

**MERRIMACK VILLAGE DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MAY 15, 2023
MEETING MINUTES
(approved June 19, 2023)**

A regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners was conducted on May 15, 2023, at 5:02 p.m. at 2 Greens Pond Road, Merrimack, NH.

Chairman, Donald Provencher presided:

Members of the Board present: Wolfram von Schoen, Personnel Liaison
Erin Clement

Members of the Board Absent: Kenneth Ayers, Vice Chairman
John Lyons

Also in Attendance: Ron Miner, Superintendent
Jill Lavoie, Business Manager
Kristen Maher, Senior Accountant

FINANCE/HUMAN RESOURCES REVIEW

A. Analysis of Revenue and Expenditures Report

Kristen Maher, Senior Accountant, informed the Commission that having completed the month of April, Merrimack Village District (MVD) is 83% through the fiscal year. K. Maher stated that the revenue is at 94% of the budget and the expenses are at 80% of the budget. Maher reminded the commissioners that Mercantile is one of the driving accounts behind revenue and that at the April meeting she stated that she would investigate this. She informed the commissioners that she had found that there was an increase in customers, and that mercantile may have been underbudgeted with the three-year analysis that was done. This was likely due in part to Covid.

Maher explained that in terms of expenses, the salaries are running at 77.25% of the budget and MVD is currently fully staffed. Commissioner von Schoen questioned MVD being fully staffed. Superintendent R. Miner explained that MVD is fully staffed for now and will be working with what they have.

Maher stated that she would like to go over the reports that she gives to the commissioners. She explained that she provides a summary that is a breakdown of what is happening with each account. She noted that there is a report immediately after that that is somewhat of a duplicate and asked the commissioners if that is necessary. It was determined that the second report is obsolete. Commissioner von Schoen noted the second report actually has a few columns that the first report does not, and asked if these could be consolidated. Maher answered that they could be. Maher informed the commissioners that she has added a new report, which is the trust fund activity.

At this time, Commissioner von Schoen circled back to Maher stating that salaries are running at 77.25% of the budget. He clarified that MVD is not spending 77.25% of the overall budget on salaries, but rather that it is strictly 77.25% of the salary budget. He suggested that they are more stringent with the wording to avoid confusion.

B. Action Items

At this time Business Manager J. Lavoie informed the commissioners that Senior Accountant K. Maher had some action items she would like to review with the commissioners. Maher provided the commissioners with a list of Action Items to review that had been assigned to her. This was in alignment with the current Action Item list to be reviewed by the commissioners later. The first one was #55, the current PTO policy. The current policy provides up to 10 days, or 80 hours, in sick time, 160 of which can be rolled over each year. PTO is done on a calendar year. Anything above 240 hours is paid out. It was noted that most employees do not hit 240 hours. Commissioner von Schoen stated that what the commissioners found unfavorable was the payout of sick time. Maher noted that other municipalities that she had spoken to were paying out at 100%. Commissioner von Schoen stated that he had also heard that from a town employee. MVD Management Recommendation is to keep as is for now. At this time, Commissioner W. von Schoen noted that he may change his position on PTO because upon seeing the vacation PTO he felt it to be pretty frugal. He stated that he personally feels sick days make sense, so an employee is not dragging themselves to work while sick, versus a PTO pool, and now sees the number of sick days MVD offers to be more realistic. Commissioner von Schoen stated that he would like to see the payout policy change. The commissioners expressed discontent with the way vacation time is given, whether it be accrual over time, or given at the beginning of the year. Maher added that MVD had discussed a quarterly accrual. It was questioned if MVD carried the ability to pay out all of the employees if ever necessary. It was also questioned if the accrual took place at different salary rates, if the unused PTO was getting paid out at the higher salary rate, or the actual salary rate at the time of earning. It was noted that the accrual starts over every year. It was also noted that vacation days do not roll over unless specific approval is given from Superintendent R. Miner. Accrual of sick time will be discussed at a later date.

In regards to Action Item #74, the Rate Discussion, Maher informed the commissioners that MVD had opened a purchase order for Underwood to calculate their suggestions for a rate increase. Maher had used 22% to match MVD's revenue to the FY24 expenses. MVD's management recommendations are pending Underwood's findings. It was suggested that this rate increase wait until MVD has switched to monthly billing. It was noted that monthly billing "coming soon" notices have gone out, with no date listed. Chairman Provencher asked if there were public hearings on rate changes. Superintendent R. Miner answered that there were. It was clarified that the discussion could take place at the June meeting with public hearings to follow in July and August. This would target the rate increase to happen in September.

Maher discussed the Capital Reserve Fund Policy, reminding the commissioners that she will be providing a trust activity sheet monthly. She noted that they are still waiting on GIS's CIP model to determine if the annual amounts are enough to cover MVD's future plans. It was decided that the Capital Reserve Fund Policy and the Fund Balance Policy would be discussed during the June Board of Commissioners meeting.

Maher informed the commissioners that MVD will be updating to Windows Office 365 on May 18th. This will involve Block 5 coming in and setting up the computers, as well as phones and tablets. One Drive will also be set up to access documents going forward.

