022**

Attendance: Darren Oustafine, Chairman
Barbara Smyth
John Flynn
John Bove
Thomas Keegan
John Igeri

Staff: Anthony Carr, Chief of Operations and Public Works
Chris Torre, Superintendent of Operations
Ralph Kolb, WPCA Senior Environmental Engineer

Others: John Marcin, Project Manager, SUEZ
Matthew Brown, Asst. Project Manager, SUEZ
Toby Fedder, Woodard & Curran
Anthony Catalano, Woodard & Curran

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM WPCA MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 18, 2022. (COPY INCLUDED)

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

**** MR. IGNERI MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. SCHEDULE PUBLIC HEARING FOR PROPOSED FY 2022-23 SEWER USE RATES ON MARCH 21, 2022, AT 5:30PM.

**** MR. IGNERI MOVED TO SCHEDULE THE PUBLIC HEARING.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. FINANCIAL MODEL PRESENTATION

Mr. Carr thanked the team for all of their efforts on the dynamic financial model which is a snapshot of the WPCA's financial health and is a tool to assist staff with recommendations to the board on what the appropriate sewer use fee should be. He said there are a multiple of factors that go into the financial model and shows and includes many variables and how they can change, but most importantly what the WPCA in consultation with the Finance Department finds as an adequate surplus and have agreed on a surplus amount of 90 days or 25% which is \$5 million dollars of the WPCA's annual operating budget of approximately \$19 million dollars.

Mr. Kolb said the dynamic financial model is a great planning tool for WPCA staff and board and currently there is over \$28 million dollars of authorized capital accounts for various projects in collections, pump stations and the wastewater treatment plant. Additional capital funds are going to be requested in next few years for capital improvement projects and the financial model takes all of that into consideration.

Mr. Fedder presented the financial model and said the project scope was to update the financial plan for the WPCA to identify a path for fiscal success over the coming five years. He said when looking at the rates one of the goals is to have the operating reserve target equal at least three months of the O&M expenses, a debt service capability coverage equal to at least 1.05 times the annual debt service on all the

outstanding debt, and makes the assumption from revenue generation estimates within the model that all annual rate increases assumed to go into force on first day of the fiscal year and provided an overview of the financial plan assumptions and objectives.

Mr. Fedder presented the financial plan results and said with using the existing customer base and existing revenue generation characteristics the model recommended the following rate increases given the capital program and the expected increase in costs both on contractual as well as other expenses and is recommending a 4% increase for 2023, a 5% increase in 2024 and an increase of 5% the following three years in order to fully pay for the cost of service, which equates to a residential rate increase of \$15 and would increase by \$22 in 2027. He said by keeping the increases at a modest level now will prevent the WPCA from getting into a position where a double-digit increase would be needed.

Mr. Oustafine asked what the current remaining balance is from the bond. Mr. Fedder said approximately \$12.8 million dollars of the \$20 million dollar bond remains to be expended. Mr. Oustafine said what if something catastrophic happens and there is only three months of operating funds on hand. Mr. Fedder said as capital funds are invested into existing assets, they become more reliable by definition and in today's dollars there is \$53 million dollars' worth of capital that will be completed through fiscal year 2027-28, and all of the costs of the future bonding are in the model as well as the expenditure of cash on hand from the 2020 bonding event. Mr. Kolb said the financial model will be updated at least once and maybe twice per year, and it does not take into consideration future Clean Water Funding that they may be able to receive from the state and he has recently put in three applications for the wastewater treatment plant itself and if grants are received, they would be included in the model and would rerun the model. He said going to the 90-day operating cash reserve is still five years out and will still be doing the six months of cash reserve for the next five years as has been done in the past. He said in addition to that there are other options to work with the finance department if the operating funds start to be depleted such as bonding for the WPCA again to fund some of the capital projects. Mr. Carr noted that there was a 0% increase in the fees last year and from his experience a 2% to 5% increase is an acceptable range for a rate increase and what this model shows is that it can't be zero, one or two percent increase based on the pending and authorized projects and consent order. Mr. Fedder said he agrees, and it would be a mistake to have significantly smaller rate increases than what has been recommended given the amount of capital projects.

Ms. Smyth said while working with Mr. Carr over the past few years she knows he takes taxpayers dollars very seriously and she appreciates that about him, and his staff and she know this rate increase would not be requested if it was not very much needed. She also asked what the history of the increases in the past five years have been. Mr. Kolb said prior to the 0% increase last year there were two years of a 2% increase, one year of a 1.5% increase, and three years of a 5% increase and prior to that were 5% increases. He said with the proposed 4% rate increase the new rates will be \$382 per residential unit, the flat rate would increase from \$525 to \$546, and the consumption rate would increase from \$9.49 to \$9.87.

5. CONTRACT OPERATIONS REPORT

a. SUEZ Monthly Operating Report- January 2022 (copy included)

Mr. Marcin presented and said in January there was an escalation in the Covid severity levels following the holidays and spent January at a level three severity level which included adherence with the CDC guidelines and limitations of visitors and subcontractors and the Covid rates have dropped substantially.

Mr. Marcin said the collections team completed over 2.6 miles of TV inspections and 2.6 miles of sewer line cleaning as well as 18 manhole inspections for the month of January.

