

Town of Montville Water & Sewer Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 7, 2023-- 6:00 PM
Town Council Chambers – Town Hall

1. Water and Sewer Commission

a. Call to Order

Chairman Longton called the regular meeting of the Water and Sewer Commission to order at 6:00 p.m.

b. Pledge of Allegiance

All stood and pledged the flag.

c. Roll Call

Present were Commissioners Kevin Lathrop, Chuck Longton, Town Councilor Alfred Mandler, Frank Miceli, and Brian Quinn. A quorum was present.

Also in attendance was Superintendent Derek Albertson.

d. Alterations to the Agenda -- *None*

e. To consider and act on a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of July 6, 2023

Motion by Commissioner Mandler; seconded by Commissioner Quinn to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of July 6, 2023. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 5-0-0; all in favor. **Motion carried.**

f. Communications pertaining specifically to matters which concern the Commission -- *None*

g. Remarks from the Public Regarding Items on the Agenda with a three-minute limit

Chairman Longton asked three (3) times for remarks from the public. There were none.

h. Report from Operations/Administration Division

Superintendent Albertson submitted an Operations/Administrative Report for July 2023, as follows:

1.0 Compliance/Process

1.1 Water Pollution Control Facility

The Montville Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) met required state and federal standards for effluent discharged to the Thames River. No complaints were received regarding the collection system or the WPCF.

Average daily influent flow to the WPCF was 2.0 mgd with a total treatment volume of 60 mg of wastewater. Removal efficiencies for key contaminants (BOD₅ and TSS) were both over 95%, respectively. Total Nitrogen (TN) loading was discharged in the treated effluent 50% under the state permit limit (with removal efficiencies over 85%).

Approximately 45% of the treated effluent was recycled (sold) to Rand-Whitney Container Board's paperboard facility. RWCB's annual outage occurred from June 5 to June 15 (next scheduled shutdown is August 9) which the plant's influent as well as recycle volumes. Process challenges can exist related to the sudden decrease (then increase) in their effluent received at the plant. In August 2022, RWCB submitted to the CTDEEP an Addendum to a previously submitted *Effluent Permit Renewal Application* requesting an increase in loading to the WPCF. According to a June 2023 CTDEEP meeting, the application (with addendum will be approved in July 2023). The Superintendent met with the CTDEEP, RWCB and their wastewater consultant in June for an update.

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In addition to the influent from RWCB, MTUA and the Town, approximately 0.5 mg of septage was received during the month (approximately 5% increase in volume as compared to last year).

Waste activated sludge (WAS produced during secondary process) was dewatered effectively with the GBT (improved to over 4.5% TS) resulting on a lower number of sludge hauls. Additionally, no sludge hauls occurred for six days due to the RWCB shutdown.

1.2 Water Supply

The Montville Water Supply (WS) met required state and federal standards. No complaints were received. Routine (annual) flushing will not occur this year unless absolutely necessary due to the unaccounted-for-water issue.

As previously reported, an increase in non-revenue water (NRW) was observed after January 11. Several acoustic tests (day/night) did not identify uncontrolled releases. Approximately 24% non-revenue water (NRW) was calculated (much higher than the typical 5 to 8% loss) with a financial shortfall of 10%. The national average for unaccounted water is 16%.

The USEPA issued new health advisories for four types of PFAS in drinking water; the advisories are not enforceable but are expected to pave the way for new regulatory limits. Immediate concerns include the very low contaminant levels proposed in ppt (parts per trillion). On May 31, the CTDPH issued drinking water Action Levels for six Per- and PFAS contaminants.

The *Connecticut Interagency Drought Workgroup* listed the majority of New London County as Abnormally Dry under the *Connecticut Drought Preparedness and Response Plan* for dry conditions. The Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW) is the entity responsible for actively monitoring water conditions and recommending drought declarations and mitigation actions to the Office of the Governor and state agency commissioners, under the authority of the WPC in accordance with the *Connecticut Drought Preparedness and Response Plan*.

2.0 Staff

2.1 Health and Safety

June is National Safety Month. No injuries, grievances or concerns were reported for WPCA staff. June is the official beginning of the NOAA hurricane season. Forecasters are reporting expectations of a typical storm season.

