

**EAST LYME WATER & SEWER COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2024
MINUTES**

The East Lyme Water & Sewer Commission held a Regular Meeting on January 23, 2024. Chairman Dan Cunningham called the Regular Meeting at 7:00 PM after the previously held Public Hearing.

PRESENT: Dan Cunningham Chairman, Steve DiGiovanna, Dave Murphy, Dave Bond, Dave Zoller, Carol Russell, Ken Roberts, Roger Spencer, Michelle Williams

ALSO PRESENT: Attorney Mark Zamarka, Town Counsel
Joe Bragaw, Public Works Director
Ben North, Chief Operating Officer
Ann Cicchiello, Deputy First Selectman
Elizabeth Reagan, Reporter for The Day

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
EAST LYME, CT
2024 JAN 29 P 3:00
Cunningham
TOWN CLERK

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Dan Cunningham called the Regular Meeting for the Town of East Lyme Water and Sewer Commission to order at 7:00 PM. The Pledge was observed.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Meeting Minutes – December 12, 2023

Mr. Cunningham called for a motion to approve or any discussion on the Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2023.

****MOTION (1)**

Mr. DiGiovanna moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2023, as presented.

Mr. Zoller seconded the motion.

Vote: 7 – 2 – 0

Motion passed.

b. Special Meeting Minutes, December 27, 2023

Mr. Cunningham called for a motion to approve or any discussion on the Meeting Minutes of December 27, 2023.

****MOTION (2)**

Mr. DiGiovanna moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of October 24, 2023, as presented.

Mr. Murphy seconded the motion.

Vote: 7 – 2 – 0

The motion passed.

3. PFAS Informational Session

Mr. North explained that tonight's presentation was about the wells in town that have "detectable" levels of PFAS. He went to say that he would go over what PFAS is and the initial steps the town is considering taking in the removal of PFAS from the water. Mr. North went over the PPT presentation visible on screens. After the presentation, there was a Q&A session.

Main points from the presentation:

- PFAS has been around for several decades and is present in a variety of products such as Scotch Guard, fire fighting foam and food packaging.
- PFAS is a persistent chemical that does not break down biologically.
- PFAS has been known to cause some health problems and its production is being phased out, however, companies such as 3M and Dupont are still producing it.
- New testing technologies became available in recent years that allow to test parts per trillion have allowed the Town of East Lyme Water Department to detect PFAS in one part per trillion which is the equivalent of 1 drop in 20 Olympic-sized swimming pools. Based on this technology, the levels found in the water are just above the detectable threshold.
- Health problems have been observed on exposure to PFAS over long periods of time. PFAS may affect pregnant women, developing babies and the immune system. It can also affect cholesterol levels and cause cancer.
- PFAS is not easily removed, and it has made its way into the environment after years of its use. Only recently, it has been discovered to be detrimental to health. It is present in every day use products such as Sticky Notes, cell phone surfaces, carpets, varnish, etc.
- East Lyme has several wells and has four different treatment centers. Each well pumps into a main distribution system that contains two large storage tanks. These tanks contain about 1 to 1.2 MG of water a piece. Two of the treatment centers have had traceable amounts of PFAS – these amounts are well under the state guidelines.
- Different options for treatment are being considered. One of them is a two-filter system to be installed at the treatment centers.
- East Lyme will be looking into purchasing filter, piping and buildings to house these systems. This project is in the early stages – the department is contacting different engineering companies to access the different types of filters and their cost.

After the presentation, Mr. North opened the floor for a Q&A session:

Frederica Gunther, 123 Pennsylvania Ave

Q – Mrs. Gunther mentioned that she had posted on social media some recommendations for home use for PFAS removal. She wanted to know if the town would be able to recommend filter systems to the public.

A – Mr. North answered that the department is a public utility entity and at such capacity, the department cannot recommend specific house filter solutions. He also mentioned that activate carbon is used in a lot of filter systems, but he could not recommend specific brands.