MVD is still aiming for monthly billing to start on July 1st. Maher has signed a contract with TD Bank for Lockbox setup, which will be ready for July. The lockbox will be phased out as more customers pay via the portal. TD Bank was not willing to adjust their pricing. Commissioner von

Schoen asked if MVD had looked at the pricing at other banks. Maher answered that they had not. Maher provided a breakdown of the cost of the lockbox and the savings due to customers utilizing online services for billing. Commissioner von Schoen acknowledged the savings but stated that he still feels it appropriate to look into other providers offering the same services. Maher stated that she could look into it. At this time, Maher also discussed offering a discount for Web Pay customers. Using the current water software, it would become very manual to give customers a discount for using web pay and there is currently no way to automate this.

REGULAR SESSION

1. Board of Commissioners to receive an update from Superintendent Ron Miner regarding:

a. Wells 2 & 9

Superintendent R. Miner informed the commissioners that Well 9 has been online since April 28th. Wells 2 & 9 have been running, in combination, right around 1,500 gallons per minute. This has allowed the District to back off on the other wells.

b. Wells 7 & 8 media changeout

Superintendent R. Miner informed the commissioners that all paperwork and media samples have been sent to Evoqua. MVD is waiting for the profile to come back. The media is tentatively scheduled to be picked up on May 25th, May 30th, and if the profile takes longer than expected - June 5th. Superintendent R. Miner stated that he should know this week if that will be on schedule. Chairman Provencher asked if this was the profile of the carbon samples. Superintendent R. Miner answered that it was. He explained that they took off the 50% port of vessel 1 (the lead vessel) and took a core sample. The sample was sent off to check for metals. Once the results come back, pick up can be scheduled. Superintendent R. Miner continued to say that next week MVD will be disinfecting the caustic treatment on the lag vessel. The lead vessel will be shut off and MVD will start treatment using the lag vessel.

c. Artificial Recharge

Superintendent R. Miner informed the commissioners that he and Peter Pitsas had walked Wells 4 & 5, down along the river, and across the tracks. They had identified a couple of locations as potential pump and intake locations. These were plotted on the map. It was noted that Jamie Emery is looking to get the Artificial Recharge (AR) proposal to MVD by late summer. Emery was informed of the potential locations and would like to review them. There is a culvert in the area of Parker Village that Superintendent Miner suggested along with another area of trestle along the river. This could potentially avoid directional drilling. The commissioners asked if this would actually provide a savings if extra pipe were needed. Chairman Provencher stated that he would like to confirm any cost/payment with landowners before moving forward. Superintendent Miner stated that it is his personal opinion that MVD purchase the property. Chairman Provencher noted that purchasing the property would be considerably more costly than an easement. Superintendent R. Miner stated that there is some well recharge that comes from that area. It was determined that this may be best discussed in a work session or non-public meeting.

d. Mitchell Woods

Superintendent R. Miner informed the commissioners Underwood is working on getting a drawing together for Mitchell Woods. Chairman Provencher asked if they had found out if MVD would be able to use the existing 8” test well as a production well. Superintendent R. Miner stated that he believed Emery said they could. Chairman Provencher asked Superintendent R. Miner to be sure that Underwood is using that information in their cost estimate rather than assuming the cost of a whole new well.

2. Board of Commissioners to review the Media Changeout Policy (second reading)

At this time, Chairman Provencher asked if all of the corrections from the April 2023 reading were included in this version of the Media Changeout Policy. Superintendent R. Miner stated that he believed everything was changed. Chairman Provencher noted that the word “guideline” did replace the word “policy,” as requested. Otherwise, there were only a few typos noted at the previous meeting, which were corrected.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER W. VON SCHOEN TO APPROVE THE MEDIA CHANGEOUT POLICY DATED MAY 11, 2023, AS PROPOSED MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER E. CLEMENT

MOTION CARRIED 3-0-0

Chairman Provencher stated that he wanted to emphasize that the 8-month goal noted was for the actual replacement and not just for the beginning of the coordination of replacement. That is noted in the guidelines. He also noted that the graphs for Wells 4 & 5 show that there is already breakthrough of PFBA through the lead vessel, which started, he believes, in December. That would mean the lead vessel at Wells 4 & 5 should be replaced in August. Superintendent R. Miner stated that he would be curious if things would change after the summer, as operations will vary now that Wells 2 & 9 are online. It was noted that this may prolong the changeouts in the future. Commissioner von Schoen referenced an email from Underwood Engineers that noted PFBA breakthrough at Wells 7 & 8 in August of 2022. Chairman Provencher noted that MVD is already behind on Wells 7 & 8, but not Wells 4 & 5. It was noted that the changeout requires minimal down time of a well. The water can be run through the lag vessel, which then becomes the new lead vessel. This would not require weeks or months of downtime. Superintendent R. Miner stated that MVD will condition the new media and then do a bacteria sample on the vessel before it goes online. This may be able to be done off-peak. It was noted that this would be the regenerated carbon which would not have the iron issues that would require two months to flush before returning to service. Superintendent R. Miner noted that he had some questions about whether or not a profile is necessary and stated that he would find out. Chairman Provencher noted that changing out the lead vessel earlier rather than later will offer some protection to the lag vessel. He also clarified that the actual media changeout needs to happen around the 8-month mark, not the coordination of the media changeout. Superintendent R. Miner stated that he was unsure how early he could pull out a profile, if necessary, prior to a media changeout. Chairman Provencher suggested he call Evoqua and ask what is needed and the timeline for an August 9th changeout date.

