



## BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES

**Wednesday, July 6, 2022**

Medford Police Department Prescott Room  
219 S. Ivy Street, Medford, Oregon 97501

The regular meeting of the Medford Water Commission was called to order at 12:15 p.m. on the above date at Medford Police Department's Prescott Room with the following commissioners, staff, and guests present:

Acting Chair Michael Smith; Commissioner John Dailey. Commissioners Jason Anderson, Daniel Bunn, and Bob Strosser were absent.

General Manager Brad Taylor, Executive Administrative Coordinator Yvette Finstad, HR Director Tanya Haakinson, Water Meter & Controls Manager Ken Johnson, Water Maintenance Manager Lester McFall, Engineering Manager Brian Runyen, Information Technology Manager Kris Stitt, Water Quality & Treatment Manager Ben Klayman, Interim Finance Manager Anna Roeder, Customer Service & Water Efficiency Manager Julie Smitherman, WTP Operations Supervisor Dan Perkins, Senior IT Administrator Chad Glass

Guest(s): Attorney Mark Bartholomew, City of Central Point Councilor Tanea West Browning\*, Laren Crawford\*, and James R.\* \*\* (\*Via Zoom) (\*\*Arrived late)

### **3. Comments from the Audience**

Zoom attendee Laren Crawford inquired about the smell and taste issue being experienced with the water; he was advised that this would be covered later in the meeting if he could stay on the line.

### **4. Approval or Correction of the Minutes of the Last Regular Meeting of June 15, 2022**

The minutes of the last regular meeting of June 15 will be brought to the next meeting for approval due to lack of quorum; no corrections were noted at this time.

### **5. Leadership Team Reports**

- Ken Johnson, Meters & Controls Manager
  - Garfield Leak – On Friday, June 17, water was reported coming out of valve can at Garfield and S. Holly St. Staff was on site around 10:00 a.m.; this is a 24" steel pipe (1962). Staff determined that the weld-on saddle failed (this is worst-case scenario). Staff worked on-site for 37 hours to make the initial repair; there was a shift change at 6:30 a.m. on Saturday with new crew. Challenges were the removal of slurry poured over the water main, dewatering 2,700 feet of 24" water main (63,000 gallons of water), and a difficult welding environment.
  - Fall Protection Training – D-2000 Training Company provided a full day of site-specific training for 9 staff members at three sites: Capital Hill #3 Reservoir roof, Capital Hill #3 Reservoir meter vault, and Barneburg Reservoir. The reservoir roof site included the use of safety tie-off plates, self-retracting lanyards, and safety harnesses, the meter vault site replicated reservoir access and confined space entry, and the Barneburg reservoir illustrated the safety climb ladder and emergency removal of staff from roof by fire department emergency personnel. This training is beneficial to both Medford Water and Medford Fire Department.
- Ben Klayman, Water Quality & Treatment Manager
  - Watershed update – Above average precipitation for April, May, and June; this is still 83% of average but better than the outlook earlier this year and this time last year. Springflow received an uptick from above- average April/May precipitation, and Willow Lake is full as well. Duff Water Treatment Plant is in 24-hour operations and production is expected to increase with the coming hot weather.
  - Annual Consumer Confidence Report – All community water systems are required to submit an annual Consumer Confidence Report to their customers. The report covers Medford Water, and Partner Cities of Central Point, Eagle Point, Jacksonville,

and Phoenix and now Charlotte Ann Water District, and Elk City Water District. It is issued June 2022 based on 2021 water quality data, and focuses on compliance with regulations; it does not include data on all parameters tested (the annual Water Quality Analyses, published in March, has a comprehensive listing of testing results).

Commissioner Dailey and Klayman briefly discussed the water districts; previously the state did not recognize them as a separate water-providing entity. Last year that changed across the state of Oregon, and they are now required to do a number of things differently, although we have always tested their water and reported their findings.

- Brian Runyen, Engineering Manager
  - Duff 65MGD Ozone Replacement – The original schedule for the project would have resulted in having the new ozone system operational prior to plant startup, delivered March and operational in April.
  - Several factors impacted this schedule:
    - Ozone generator skid potential QC issue (March)
    - Suez Project Manager transition (April)
    - Suez commissioning staffing for testing of units (May)
    - Supply chain issues - 2 Allen Bradley analog cards (May)
    - Suez Ambient Ozone Analyzers out of calibration (June)
    - Alternate rental of analyzer – supply chain/shipping issues
    - Goulds cooling pump issue (June)
    - Final testing (July)
  - It is now estimated that factory testing will be completed this week, the units will ship next week, and installation will start the third week of July. Startup and commissioning are expected to begin the last week of July, with the system up and running mid-August.