In early May, WHO reported that COVID no longer qualifies as a global emergency. Now COVID testing (i.e., facilities, kits) will transition over to traditional health care and not be supported formally by state or federal programs. This fall's COVID-19 vaccine should target the XBB.1.5 variant not take aim at the original virus, a federal advisory committee recommended on June 15. Of note, a database of COVID samples in Ohio indicated a brand-new version, or "lineage," of the virus. There were massive amounts of this unique strain, all coming from one mystery person. The levels of coronavirus detected in New London County waste water showed a slight uptick. Specifically, a higher average (approximately viral copies per ml) was detected as compared to the nationwide average of SARS-CoV-2 Virus concentration of (approximately 200 copies per ml). On June 14, the Superintendent met with Nick Durham of Biobot Analytical (testing facility) to confirm the results as reported. The findings were shared with the Director of Health (Uncas Health District). Wastewater virus data is an important early warning signal-detecting COVID-19 infections (approximately 7 days prior to outbreak) and before official test reporting. As more people are using rapid at-home tests, whose results are usually not reported to state public health officials; wastewater testing has become a key indicator of the virus's prevalence in a community.

The part time (summer) maintainer began work in June. The new hire cleans and paints primarily. One staff member is out on compensation due to an injury; expected to return to light duty in early July. The lower plant staff led to increased overtime demands.

Three senior level workers will retire in less than 18 months. Water sector leaders are challenged to retain and hire employees to keep full staff; in technical fields the number of employees leaving the workforce is higher than those entering. In response, the Superintendent has conducted outreach with the technical schools for the last four years to foster a program that

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allows students to tour the plant and potentially sit for the initial operator exam. The Superintendent has met formally with operator candidates from Grasso Tech, Montville High School and St. Bernard’s School for work positions which will hopefully lead to formal applications with the Town to fill vacant positions. Work-Based Learning (WBL) is a part of the *Connecticut Technical Education and Career System* (CTECS) Student Workforce that allows students to work for an employer during their trade instructional time. The goal would be to encourage young people to explore a career in the water industry while working toward their CTDEEP certification(s). Several Grasso Tech students have toured the facility in June. The CTDOL, tech students 16 years and older are permitted to work in all trades (including those with some hazards). Jon Grossman, Grasso Tech Dean of Students was met (again) on June 15 to discuss the CTECS Student Workforce Program (internships). Additionally, older employees are encouraged to be part of a “returnship” to integrate professionals back into employment. The COVID pandemic exacerbated the workforce gap. A former operator has been in contact with the Superintendent to consider re-employment.

In January 2022, the Workforce Committees of New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA) and New England Water Works Association (NEWWA) gathered to discuss establishing a regional water workforce planning structure. Because of multiple stakeholder interests in establishing a workforce development effort, two of the largest professional organizations in New England (NEWWA and NEWEA) contacted the six New England states' professional drinking water and clean water associations to form collaborative partnerships.

2.2 Training

Staff continued to receive training to meet CTDEEP and CTDPH requirements for (wastewater /water certification) training credits.

The CTDEEP QA/QC workgroup has completed revising the existing *Reasonable Confidence Protocols* to better reflect updates to applicable EPA SW-846 methods, to improve the consistency of expected QA/QC requirements for wastewater laboratories. QA/QC evaluations by the USEPA/CTDEEP (ERA, contracted laboratory proofing samples) of the WPCF laboratory were satisfactory- compliance analysis by the Lab Director met agreement with spiked samples supplied for pH, SS, TSS, TS, BOD5 and residual chlorine. This annual test is conducted to confirm prescribed methods used within the facility to support permit compliance monitoring. The laboratory QA/QC plan was completely overhauled when the Superintendent began work in October 2018, and consists of strict adherence to the (1) Quality Assurance and Quality Control manual and (2) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) manual as per SM; training manuals; maintenance of QC records; ongoing review of QC procedures; and implementation of QA/QC improvements to provide quality results.

June 8 was *World Ocean Day*; the WPCF contributes directly to the health of the Thames River (which is contiguous with Long Island Sound).

3.0 Equipment

3.1 WPCF/Collection System

All pump stations were inspected and cleaned during the month as well as a large number of manhole inspections were made. CCTV sewer pipe/manhole inspections was conducted in prioritized areas (those areas identified in the 2010 and 2011 URS reporting/CIP Cross-Country Clearing areas). All manholes along the Route 163 paving area were directly inspected. Approximately 2,000 feet of cleaning/CCTV inspection has occurred so far in 2023. Work within the collection system is recorded in the GIS system (inspection attributes) as record for potential regulatory review.

4.0 Projects

A summary of existing projects is provided in an attached project summary table. The table has been updated to reflect completed projects as well the FY 2023/2024 CIP projects. The Superintendent has worked to develop a strategic plan for the WPCA infrastructure including formal (annual) CIP requests as well as a 5-year plan. Most of the FY 2023 CIP projects have been completed.

4.1 WPCF/Collection System/Water Supply

Operation Clean Safety began on June 1st and included a thorough cleaning of all interior spaces at the plant and pump stations with hi-vis paint application to limit slip/trip accidents.

Due to the impending storm season, a review of each pump station was conducted to determine emergency power as well as tree trimming needs. Overhanging limbs cause energy supply problems during high wind events.

4.2 Regulatory Oversight

No regulatory oversight or action is ongoing for the WPCA. The plant is a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit holder. Additionally, two state permits (for nutrient removal and stormwater) exist for the plant. No existing state or federal *Consent Decrees* or *Consent Orders* currently exist. The CTDEEP (Susan Unger, Environmental Analyst) made an inspection of the WPCF on June 29. The *Draft 2024-2028 Nitrogen General Permit* is going to Public Notice. Before making a final decision on this proposed general permit, the CTDEEP Commissioner will consider written comments from interested persons that are received within thirty (30) days of the date of the public notice posting.

The Montville facility has been identified to participate in the *2023 Discharge Monitoring Report – Quality Assurance Study 43* (DMR-QA Study 43), which covers all major and selected minor NPDES permit holders. This is a confirmation testing procedure for onsite laboratories at wastewater treatment plants. Previously (during the last four years), this QA/QC testing has gone well.

In accordance with Title 40 of the CFR, §403.8(f)(2)(viii), the CTDEEP provided notice of Significant Industrial Users (“SIUs”) that were in Significant Non-Compliance (“SNC”) with pretreatment standards and other pretreatment requirements during the preceding federal fiscal year. No contributors to the Montville collection system were cited.

The USEPA and US Army Corps of Engineers plan to update their Waters of the U.S. Rule under the Clean Water Act by September 1 to align with the Supreme Court's recent ruling.

The Superintendent completed an online CTDPH survey for the upcoming 2023 Sanitary Survey. The last survey of the Montville Water Supply was completed remotely (November 2020) due to the COVID pandemic. The sanitary survey is completed pursuant to RCSA Section 1913-B102 and will be completed prior to the end of the year. The significant amount of work conducted within the distribution system (e.g., acoustic studies, flow studies, meter calibrations, physical inspections, GIS mapping, billing software/hardware) will support a positive outcome to the CTDPH investigation.

The USEPA issued revisions to the federal Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) on January 15, 2021. The Revisions (LCRR) strengthen every aspect of the LCR to better protect communities in elementary schools and childcare facilities from the impacts of lead exposure. Over the next three years, the LCRR will require water systems to conduct an inventory of service lines and determine the material of those lines and fittings. The LCRR’s inventory requires all water systems to develop an initial service line inventory by October 2024 or demonstrate the absence of Lead Service Lines. Lead Service Line Replacement Plans must then be created as a result of your inventory. Adequate funding is present to cover the expected costs of compliance. The distribution system is compliant with the LCRR. A June 27 meeting help plot a course forward to continue to work toward future compliance.

The USEPA is initiating a program designed to support public drinking water systems as they select and implement technologies to remove PFAS from drinking water and from drinking water treatment residuals. A major portion of this effort involves partnering with water systems to provide piloting, sampling, analytical, and optimization support.

5.0 Development

The sewer and water connection plans have been proposed for residential and commercial development. A gasoline filling station is proposed for 2040 Route 32. A solar array is proposed for the landfill property. Residential development is proposed for 69 Fitch Hill Road

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and 26 Platoz Drive. Some commercial development has been discussed along Route 32 near Fort Shantock Road. Oxoboxo Lofts development is continuing with construction meetings pending.

6.0 Finances

The WPCA operates within an *Enterprise Fund* (a business-like account with net-zero goal, that is AR should equal to AP, according to GAAP). The FY 2023 WPCA Sewer and Water Budgets began on July 1, 2022. The financial condition of both water and wastewater accounts are considered good. Even with the unaccounted-for-water condition, the fund balance line in the revenue should cover unexpected costs. A complete review of accounts will occur following the close of the FY.

Governments continue to provide drinking water supply/sewer services in most of the U.S. Eighty-four percent of drinking water systems are government-owned, as are 98 percent of wastewater systems (AWWC, 2020). However, heightened cost awareness (due to recent inflation flares) affecting the water sector is a significant factor driving potential privatization. Researchers noted that regulations favorable to privatization correlate with higher prices.

6.1 Accounts Review

Current rates (and ancillary fees) appear to be adequate at this time to cover costs for water and wastewater activities. For the last four years (on average) the revenues for the sewer account has risen almost 7% annually (above the national average) with a strong showing during the pandemic. It should be noted that the Town has a high collection rate (over 90%) which allows for a dependable revenue stream.