Mr. Marcin said the IPP inspection program was suspended for the month of January in relation to the Covid severity level three but have now resumed those inspections in February and have also continued to receive septage from Stamford as they continue their construction.

Mr. Marcin said the facility was in compliance with all permit limits in January and the monthly nitrogen performance was elevated at 642 but January is always a difficult month but were still well below the contract permit limits and that begins the 2020 annual average.

b. Odor Control Project Update

Mr. Marcin provided an update on the odor control project and said they did energize both carbon scrubbers at the end of December and January and the system ran well for several weeks but unfortunately had a failure of the bearings on the fan on the blend tank unit but was under warranty and the vendor is making the necessary repairs and should have it back online the end of this week or the beginning of next week.

Mr. Kolb said the nitrogen performance for 2021 was the second-best year ever and the pounds per day averaged 519 pounds per day of nitrogen, and in 2020 had the all-time best number of 498 pounds per day so since SUEZ has been the contract operator, they have had the top two nitrogen performance years.

c. Sludge Blend Tank Rehabilitation Update

Mr. Marcin there has been good feedback from two engineers on the sludge blend tank repairs and are optimistic that patch repairs can be done on the existing tanks, and they are in the process of finalizing the quotes from two engineering firms to develop that final scope of work.

d. Orchard Street Sanitary Sewer Improvements Update

Mr. Marcin said they are also finalizing the permits in relation to the Orchard Street sanitary sewer improvements

e. Seaview Avenue Sanitary Sewer

Mr. Marcin said there was a large sewer main collapse on Seaview Avenue that resulted in a complicated multi-day dig but were able to get the line completely repaired and backfilled safely without instance. He said the plan is to work with Mr. Kolb and the sub-contractor to line a significant portion of that gravity line on Seaview Avenue.

f. Major Repair or Replacement/ Out of Scope Items:

1) Drum Screen Removal (copy included)

Mr. Marcin said Mr. Marcin in January they began the removal of the drum screens in preparation of the DEEP consent order and improvements that may be related to that.

2) Final Settling Tank #2 Rehabilitation (copy included)

Mr. Marcin said they have engaged the subcontractor in the rehabilitation of the final settling tank #2 and when that is completed will have two of the four tanks completely rehabilitated and the plan is to continue to all four before the end of this year.

3) Scum Pump Electrical Replacement (copy included)

Mr. Marcin said and lastly there was a replacement of a scum pump electrical components as part of the scum piping project that they have been working on.

6. REPORTS

a. FY 21/22 Revenues/Expenditures MUNIS Report (copy included)

There was no discussion.

b. Discussion on WPCA Projects:

1) Collection System Master Planning

Mr. Kolb reported and said there was a meeting held with the SUEZ team, WPCA staff and Brown and Caldwell team on the hydraulic model and are continuing to get the model in sync with the flow data that was monitored to have the best analysis moving forward.

2) Collection- Sanitary Sewer System Rehabilitation- Various Locations

Mr. Kolb reported and said Green Mountain Pipeline Services is working on the punch list items and will be lining approximately 1400' on Seaview Avenue from Fort Point Street to Osborne Avenue.

3) Collection- Wall Street/2 Knight Street Relocation Improvements

Mr. Kolb said that Holzner Electric has relocated a gas service line and are in the process of relocating a water service line to install the large chamber at that property.

4) Collection- Belden and Burnell Blvd. Gravity Sewer

Mr. Kolb said this project has taken the contractor much longer than anticipated due to various utility lines and has been very challenging to get a gravity line out to the Belden/Burnell intersection, but did succeed last week and they did the gravity work that was needed and are now installing the temporary patch in the road and sidewalks and when the asphalt plants open in the spring they will replace the temporary patch with permanent patch.

5) Wright -Pierce Miscellaneous Task Order (copy included)

Mr. Kolb said the task order is in the amount of \$40,700 and provides professional engineering services for the construction administration of various projects.

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

Mr. Kolb said that Kovacs Construction has just completed the bypass connection for the Woodward Avenue Pump Station and are developing a plan to install the bypass connection for the Five Mile and Old Trolley Way Pump Stations so that in an emergency it will allow them to utilize the existing force main

7) PS- Bell Island PS Improvements

Mr. Kolb said that a bypass connection will be installed and have been working with the association president of Bell Island, so they are aware of the work that is being done along the way.

8) WWTP- Aeration Tanks Electrical Infrastructure Improvements (copy included)

Mr. Kolb said that Kovacs Construction was awarded the aeration tank electrical infrastructure improvements project at the wastewater treatment plant and is currently ongoing.

9) SCADA Upgrade Phase III

Mr. Kolb said the project is still ongoing with ARCADIS along with their subconsultant and a lot of the remaining work is punch list items and add-on items that the team had identified after the main SCADA project had gone online.

c. Sewer Use Bill Appeals/Adjustments Update

1) Appeal Status

Mr. Kolb said the appeals to date are \$135,210.

d. Information Copies:

1) 2021 CSO Annual Report (copy included)

Mr. Kolb said the 2021 CSO Annual Report has been submitted and noted that there were four events in 2021 and two of them came from the Ida and Elsa storms.

7. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. FLYNN MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:35PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd