



OFFICE OF THE  
WATER DEPARTMENT  
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**Water Commission Minutes**  
**Wednesday, September 28, 2022**

**Approved:**

John O'Brien called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm  
Other member(s) present: Mat Morton  
Meeting held: At the Dunstable Town Hall, 511 Main Street, lower level  
In attendance: Paul Brinkman, Pepperell Water Division

**Reviewed & Signed:**

- All Bills Outstanding Since Last Meeting
- All Payroll Outstanding Since Last Meeting

**Department Operations Update**

Mr. O'Brien noted that Groton-Dunstable High School is having water issues and there is a meeting on October 6. One of their options is to get on to the Dunstable Water System. Mr. Brinkman agreed reporting he already spoke to DEP about it. They might be willing to kick in money. Mr. O'Brien asked if Pepperell has the ability as well. He responded Pepperell serves the High School for sewer, but is a mile away with pipe. Probably cheaper to connect to the Dunstable system. Mr. Brinkman then reminded that a number of the houses in the area near the High School are also now seeing private wells showing up as contamination. Mr. O'Brien asked if the Dunstable system could sustain it. Mr. Brinkman responded it should be fine and would fall within the towns permit with the state. There is also the potential to expand to some of those neighbors whose wells are contaminated. The wells are rated at a million gallons a day. Whether DEP would permit that is an open question and the existing pumps can't do more than 250 gallons a minute. Our busy day is 35,000 gallons with the water tower having a capacity of about two days or 70,000 gallons minimum. Mr. O'Brien reminded that any increase in sale of water decreases the ultimate costs for all.

Mr. Brinkman then outlined the process with DEP regarding the permits for how much can be pumped. They issue them for periods like 10 or 20 years. DEP does not like issuing for a lot of volume. But they do have a process. So there is possibility. Mr. O'Brien asked about the tank in that case. Mr. Brinkman responded the way that he'd see that would be to build an interconnection with a booster system to address pressure differences. Thus Pepperell's system could support Dunstable's and vice versa. Mr. O'Brien asked if Groton could prevent anyone on their side of the border from joining. Mr. Brinkman responded they could. But the uniqueness of the situation would probably stop them from objecting as it would likely more affordable to resolve the problem with Dunstable's system than Groton's system. Mr. O'Brien asked how would maintain anything across the border. Mr. Brinkman responded we would maintain it as we'd own the pipe and be responsible for service to the ratepayers. Although, if Groton wished it could utilize things like betterments itself to lay the pipe and merely contract out the maintenance to us. Mr. Morton noted he'll be at the October 6 meeting. Mr. Brinkman reminded that this may become a priority for Boston given the number of private wells in addition to the High School. Mr. Brinkman then reported on the latest with the Rt. 113 Project's water component. There will be an announcement going out soon on that.

Mr. Morton and Mr. O'Brien then turned to some of the ratepayer complaints about the boil water order. Mr. Morton stressed that all parties involved did the best they could in the situation. Some have asked for some kind of credit for not being able to use the system and for having to buy bottled water. Mr. O'Brien reminded that this wasn't an intentional act. This was an unfortunate situation, but the department did the best it could as did Pepperell's Water Division. He couldn't parse how to provide a credit fairly. Some will have used more water than others, and given the complexities it would be hard. He suggested it be tabled until the next meeting and revisited then. That gives us time to sort out a way of possibly providing a response. Still, we are a public utility and when your power goes down you don't usually get a refund or credit from National Grid. But we should be customer service oriented.

### **Town of Pepperell Water Operator Services Review**

Mr. Brinkman noted a lot has happened. Once a month the town takes samples and tests for an indicator organism. Which isn't hard to pick up since we don't have chlorine in our system. We test for things like e coli. Now we only got one single organism. But DEP has zero tolerance. So a chain of reaction occurred as a result. Including limits to our ability to speak publicly as DEP has to approve and direct our actions. This comes in the form of Administrative Orders. So we had to chlorinate and do the boil order. Notices were issued to all ratepayers and next day actions were taken to investigate the situation. It appears that there's a hatch on a tank where the gasket may not have been installed properly. A few other related issues such as an overflow pipe. So it could have easily been an insect. That has all since been buttoned up. They also took other steps like checking the hydropneumatic tanks. They apparently were still connected to the system rather than being cut and capped. Mr. O'Brien was surprised that this hadn't been done. Mr. Brinkman stressed that it's moot now as they've done that cutting and capping. He then elaborated on the following testing that was done and the paperwork filings. Mr. O'Brien asked if the test site could have been the problem.

Mr. Brinkman responded he's not sure, it's not really something they can tell for sure. It is possible that the prior water operator company might have been taking steps there that DEP does not approve of. But nobody witnessed anything like that and it cannot be confirmed. Mr. Brinkman than discussed ways prevent this sort of issue like arising. He suggested we could add chlorine to the system. Perhaps from May to October. It doesn't have to be constant, but we'd have to install an analyzer on site. There were other ideas like refreshing the water tanks supply through flushing. It was agreed this could be a good idea as part of an overall solution. Mr. Brinkman then stressed that only one organism was found. To have truly been an emergency it would have had to be in the thousands. Mr. O'Brien asked if we should go chlorinated. Mr. Brinkman chlorination makes this sort of situation virtually impossible. Other solutions only mitigate against these sorts of issues. Mr. Morton expressed the desire to avoid chlorination. The water quality is good, he lives on the system, and did not think it would be appreciated by ratepayers. Mr. O'Brien suggested we take mitigating steps and revisit the chlorination concept next spring. Mr. Brinkman felt that a prudent action submitting it can be reviewed in April 2023. Otherwise he reported on the flushing done in general for the system and other matters of maintenance.

### **Next Meeting/Regular Meetings**

The next meeting is expected to be scheduled for October 26. The Commission decided it would affix its meetings to the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month save for November. For that it will be November 30.

### **Authorization of Accounts Payable & Payroll**

The Commission considered and signed off on all of its outstanding bills. The Commission then reviewed and approved payment of the bills and also signed all outstanding department payroll. Mr.

O'Brien then briefly reported on all bills he'd reviewed and approved since the last meeting in his capacity as chair. He noted these are the usual ones, utilities, alarm, and the like.

### **Minutes**

The Commission considered the minutes from its meeting held on August 24, 2022. Seeing no reason to modify the minutes the Commission determined to accept the minute.

A motion was made by Mr. O'Brien to approve the minutes of August 24, 2022 as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Morton and passed by majority vote.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Morton at 7:01 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. O'Brien and passed by majority vote.

Respectfully submitted by



Jakob K. Voelker  
Assistant Town Administrator