Duane Moser, 6 Peach Tree Lane

Q – Mr. Moser asked if distilling water would be a good method to get rid of PFAS in the water.

A- Mr. North said that he did not recommend distilling water as a solution. He mentioned that if even water was boiled, PFAS would be in the vapor, so it is not recommended to use such a process.

Kevin Leach, 15 Clark St.

Q – Mr. Leach asked that because the timeline to remove PFAS from the drinking water supply, what are homeowners to do in the meantime to protect themselves?

A – Mr. north answered that he did not have a solution for a different source of drinking water since bottled water companies are not even testing their levels of PFAS yet. For now, the town will be working diligently to find and implement a solution as quickly as possible.

Q – Mr. Leach asked what “as quickly as possible” meant

A – Mr. North mentioned that things are in the design phase but hopefully it would take only 3 to 6 months to go over the selection process and bidding.

Q – Mr. Leach asked what if there was an equivalent filtration system for the house level to the one that the town is looking into for the treatment centers.

A – Mr. North answered that as others in the meeting have mentioned, there are some PFAS removal systems available, but he would not be able to recommend any.

Rosalind Shoemaker, 307 Giants Neck Rd.

Q – Mrs. Shoemaker asked if Reverse Osmosis would be a process to be considered to remove PFAS.

A – Mr. North answered that R.O. would be effective, but unfortunately it would cost the town ten times more than the treatment being looked at.

Lynn Zakowski, 9 Stoneywood Dr.

Q – Mrs. Zakowski asked if PFAS is something that has been tested in the past or was it new?

A – Mr. North said that the EPA first came out with test requirements in 2014. The town tested in 2015 but, at the time, the technology only allowed parts per billion testing instead of today's parts per trillion.

Q – Were the two filters needed because of the two treatment centers?

A – Mr. North answered that the two-filter systems are to be installed in the two locations. The way the filters work is that the first one will remove 99% of PFAS and then the second one will remove the rest.

Unknown Name, Unknown Address

Q – Has the town identified the reason why the two treatment centers have PFAS chemicals present?

A – Mr. North answered that no, there were no specific reasons why PFAS is present on those locations.

Q – Why would the town not investigate putting a filtration system at the source of water before it gets distributed instead of at the treatment centers?

A – Mr. North answered that it sounds like a good solution, but it wouldn't work because the water is being distributed along the way. Also, the town is looking for the most cost and performance effective solution and something like this suggestion would be extremely costly.

Dawn Griswold, 5 Dodge Ct.

Q – Mrs. Griswold said she follows a lot of ecology sites and she learned that PFAS is an issue all over Connecticut and the Town of East Lyme levels are not as high as other towns. In the past she had issues with her water and now she uses carbon filters. She was wondering if the town should be testing water quality at flow points for things such as pesticides and other lawn chemicals. Maybe East Lyme could be a greener town and be preventive.

A – Mr. North said that it was a great option for the future. However, in his capacity, he can only concern with the quality of the drinking water. He thanked her for her concern and diligence.

Mr. Bond, W&S Commission Member

Mr. Bond noted that this filtration system will cost between \$4 to \$5 Million to implement. As a group – the rate payers and the commission will have to make some tough decisions on the budget. He also mentioned that as of today, the town has not broken any rules with the state since the levels of PFAS are below what the state requires.

Frederica Gunther, 123 Pennsylvania Ave

Q – Mrs. Gunther mentioned that the town should be proactive in offering information on the house filters to the public to protect themselves instead of spending millions of dollars adding filters to the treatment centers. She gave Mr. North papers containing information on filtration systems for the home. She also mentioned that the schools in town should have filters installed in their buildings.

A – Mr. North answered that the state has regulations on the type of filtration the town needs to install to fix the PFAS levels and filtration at the point of use would not be acceptable to regulators.

Mr. Roger, W&S Commission Member

Mr. Roger asked Mr. North to explain to the commission and public the technology that will be used at filtration sites.

Mr. North explained that the system being looked at is an ION exchange system – these systems are the most effective because the PFAS particles will get “stuck” in the resins between the filter system and then will be taken out and eliminated.