With the close of FY 2023 the WPCA finds itself in good financial condition. Depreciation is required to be posted, but it is not an "out of pocket expense" and as such is not considered a direct cost. Affordability of service is vital to our community. Yet, with rapid increases in infrastructure costs and due to aging infrastructure; defining, developing, measuring, and informing the public of the utility's condition is more critical than ever. No rate increase is required for sewer for the coming year. A rate study will be conducted for the water account and applied, as required.

Septage receiving continues to be a significant source of revenue with approximately \$40,000 received during the month (about a 5% increase compared to last year). The receiving volume actually helps process.

A cursory review of the sewer books (FY ending June 30) indicates positives- ledger accounts for energy, sludge removal/disposal and labor costs will be under the approved FY Budget. This represents another good (financial) year in the black- the AR exceeding AP. Significant upticks in revenue include the septic receiving, MTUA billing and the RWCB billing. As indicated, the RWCB facility will likely increase its loading to the WPCF (following their approval of a permit alteration) resulting in a subsequent rise in sewer fees collected as revenue.

6.2 Assets

A formal review of the Construction-in-Progress occurred in June to determine which completed and can be considered fixed assets. Over the last five years, approximately \$5 million in infrastructure investment has occurred.

6.3 Grants/Funding

On May 13, the USEPA announced \$1.9 billion in grant funding to the *State Revolving Funds* (SRF) to accelerate progress on water infrastructure projects. Combined with historic investments through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, this funding will help states, Through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) the U.S. Department of Treasury is providing over \$350 billion in funding to state and local governments nationwide. The \$1 trillion jobs act will provide \$55 billion for drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure. Some money will be invested in the state revolving funds. The *Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds* provide a substantial infusion of resources to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and provide the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery. These funds provide substantial flexibility for each government to meet their local and regional needs-

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including response efforts to continue to decrease the spread of the virus and making necessary investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

Some current wastewater projects are funded by State funds including two bonds and one grant (CTDEEP \$5 million *Grant-in-Aid for Sewage Treatment Facility Infrastructure Improvements and Upgrades at the Montville WPTF- State Grant Agreement 2017-170491*, approved via March 2014 Town of Montville Resolution No. 2014-25). The bonds were for infrastructure improvements within the plant including the new chlorine system, new recycling pumps, and grit removal system. Additionally, the aeration systems for SBR-1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 will be replaced. The Mayor requested an extension for the Grant. A review of the approximately \$4.5 million in grant monies (slated for the WPCF) indicated adequate funding for the proposed projects with approximately \$200,000 margin. It is hopeful that this money will be used to remedy the concrete failing in SBR-4.

Based on a review of the WPCA’s *Eligibility Application* the CTDPH DWS had determined that the Cook Water Tower replacement project was ready to proceed and that DWSRF funding will be available. The Finance Director was notified of the intent to pursue federal funding for the tower project. The potential exists for additional monies (\$500,000 more than the \$1 million allocated) for the project.

The State DECD still recognizes the Town as a Distressed Municipality. The citation often allows for certain funding and/or grants to enhance the community

6.4 Energy

A continued decrease in plant energy demand has been observed associated with the (more controlled) lower DO settings in the process tanks due to the new fine-bubble diffusers as well as the new (more efficient) turbo blowers. Please note that (electrical) energy is the single largest monthly expenditure.

Electrical Energy is supplied to the plant by the Doosan Fuel Cell America, Inc. fuel cell (onsite generation), Eversource (transmission) and *First Point Power* (generation). The power generation was formerly supplied by *Constellation Energy*. Approximately 90% of the electrical energy came from the fuel cell in June. The WPCA is using less public grid kWhs and KVARh this year.

Each month a review of energy usage is conducted for each billing (i.e., plant, pump stations) to determine if there is a sudden rise in demand which often indicates mechanical problems (i.e., pump/motor failures). According to Dan Joyce (Balance Rock Energy) there is an expectation of energy costs in the future.

Connecticut’s Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) announced in February 2021 that it had established a successor residential renewable energy program that will change how solar owners are compensated for the power their systems produce and provide to the local electric grid. The *Non-Residential Solar Renewable Energy Solutions* (NRES) Program is a successor program to the *Low Emission Renewable Energy Credit and Zero Emission Renewable Energy Credit* (LREC/ZREC) and *Virtual Net Metering* (VNM) programs with the objectives to foster the sustained, orderly development of the state’s Class I renewable energy industry and to encourage the participation by customers in underserved and environmental justice communities, among others. The program is statutorily authorized to run for six (6) years and to select up to sixty (60) MW of clean energy annually.

