July 15, 2025
Meeting Minutes

Present: Chairperson, Bernie Cullen, Commissioner, Mark Emery, Commissioner, John Manning, Superintendent, Rob Swiniarski

Chairman Cullen opened the meeting at 6:35

Agenda Items:

1. **Water Meter Replacement and M36 Audit:**
   Rob said the water audit was a State program funded by grant money. It revealed significant unaccounted-for water. The audit showed that out of the 160 million gallons produced, 38 million gallons were unaccounted for, with 15 million gallons attributed to customer meter inaccuracies, translating to approximately $330,000 in lost revenue annually. He estimated that approximately 700 water meters need replacement, with the project costing around $250,000-300,000, which he plans to propose for the next fiscal year. The group also discussed adjusting tiered water rates, particularly the 30,000-gallon threshold, which John suggested should be lowered to 10,000 gallons to better align with average household usage and generate additional revenue of about $60,000.

2. **Vote on Fenno Drive water main project Amendment no.1:**
   Rob explained this is really a vote on the amendment to the existing PFAS project that was being handled by Tata and Howard. This is an extension of the original contract. It is for technical assistance for anything PFAS related. The Board signed the amendment.

3. **Update on PFAS investigation at 165 Newburyport Tpke. – Chase Bank:**

   Chair Cullen said Chase Bank found that one of the test wells had PFAS contamination. We then asked them to test the surrounding soil, and it came back essentially clear. Rob discussed the allocation of $1.5 million in grant money for a PFAS treatment project in Rowley, with plans to apply for the full $3 million needed for temporary treatment. He emphasized the importance of finding the source of contamination before proceeding with a permanent solution and suggested using the term "emergency remediation" instead of "temporary treatment" to better communicate the situation to the state. Rob also

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Board of Water Commissioners
Bernie Cullen, Chairperson
John Manning, Commissioner
Mark Emery, Commissioner

mentioned the need to upgrade the well pump and increase its capacity, as well as the requirement for public notifications when testing and using the treated water.

4. **Discuss meter reading issues:**

   Rob discussed meter reading issues from a 2016 water audit, revealing that 7-10 meters were incorrectly reading as 1.5 inches instead of 2 inches, causing some revenue loss. He identified that the problem stemmed from a flawed work order system between the town's operations and Pennichuck, where meters were not properly verified before installation. Rob also noted that some buildings had received water meters without proper account setup, though this was less widespread than initially feared. He implemented new GPS tracking and direct communication protocols between operators and Pennachuk to prevent future errors.

5. **Vote on withdrawing letter sent to PAC on June 2nd, 2025, RE: Superintendent retro pay:**

   The board discussed withdrawing a request for retroactive pay for Rob Swiniarski, the acting superintendent, due to concerns about legal complications and setting a precedent. They agreed to withdraw the request, acknowledging that while the wording in the original letter needed revision, the facts presented were accurate. John expressed concerns about altering public records, but the board decided to formally withdraw the request while maintaining that the original request was reasonable.

6. **Superintendents' report on current and future operations of the department:**

Rob explained that Well 3 is undergoing redevelopment, which has temporarily reduced water supply, but the project is expected to be completed by tomorrow or Thursday. Rob discussed potential changes to the site, including moving fences and running underground electrical lines, to improve future maintenance. He also mentioned that the Fenno Drive water main directional drill is complete, with bacteria samples being tested. The road repair is the next step, and Rob will assess if any additional funds are needed for this.

Rob provided updates on staffing and operational matters. Kathy Bento has returned to remote work, while Doug Pelletier, who was on light duty due to an injury, has been cleared to return to full duties. The primary treatment operator position remains unfilled, with the job posting extended for another 2-3 weeks. Rob also discussed the completion of a storage tank inspection, noting only minor issues were found. Lastly, he highlighted ongoing efforts to streamline communication costs, identifying unnecessary expenses on cell phones, internet, and cable services.

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The Board scheduled their next meeting for August 19th at 5:30 PM to discuss the budget report, which needs to be completed by July 31st to increase funds. Rob noted that while there are no major concerns, the financials are still being worked on by Carrie, and the team will review the year-end results to identify any issues. The meeting time has been confirmed.

Next meeting:

Adjourn: Commissioner Manning motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Emery seconded**. All in favor at 8:15.**

Minutes approved at the September 16, 2025, meeting.

Budget reports
Change order
Project contract amendment

Minutes respectfully prepared by Kathy Bento

Open Meeting Law,' G.L. 39, S.23B, the approval of these minutes by the Board constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting, the members present and absent, and any actions taken at the meeting. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion of any matter, is included for context only, and no
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