

Board of Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
January 31, 2024

The Commission meeting convened at 10:00 a.m. in the meeting room at the North Conway Water Precinct 104 Sawmill Lane North Conway, NH. The following were present:

Commissioner Suzanne Nelson  
Commissioner James Umberger  
Commissioner Deborah Fauver

Superintendent Jason Gagnon  
Fire Chief Chad McCarthy  
Recording Secretary Hannah Andersen

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 10:00 AM by Commissioner Suzanne Nelson.

Minutes

Motion of Commissioner Umberger and seconded by Commissioner Fauver to approve the Public and Non-Public Session minutes from January 17, 2024.

Fire Department

Membership:

37

Personnel:

One member on leave of absence.

Training:

Department Training: Apparatus orientation.

Engine 3 Training: Water Supply.

Rescue Training: Elevator Rescue.

Department Activities:

Place of assembly inspections, rental and life safety inspection on going.

Emergency Calls:

Five year call average is 1,276 calls a year.

Five year monthly call average is 106 calls a month.

Five year daily call average is 3.49 calls a day.

The department has responded to 121 calls year to date for 2024

Monthly call average is 10.8 calls a month for 2024.

Daily call average is 0.33 calls a day for 2024.

Superintendent's Report

### 2024 Annual Meeting Timeline and Key Dates

*There was a brief discussion about the Annual Meeting Timeline and the best ways to inform folks of the key dates. (Annual Meeting dates are posted at the NCWP Office, the NCFD Station, in the Conway Daily Sun and on the Website. There was also a post card that went out to the CCR mailing list with the Annual Meeting events on it.) There is more room to be communicative on the bills that go out so the office will work in more announcements on the bills going out.*

### NEWEA Conference & Award

Aaron Bernier and Jason attended portions of the New England Water Environment Association's Annual Conference in Boston last week. This conference is the largest gathering of wastewater professionals in New England and includes a large expo area with hundreds of vendors, 3 full days of training opportunities, networking functions, and the opportunity to meet with regulators and funding agencies in an "unofficial" setting.

Training sessions attended included:

- Low-pressure sewer public relations and lessons learned
- Sewer pump station resiliency planning
- Multiple sessions of PFAS treatment and destruction technology related to wastewater/leachate
- Multiple sessions on PFAS specifically related to biosolids (sludge)
- Public communication and stakeholder engagement for large projects
- Energy efficiency and innovative energy approaches

Perhaps most importantly, the Precinct was there to accept the NEWEA New England Utility Management Award. Specific criteria evaluated for the award include:

- Product Quality: the consistency of and level to which the WWTF meets and exceeds its treatment goals
- Customer Service: the degree to which the utility engages customers and provides reliable service
- Employee and Leadership Development: how the utility recruits, retains, and develops staff to provide long-term sustainable operation and management
- Operational Optimization: how the utility proactively works to improve performance, minimize resource use, and adopt operational and technological improvements in a timely manner
- Financial Viability: a measurement of the utility's understanding of full life-cycle costs for the services it provides

- Infrastructure Stability: similar to financial viability, with a long-term focus on life-cycle cost of infrastructure and high-value capital assets
- Operational Resiliency: the ability of staff to work together to anticipate and avoid problems, and to proactively manage risks
- Community Sustainability: a demonstrated understanding of the utility's impact on community and watershed health and welfare, energy efficiency, and the general role of the utility within the community
- Water Resource Adequacy: the utility's focus on long-term aquifer sustainability and replenishment
- Stakeholder Understanding and Support: the utility's efforts to recognize it's role in the larger community by promoting understanding and developing support from diverse stakeholders within the watershed

It's important to note that this award recognizes the efforts of the entire Precinct over the past 30 years. From the initial decision to construct a wastewater treatment system for the purpose of protecting our drinking water, through the commitment to aggressively building out our wastewater collections system, and to the present where the Precinct continues to explore ways to improve existing operations and stay one step ahead of challenges coming down the pipeline – all the while honoring the investment our customers have made through exemplary operation and maintenance of our existing facilities – each and every employee, Commissioner, and voter should be proud of their role in helping the North Conway Water Precinct set the standard for wastewater utility excellence in New England.

*There will be a press release coming out about the NEWEA Award and it's possible that there is going to be another contribution from the Precinct to the Vibe's Summer Edition.*

### Project Status

#### *Asset Management – Energy Efficiency Grant*

Preliminary survey work suggests that the height of the recent flood was higher than the FEMA flood elevation in the field adjacent to Well 2 where the solar panels were planned. We are currently looking into the design of the racking system to determine the feasibility of elevating the panels higher than expected. ReVision energy has multiple successful projects located in a floodplain with panels elevated approximately 6' off the ground surface – however, in this location they would need to be 7 ft to as high as 9 ft off the ground to make me comfortable.

#### *Asset Management – Traditional Asset Management*

Water vertical assets (facilities, etc.) are ready to be uploaded to LLumin. Next up will be integrating the horizontal assets (pipes, etc.) from our GIS database.

We had a good meeting with Raftelis, who is working on our water/sewer rate study. Dave Fox from Raftelis is planning to attend the meeting on February 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss their findings.