In March 2023, the Montville WPCA and Town signed a 20-year solar service agreement with N. Silver Brook, LLC- a Montville based renewable energy company. The agreement will save the Town of Montville more than \$850,000 and is structured for the Town to receive the full savings amount within one year of the solar facility’s completion. N. Silver Brook and its partners allocated solar energy from a Connecticut solar project in Naugatuck to the WPCA’s electrical accounts. On June 9th, that project was selected as a winning bid in Connecticut’s Non-Residential Renewable Energy Solutions (NRES) program. All of the WPCA’s electrical usage was assigned to the winning bid and will result in lower energy costs.

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Through the inaugural round of the CTDEEP Climate Resilience Fund (DCRF), the CTDEEP is providing critical planning support to local governments seeking to advance climate resilience projects, with the goal of enabling the recipients to in turn seek federal funding for construction and implementation phases. The CTDEEP is utilizing DCRF funds to catalyze Connecticut's resilience project pipeline and ensure our communities are competitive for federal resources, which are at historic levels as a result of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act.

Superintendent Albertson remarked the plant had a good month with July processes improving steadily even with two (2) storm events earlier in the month that did not show an increase in flow. Solids, an average of 5.99%, were very good and thickening was better.

i. Report from Mayor. -- None

Mayor McDaniel was absent from the meeting.

j. Report from Engineers

Superintendent Albertson reported on the emergency situation; the failing utility bridge over Stony Creek near the Public Safety Building and a meeting to be held tomorrow on the same. Truckers has trouble offloading that equated to less trucks. Formal notification was received from the State regarding funds for nitrogen removal; using a brackish system means nitrogen removal must be done well. In 2022, the Plant had the best process removal in the State. As to the 2023 year end, the account for the sewer system will be in the black and the water system account will break even. The accountant will present to the Commission on the same. For septic receiving, \$30,000 was received. As to Planning and Zoning referrals and reporting to the Commission formerly done by former Commissioner Siragusa, Commissioner Mandler will check with the Town Council.

k. Old Business -- None

l. New Business -- None

m. Reports/Referral from Planning & Zoning

Superintendent Albertson remarked on a meeting regarding the 2040 Podurgiel Lane and Route 32 project and changes approved for the same.

II. Water Commission

a. Report from Engineers

Superintendent Albertson reported the water leak may have been found due to the diligence of Operators John Lily and Kevin Loiler and there nonstop attention to the problem. He recapped the discovery efforts since a leak was determined on January 11 and the exhaustive efforts since then to locate and remedy it, specifically three (3) formal acoustics studies. It was deemed the water system was tight and sound. A subterranean vault was found to be uncapped and has a water supply line 1 ½ inches in diameter and is the likely cause for the ongoing leak. As soon as good data is obtained, it will be conveyed to the Commission. Pictures will be taken concerning the unaccounted for/nonbillable water that was discharging into the casing. Discussion involved the 16 % water loss that should be less with the calibrated, tighter system. What is unknown is whether that is the only leak that would not have been found if it was a quiet leak. Superintendent Albertson complimented the plant team for checking hydrants and catch basins near the water supply. The subterranean vault has doors on it and was described as being lateral to the water supply from which a cap on it broke off. Whether there is a safety issue regarding the doors on the vault is unknown and will be checked.

b. Old Business -- None

c. New Business -- None

d. Remarks from the Public

Chairman Longton asked three (3) times for remarks from the public. There were none.

e. Remarks from Commission Members

Commissioner Mandler remarked on the hopeful resolution to the water leak in the water system and thanked Commissioner Quinn for his service and tenure with the Commission. Commissioner Lathrop appreciated Commissioner Quinn for his time on the Commission. Commissioner Quinn remarked his time on the Commission was a great experience having worked for a municipal utility for 25 years. Commissioner Miceli remarked the missing water peaked his interest on serving on the Commission. Chairman Longton welcomed Commissioner Miceli to the Commission and invited him to intern with Superintendent Albertson about the Department processes. He also thanked Commissioner Quinn for his time and expertise to the Commission and wished him good luck and a possible return in the future to the Commission. As well, he appreciated the attendance of the Commission this evening.

f. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Mandler; seconded by Commissioner Quinn to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 5-0-0 , all in favor. **Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted by,

Gloria J. Gathers
Recording Secretary, Town of Montville

**AN AUDIO RECORDING OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE ON THE TOWN OF
MONTVILLE WEBSITE.**