3. Board of Commissioners to review the minutes from the April 17, 2023 regular BOC meeting and the two Non-Public Sessions.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting April 17, 2023

No amendments were offered.

Board of Commissioners Non – Public Meeting (1) April 17, 2023

No amendments were offered.

Board of Commissioners Non – Public Meeting (2) April 17, 2023

No amendments were offered.

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER W. VON SCHOEN TO ACCEPT THE MEETING MINUTES OF THE APRIL 17, 2023 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING AND NON-PUBLIC MEETINGS AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER E. CLEMENT**

MOTION CARRIED

3-0-0

4. Board of Commissioners to review Action Items from previous meetings and those to be added from this meeting.

The Commissioners reviewed the list of Action Items, removing tasks that have been completed, and making necessary additions. During the Finance/Human Resource Review Senior Account Kristen Maher reviewed Action Items that had been assigned to that department. She provided updates noted above, as well as on the Action Items list. At this time, the commissioners discussed an open house at a treatment plant now that they have been completed. This is tentatively set for August 26, 2023. The logistics of which include an open invitation and the potential of food trucks. Commissioner von Schoen recommended MVD t-shirts to easily identify the people who could answer questions for the public.

5. Old Business

At this time Superintendent R. Miner informed the commissioners that Customer Service Representative Amy Doucette had put in for the Watershed Planning Grant. This was an \$80,000 grant with no match required at the time. Jamie Emery submitted it and there were an additional 22 tasks added that MVD will be required to conform with. Emery is asking the MVD for an additional \$20,000 to support the work. Commissioner von Schoen noted that there was no outline of the work Emery was asking to support. Superintendent R. Miner explained that Emery had expressed that he felt the \$80,000 would be tight for the initial required tasks, but with additional tasks added, he is now requesting additional funds to support the work. Commissioner Clement asked who added the additional tasks. Superintendent Miner explained that NHDES added the additional tasks and had changed the scope of what they were looking for within the grant. Chairman Provencher stated that he would like to see Emery’s scope of work and see what has changed. Chairman Provencher stated that this grant feels like a bait and switch. Commissioner von Schoen expressed his agreement and stated that this seems to happen quite a bit. He

suggested reaching out to NHDES and expressing their concern. Chairman Provencher asked Superintendent R. Miner to reach out to Emery for a revised contract but also to see if there is a record of revised information for the grant.

At this time, Chairman Provencher asked if there was any follow up on the Waterline Extension Grants that MVD was awarded. Superintendent R. Miner stated that there are two Waterline Extension Grants and they are waiting to be signed by Governor Council.

Chairman Provencher asked for the status of the Pennichuck Water Works (PWW) wholesale agreement. Superintendent R. Miner answered that it was waiting to go to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). It was noted at this time that the PUC has reached out regarding the special rate at which MVD had previously purchased water from PWW and MVD will be receiving \$46,000 back in the form of a rebate or a credit.

6. New Business

At this time, Commissioner W. von Schoen questioned if reading the preamble of the agenda was necessary. He noted that a person would have the remote login information from reviewing the agenda prior to the meeting and without having the information prior to the meeting, a person would not be able to hear it stated at the meeting regardless. He stated that it is his opinion that all that is necessary would be to state that public participation is offered by webinar, and information regarding electronic participation is available on the agenda, which is available on the [MVD website](#). Commissioner E. Clement asked why MVD offers public participation through webinar. It was explained that it was leftover from the pandemic and has provided additional access to the community with little extra effort required on the part of MVD and the commissioners. The commissioners agreed to reduce the preamble to the agenda to reflect what was suggested.

7. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent R. Miner reminded the commissioners that some time ago, the NH Municipal Association reached out with questions regarding GAC and was interested in GAC funding and legislation. At that time, Superintendent R. Miner had expressed to the NH Municipal Association that he would be happy to provide a tour if any Senators would be interested to see what was involved. There is a tour scheduled for May 30, 2023, with Senator Denise Ricciardi. Commissioner von Schoen stated that MVD should be aware of what the expectations are of the visit. Superintendent R. Miner noted that he did express the invitation to the NH Municipal Association and Senator Ricciardi was the only one who expressed interest.

8. Questions from the Public/Press - None

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER E. CLEMENT TO ADJOURN
MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER W. VON SCHOEN**

**MOTION CARRIED
3-0-0**

The May 15, 2023 meeting of the Board of Commissioners was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Submitted by Amanda McKenna, Recording Secretary