#### *Landfill Leachate*

We had a great meeting with Black & Veatch. I'm anticipating a draft scope from them in the coming few weeks.

#### *Saco River Erosion*

Interfluve has been directed to move forward with Option 1 – channel reconstruction. A big portion of our last meeting was dedicated to discussing funding strategies for the large scope of the project.

#### *Cell Tower*

The Precinct will be meeting with the group looking to install a temporary tower for Verizon at the Seavey Street property on Friday morning.

#### *Abatement Requests*

##### Account 2600

This customer recently discovered they had been charged the commercial rate for sewer since 2013. We have checked our records, and the error was on the Precinct's side. A sewer abatement in the amount of \$386.78 is recommended – this is the difference between what the customer should have been charged at the residential rate of \$7.92 compared to what they were actually charged.

**Motion of Commissioner Umberger and seconded by Commissioner Fauver to approve the abatement request for account 2600 in the amount of \$386.78.**

**Motion carried by a 3-0-0 voice vote.**

#### 2024 Proposed Budgets

No new updates – I'm happy to answer any specific questions.

#### *General Trends*

Property/Liability:	+17.8%
Health Trust:	+15.6%
CBA (wages):	+3.5%

All budgets presented today use the same approach the Precinct has used for decades: present the true cost of operating and maintaining our systems to the standard our customers expect. Over the past 7+ years, NCWP has been fortunate that growth within the service area has outpaced rising costs and rates have therefore been able to hold steady. With recent inflationary pressures and the workload in the office requiring

additional staff to keep up with it all, we're no longer at a point where Precinct growth can keep up with the rising costs. You'll note that the water and sewer draft budgets each show a deficit which reflects this. At our next Commission meeting, I hope to have recommendations from Raftelis for potential increases to our water and sewer rates.

#### *Sewer*

Costs continue to rise for just about everything. For 2024, the draft sewer operating budget increase is 5.7%. The biggest drivers are personnel costs – specifically, the hiring of a wastewater operator 5 months before the retirement of the Chief Operator for training purposes and the inclusion of ½ of our new full-time administrative position.

#### *Water*

For 2024, the draft water operating budget increase is 6.3%. The largest drivers of cost increase in 2024 are again personnel costs – although the increase looks higher than it should be because the 2023 budget only included 4.5 water operators (due to the hiring timeline to replace an operator who left) and in 2024 we're back at full-strength of 5 operators for the full year. 2024 also adds in ½ of the new full-time administrative position. In this budget, I have tried to scale back a bit more than I would like on the repairs/maintenance lines – I don't feel great about that, however, and would love to bump them back to 2023 levels (an additional \$25K or so) depending on where our water rate discussion goes. 2024 again does not include any contribution to Water Capital Reserve, other than the buy-in fees.

#### *Commissioners (General Fund)*

For 2024, this is one area where we don't anticipate any large increases – the draft 2024 budget is down 0.4% for operating expenses and down 1.1% for total expenses (including long term debt payments). One thing to note is that the tax levy shown is most likely wrong due to the recent revaluation in Conway. The numbers shown are based on 2023 valuation and 2022 equalization ratios (the latest data published by DRA). The new data won't be officially released until September so we're hoping to get updated "unofficial" numbers so that we can project tax levy and tax rates with some semblance of accuracy in time for budget hearing.

#### Public Comment

Bill Hounsell provided an update about the work that he is doing at the State and Local level to further the interests of the Precinct. He views himself as a catalyzing enzyme in the affairs of the Precinct and does what he can to connect resources that will benefit the Precinct and greater wellhead protection areas. Currently he's working on finding bills on housing that are dealing with zoning and incorporating wastewater in zoning updates.

#### Signing of Checks

**Motion of Commissioner Umberger and seconded by Commissioner Fauver to ratify checks signed out of session:**

- a. Accounts Payable checks dated 02/01/2024
- b. Payroll checks dated 02/01/2024

Non-Public Session

At 11:01AM, Motion of Commissioner Umberger and seconded by Commissioner Fauver to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II(a) The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her, unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a meeting and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted.

Motion carried by a 3-0-0 roll call vote.

Sue	Yes
Jim	Yes
Deborah	Yes

Commissioners Returned to Public Session at 11:45AM.

Motion of Commissioner Umberger and seconded by Commissioner Nelson to seal the minutes, as it was determined that divulgence would render a proposed action ineffective.

Motion carried by a 3-0-0 voice vote.

Motion of Commissioner Umberger and seconded by Commissioner Fauver to enter into Non-Public session per RSA 91-A:3, II(d) Consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community.

Motion carried by a 3-0-0 roll call vote.

Sue	Yes
Jim	Yes
Deborah	Yes

Commissioners returned to Public session at 12:15.

Motion of Commissioner Umberger and seconded by Commissioner Nelson to seal the minutes, as it was determined that divulgence would render a proposed action ineffective.

Motion carried by a 3-0-0 voice vote.

Having nothing further to come before this public meeting, motion of Commissioner Nelson and seconded by Commissioner Umberger to adjourn this public meeting at 12:16PM.

Motion carried by a 3-0-0 voice vote.

Minutes recorded by:

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to be "J. Umberger", written over a horizontal line.