Commissioner Dailey inquired about the strategy of disconnecting the old system; there was a short window between the start of the project and when the plant can start up, and with the data and reports we had from the contractor, it was believed at that time that we were on target and would have it all done before startup. The decision was not premature, as with all of the information available at the time, we would still have been under the time estimate; there was nothing to indicate we wouldn't be able to make the original timelines. Suez was selected following a formal procurement process (there are three manufacturers). Unfortunately, this was followed by three months of delays from the supplier and a series of other interrelated events.

Commissioner Smith noted that for the benefit of the caller(s), this is the technical explanation behind the taste and odor issue. We are in the middle of doing a replacement of the ozone system, which is what deals with the taste and odor issues, does not affect the quality of the water; we anticipated having all of this completed before plant startup. Commissioner Dailey suggested a rephrasing regarding "quality"; it does not affect the *safety* of the water, but does affect the quality.

- Klayman reported that the lack of ozone treatment has caused some customers to experience a musty taste and odor to their water, this is related to the higher river temperatures and lack of ozone to improve these qualities. This was a regular occurrence before the installation of ozone in 2002. Water began coming from the plant made its way to the distribution system on June 24 and 25, we started receiving calls on June 27. Approximately 80 calls have been received since then (a call log was used to track calls), calls are fielded using standard talking points around these seasonal issues and ozone; the FAQs were also posted on our webpage. Media interviews have been completed with KTVL 10, Newswatch 12, and Mail Tribune.
- Monthly river samples are taken for Little Butte Creek and the Rogue, and there are also online analyzers for multiple parameters including organics and algal activity.

Taste and odor laboratory testing, algal toxin laboratory testing, plant testing of raw and finished water (operators complete taste and odor testing at the plant—odor tests on raw water, taste, and odor tests on finished water—twice a day, and have largely not detected anything), and distribution system monitoring also occurs regularly. Everything shows normal/non-detect results for this time of year. The issue is exacerbated inside household plumbing when the water sits and warms up. Operators have tried warming the water before the taste and odor tests as well (without notable difference), but water in a glass is different than water in pipes. Staff have also completed house calls, where it was detectable at first, but not after the lines were flushed. Chilling or flushing may not work in every situation, but are certainly best practices. This happens every year as the water warms up, but in a typical year customers would not notice due to normal ozone treatment. The old ozone equipment is no longer serviceable and cannot be made operational again; the faster route at this point would be to hold on for the new equipment. Staff is working as hard as we can to resolve it.

Two members of the public wished to make comment on this topic. James R. expressed frustration that there is not more information available and that our message is that nothing is wrong, clearly something is wrong. Commissioner Smith noted that information about the issue is the first item posted in the News section; we will continue to look for ways to get the message out to customers and do our best to make sure that the message is as clear as possible. Mr. Crawford requested confirmation that the ozone replacement project that was reported on is the cause of the taste and odor issue, which was confirmed. Commissioner Dailey inquired of staff what the experience was like before ozone treatment was added; Perkins affirmed that it was just like it is now. Carbon filtration and other options were tried at that time, but did not work effectively, so we selected ozone to do whatever we could to improve the experience for our customers. This used to happen seasonally every year and customers at that time understood that there was always taste and odor issues with warm water; as soon as the project is complete and the system is back up and running, this issue will improve. Commissioner Dailey suggested that it would have been good idea to get on the messaging sooner when it was known that there would not be ozone at the plant startup.

- Brian Runyen, Engineering Manager
  - Capital Hill Reservoir: Public Engagement & Communications – Part of the Rogue Valley Water Supply Resiliency Program is the replacement of Capital Hill Reservoirs 1 (const. 1908 @ 2MG), 2 (const. 1927 @ 2MG) and 3 (const. 1945 @ 8MG). Project scoping includes Public Engagement and Communications Services; JLA Public Involvement developing scope as subconsultant to RH2.
    - Public Involvement and Communications Plan will identify key audiences and stakeholders, develop communications strategies, identify prospective allies, public information campaign, outline key messaging, and outline timelines, roles, and responsibilities.
  - Pre-design scoping is in process, to be followed by design scope (RH2); construction is anticipated to start in approximately 18 months (beginning 2024).
  - Board involvement will be imperative, for early input and continued engagement. Will require communication with Medford Water staff, consultants, and community contacts. Staff will be back with more information as the project continues.

Commissioner Smith suggested that the Nextdoor application would be a good tool; staff and project consultants have begun brainstorming the different groups to be involved, and will be working closely with them in addition to the City of Medford to leave the surrounding area better than when we started. Commissioner Dailey inquired as to the magnitude of the project; unfortunately, this is a large magnitude project. There will be noise during the day, heavy equipment, and traffic on the streets. It will be absolutely necessary to minimize impact from this project, which is vital to our system.