Rose Conklyn, 97 West Main St. #84

Q – Mrs. Conklyn asked what would happen to the chemicals being filtered?

A – Mr. North answered that the material will be removed and then brought to a HAZMAT landfill or incineration.

Q – Mrs. Conklyn wanted to know if the town would reach out to well water users to let them know to test their water.

A – Mr. North noted that it was a good idea and, as far as he knows, not a lot of people who reside next to the treatment centers do have public water. He also mentioned that private well users should be testing their water for PFAS and/or any other constituents.

4. Delegations

Mr. Cunningham called for delegations. There were none.

Recording Secretary left the meeting room at 7:52 PM

5. Executive Session – Pending Litigation Re Landmark LLC

Mr. Cunningham called to enter the executive session regarding Pending Litigation Re Landmark LLC.

*** Executive Session over at 8:20 PM. Recording Secretary back into the meeting room at 8:21 PM. No actions were given to Recording Secretary to note.***

6. Correspondence Log

Mr. Cunningham went over the correspondence log that contained the NL Agenda and Minutes.

7. Billing Adjustments

Mr. Cunningham called for billing adjustments. There were none.

8. Approval of Bills

Mr. Cunningham called for the approval of Invoice for DOT Water and Sewer Relocation Project

****MOTION (4)**

Mr. DiGiovanna moved to approve the Weston and Sampson Invoice No. 1241174 for \$1,800.00

Mr. Zoller seconded the motion.

Vote: 8 - 0- 0.

Motion passed.

9. Finance Director Report

Mr. Gervais was not present.

10. Discussion on Possible Actions to Request the Board of Selectman to Grant the Transfer of Remaining ARPA Funds from the Boston Post Rd Tank Project to the Well 4 and Well 1A/6 PFAS Removal Project.

Mr. North explained that this request is similar to the last meeting but that instead of requesting the allocation of funds from the Boston Post Rd. tank project to be used in the Well 5A lagoons that the funds be used towards the PFAS Removal Project.

Mr. Bragaw explained that because the PFAS removal is higher in urgency, the department decided to come to the commission and ask that the previous request to be changed. The Board of Selectmen in this case would be asked the allocation of funds to the PFAS Removal Project instead of lagoon improvements at Well 5A.

Mr. Bond voiced his opinion that the lagoons work should be completed and that the PFAS removal issue should be addressed as a separate issue. He proposes that this issue should be brought to the public's attention and be dealt with in a later date since the levels are under the EPA suggested as an issue.

Mr. North clarified that the lagoons improvement project was still going forward and bids for the work will be accepted mid-February.

Mr. Bragaw mentioned that it is not a given that this request will be granted. This is why the department staff is coming to the commission for support because the PFAS removal is more of a pressing issue than the improvement of the well lagoons.

Mrs. Williams wanted to discuss further – she mentioned that the amount being asked to reallocate was more than the design and project planning for the PFAS removal.

Mr. North responded that she is correct, but the money could be used for other parts of the project such as putting the bid together, construction or putting deposits on filters. Mrs. Williams showed some concern about going forward with a project for an issue (PFAS removal) that does not have set regulations. Mr. Bond mentioned that if this project is done in a systematic way, there might be state/federal funds available in the future so, maybe the town should wait until the EPA comes out with more defined regulations.

Mr. Bragaw said that New London could change the terms of the Interconnection Contract at any time and stop supplying us with water after this summer. The water in East Lyme needs to be treated to the level that it is acceptable to New London to take the water as part of the interconnectivity. Mrs. Williams says that this is now then a business decision and the water should probably be treated for the removal of PFAS.

Mrs. Carroll mentioned that the PFAS removal is a national issue and already there are supply-chain issues for resources and materials. She is concerned that if the town waits until the EPA's final rule on PFAS removal, there will be issues finding the supplies. She believes the town needs to be proactive.

Mr. Cunningham agreed. He also mentioned that the town should not jeopardize the relationship with New London and have our water treated.

