

**New Hartford Water Pollution Control Authority  
TOWN OF NEW HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, January 16, 2020 at 7:00 PM  
New Hartford Town Hall  
530 Main Street, New Hartford, Connecticut**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Denton Butler, David Douyard, Mary Beth Greenwood, Michael LeClaire, Wes Marsh, Polly Pobuda, Joe Toro, and First Selectman Dan Jerram.

**ABSENT:** None.

Mr. Butler called the meeting to order at 7:03PM.

**1. DISCUSSION – INPUT FOR INFORMATION SESSIONS – SALE OF WATER SEWER ASSETS:**

Mr. Butler invited Board members to share their feedback from the Board of Selectmen January 13, 2020 meeting at which the potential sale of the town's water and sewer assets was discussed.

Mr. Douyard shared his belief that individuals may have been caught off guard because they weren't sure of exactly what was going to happen. He shared his observation that once information was presented, the concerns of folks that attended the meeting were calmed. Providing a historical perspective will be very important going forward, according to Mr. Douyard.

Mr. Douyard opined that information should be provided on how the infrastructure is funded. Mr. Butler relayed a historical accounting as to how the system is paid, noting that the whole town has had participation among its general taxpayers for a considerable length of time. Mr. Jerram explained that the split had been 61% / 39% towards the debt service, which had come out of prior incarnations of this Board. He explained how the effects of the anticipated development during the time of the design of the plant upgrade have impacted rates today.

Mr. Douyard noted that this type of historical information should be communicated clearly and concisely so that people in town are able to understand it. He suggested providing a cost analysis on what the burden would be if the Town were to just pay for and run the system. Mr. Butler reported that a few years ago a task force had been appointed to review three possible options: run the system as it does currently with a third party operating the plant, have the system brought back to a municipal entity, and lease or sell the system. He noted that these had been reviewed by the Asset Evaluation Team.

Mr. Toro was happy to see the crowd that attended the recent meeting. He thought the presentation should be simplified for additional public meetings. Mr. Toro suggested strengths be outlined to the users, the non-users who reside in a future expansion area, and the residents who do not live near an expansion area. An opportunity for the public to question the AET, and/or who want to share their concerns, should be included in future meetings, according to Mr. Toro.

Mr. Marsh opined that it is important to remind and to reiterate to the public that the users have not been funding the system solely. He was surprised to come to understand that there is indeed interest in the whole town financing the system. Mr. Marsh explained that he did not

think the cost resonated with the public enough though. Mr. Jerram noted that folks may not realize the amount of expertise involved in running the plant. Mr. Butler pointed out the shrinking pool of operators who have the expertise, too.

Mr. Marsh opined that the value of not assessing properties was underplayed. He noted the value derived from levying a betterment assessment may prove to be very impressive. When questioned about Simsbury's betterment assessment, Mr. LeClaire believed it to be \$4,095. Mr. Butler noted Canton's as \$8,750. Mr. Marsh noted that this should be emphasized.

Additionally, Mr. Marsh opined that the list of what is actually being sold ought to be communicated. Mr. Marsh also shared an observation that he was not sure folks understand that the protection of the aquifer is regulated by the Department of Health and not the WPCA. Mr. Marsh also thought that some indication on how connection orders would be administered should also be shared.

Mr. Butler reported that the Town's website will be uploaded with reference documents, communications, and maps regarding the sale of the assets.

Ms. Pobuda thanked the AET, citing the long hours of hard work they have undertaken. She reported that she is hearing from folks who are fearful of a rate increase as a result of the sale. Ms. Pobuda noted that most folks she talks to are very concerned with what effects a sale of assets will have on their budgets. She also shared concerns with whether the Town would be retaining the easements and rights of way in Pine Meadow and the Industrial Park.

Ms. Greenwood share her impression that one perspective that has been missing in the discussions is in what has happened had already been projected. She noted that it has been known for some time that in order for the WPCA to remain solvent, it was necessary that the customer base be expanded. She reminded board members that a line analysis was completed and CDM Smith was retained to complete a review and analysis of extensions in Pine Meadow and on Cottage Street. Ms. Greenwood pointed out that despite the town being on the priority list for funding, nothing was pursued. Her observations from the other night was that the sale has become the default action. She noted that while it might not be the role of the AET, it may be the role of this board to continue to review the other options.

Mr. LeClaire questioned why the WPCA would spend their own money to expand the system after selling it. Mr. Butler explained that under the regulatory control, the owner would not have the statutory provision to do any expanding. Mr. Butler reported that Aquarian has acquired seventy-one systems since 2011. He noted that he is in the process of interviewing people who have been involved at the municipal level to ascertain what has transpired.

Mr. Butler shared his observations. He noted that the presentation is now drilling down to the next level of what has to be explained. Mr. Butler relayed that he was delighted to see so many people turn out for the meeting however it may have been that they turned out for the wrong reasons. He explained that Town Hall had received several concerned calls from residents who may have been misinformed through social media and flyers that were distributed at a homeowners association in Pine Meadow and River Run. He reminded the Board that this meeting was the first meeting in a series of meetings that will take place.

Mr. Butler noted that there will be additional meetings with the Board of Selectmen, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Board of Finance and at least three public information meetings.

Ms. Pobuda pointed out that residents should be advised that the rates will be set by PURA, and not this group. Mr. Butler noted that the WPCA will also have a voice going forward.

Ms. Greenwood questioned why Aquarian wants to buy the assets. Mr. Butler explained that Aquarian is in this type of utility business, that they think that they can make their rate of return off of it, and that it is consistent with their business system to buy small systems. Mr. Butler pointed out that PURA often approaches companies like Aquarian or MDC to take over distressed systems.

Mr. Jerram shared his observations, too, noting that he saw body language change as attendees heard more and gained a better understanding. He noted that the rates of Aquarian are 30% lower than the Town's.

**2. REVIEW/APPROPRIATION FOR WWTF REPAIRS:**

Mr. Butler distributed a document, noting that the wastewater plant suffered \$53K in repairs on the ten-year old plant. He noted that the MCC display and control panel needs to be replaced at a cost of \$10K. A purchase of a new display is being purchased for \$200 and will suffice for the time being, according to Mr. Butler. He noted that the AC and heating for the MCC and control rooms need to be repaired at a cost of \$6K. Mr. Butler noted that there are discussions ongoing regarding the jet motive pumps. He indicated he would update this board in February.

**MOTION:** Mr. Marsh, Ms. Pobuda second, to appropriate an amount not to exceed \$10K for required repairs as discussed; unanimously approved.

**MOTION:** Mr. Douyard, Mr. Toro second, to adjourn at 8:34PM; unanimously approved.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Pamela A. Colombie  
Recording Clerk**