- Kris Stitt, IT Manager
  - Asset Management Project Update – Over the past year, staff has been working with a consultant to develop Asset Management plans and policies to help guide us toward a full asset management program. This includes a strategic asset management plan for the organization, and individual asset management plans for BBS, Duff, and Distribution. We have released our RFP for Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) platform and implementation.
    - Implementation Types – First-Party Implementer: Software vendor provides software and implementation services; Third-Party Implementer: Outside consultant/reseller partners with a software vendor to provide implementation services. Medford Water may need to continue to work with an outside consultant to oversee the project.
    - Proposals are due mid-August, followed by review and selection, software demonstrations, and a statement of work/contract negotiations.
    - Although we still have much to do, this is a big step forward for Medford Water; getting this far has taken many hours of staff time and effort from all areas of the organization.
- Julie Smitherman, Customer Service and Water Efficiency Manager
  - Big Butte Springs Tour – Tours to resume following cancellation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Planning for September 14, the tour will go to Big Butte Springs, Willow Lake, and Whiskey Springs (Duff WTP will be skipped this year to keep plant staff isolated from a large number of public visitors while our area still deals with high-risk conditions). 37 members of the public and approximately 10 new staff members will be able to attend.
  - Water Efficiency Team Update – The team is growing, we have added a Water Efficiency Coordinator, Technician, and Intern. The team does public outreach, presentations, Infoline/watering recommendations, program flyers, and contributes to the newsletter. Efficiency Programs include sprinkler surveys, leak & high use checks, and rebates (Toilets & Smart Controller). They also assist Ashland through an IGA, doing indoor and outdoor evaluations, newsletters, presentations, assisting with rebates, and commissions/community action groups.

Commissioner Smith noted that he is interested in attending the tour. Taylor added that with regards to the IGA, we bill for our staff time, and they reimburse us. It is approximately 8-12 hours a week, depending upon on the season.

- Anna Roeder, Interim Finance Manager, Dan Perkins, WTP Operations Supervisor, and Tanya Haakinson, HR Manager
  - Conference Updates – Roeder attended the GFOA 2022 116th Annual Conference; some highlights were sessions around responsibilities in debt management, setting user charges & fees, principles for better public engagement, structuring of debt issuances, and managing investment portfolios. Perkins attended AWWA's ACE 2022 Conference; hot topics of the conference were regulatory updates, emerging contaminants, disinfection byproducts, and conventional treatment/technology advancements. Perkins added that another benefit was discussions with conference attendees regarding the CM/GC process and latest technologies related to filter and other treatment processes. Haakinson attended the National PELRA Training Conference, focused on labor relations. Hot topics included recruitment & retention, employee engagement, ADA, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, and labor negotiations. Staff thanked the Board for the opportunity to attend these events, as they provide extensive benefits not only from an educational perspective, but also by broadening perspectives and networking.
- Tanya Haakinson, HR Manager
  - Recruitment Update – Several positions have been posted or recruitment continues;

all are refills. Project Manager (new hire starts July 18), Utility Person IV – Lead (offered to an internal candidate), Senior Accountant (interviews on Thursday), Warehouse Specialist I (interviews on Thursday), Customer Service Tech I (interviews on Monday), and IT Business Administrator (recruitment continues).

- Brad Taylor, General Manager
  - Other Announcements – Budget books will be available soon, both electronic and hard copies. WIFIA Reimbursement #3 has been completed for \$3.2 million; this brings the total so far for FY 21/22 to \$9.5 million. There will be one more for June. This represents a great accomplishment for the organization. Upcoming Meetings: July 20<sup>th</sup> - SCADA Project Update; August 3<sup>rd</sup> - TBD; August 17 - Duff WTP Meeting (the goal is to be at the plant after the new ozone equipment is up and running). Taylor added that an off-cycle executive session meeting will be scheduled for next week.

Before the next topic, Taylor wanted to address a supplemental comment from James R. thanking commissioners for their responses and adding that if it was known that there would be a taste and smell issue in advance, notice should have been provided ahead of time; he gets all of his news from social media. Councilor West Browning remarked to staff that she is excited the tours are starting up again.

#### **6. Propositions and Remarks from the Commissioners**

Commissioner Dailey noted that the News from 100 Years Ago section of the newspaper today has an article about the water system (content is drawn from the archives 100 years ago).

#### **7. Adjourn**

There being no further business, this Commission meeting adjourned at 1:49 p.m. The proceedings of the Medford Water Commission meeting were recorded and are on file along with the complete agenda of this meeting.

Yvette Finstad  
Assistant Clerk of the Commission