****MOTION (5)**

Mr. Murphy moved to approve the request to reallocation of \$187,107.54 funds from the Boston Post Road Tank Project, account #85-70-007-700-711 and \$2,291.10 from Well 5A WTP Upgrade Project, account #85-70-004-700-004 to an account to be created and titled "Well 4 and Well 1A/6 PFAS Removal Project."

Mr. DiGiovanni seconded the motion.

Vote: 8 -0-0

The motion passed.

11. Project Updates

a. Meter Replacement Project

Mr. North noted that we are going after the last meters left to be updated as part of the project and that scheduling slowed down. Another 130 meters have been updated in the month of December. Door hangers were just delivered this week and as the technicians were dropping cards off, they were trying to make contact with customers by knocking on the door and trying to make appointments or, have them call the office to set them up. Mr. Bragaw mentioned that the Manual Reading Fee has been mentioned to customers and that during the May billing, the \$75 fee will be applied.

b. Bridebrook Water Treatment Plant Upgrade Project

Mr. North mentioned that the project is coming along with the sand blasting and the recoating of the filters and piping. Because the treatment plant must stay up and running, there is a lot of phasing and coordination of different contractors. The chemical containment systems have just been approved and will be installed – in the past the town has used epoxy coated concrete containment areas that had issues with erosion caused by any chemical leak. It is very expensive to recoat these areas and the latest quote was for \$40,000 for 110 square feet. Mr. North said that an alternate option has been looked at with HDPE lining for the concrete walls and it is much more affordable. The town will be getting chemical tanks delivered in a matter of weeks.

Mr. Bragaw mentioned that the finalizing of this project will be looked at in a positive light by the public since it affects many users. He also mentioned that the public should be made aware of these on-going projects since the Water and Sewer staff has been diligently working on them.

c. Niantic Pump Station

Mr. North reported that this project is progressing well, and that Mr. Weiss and his crew have been great to work with. He mentioned that the line stop installation work was done yesterday and the mechanical work was completed today by the mechanical contractor. The completion of this project will simplify valve substitution in the future because the station can now be isolated via the line stop and, the line stop will be available for decades to come. When the contractors do a line stop this extensive, they also have to cap the main, and now we have a sample "coupon" off the main to have it analyzed for corrosion.

Mr. Murphy asked if there were any updates on the Rocky Neck sewer connection. Mr. North responded that not yet.

12. Chairman's Report

Mr. Cunningham reported that the budget process has started and that the W&S Commission and departments should be aware of decisions that could affect their budget. He also wanted to let the board know that he is very aware and in tune with the PFAS issue and will cooperate anyway that he can.

13. Staff Updates

a. Water Department Monthly Report

Mr. North noted that water production is still down and could be due to the Meter Replacement Project catching water leaks prior to becoming a larger issue. With the new meters the water department can alert the customers and have them fix these leaks in a timely manner. Also, we contract the leak detection services more often and it helps identifying leaks that are not caught in the regular meter leak detection process. One more benefit of leak detection is finding line services that do not meet our standards/regulations and having homeowners upgrade to meet code. For example, on lines longer than 100 ft, a pit should be installed.

b. Sewer Department Monthly Report

Mr. North noted that precipitation was 8 inches causing the sewer flows to be higher than usual. After a day of heavy rain, the department reported 1.6M gallons going through the Niantic Pump Station when typically, 900,000 to 1M gallons is usually seen.

Mr. Roberts asked if there are meter devices in the sewer system. Mr. North answered that there are no meters at most of the pump stations and that in the near future, he will be proposing an in-depth study to find out costs and resources needed to install metering devices in the sewer system.

14. Future Agenda Items

There were none.

15. Adjournment

Mr. Cunningham called for a motion to adjourn.

****MOTION (6)**

Mr. Murphy moved to adjourn this Regular Meeting of the East Lyme Water and Sewer Commission at 9:02 PM.

Mr. DiGiovanni seconded the motion.

Vote 8 – 0 – 0

The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Tania Ranelli
Recording Secretary