

Town of Montville Water & Sewer Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
January 4, 2024-- 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 Chairman Chuck Longton, Town Councilor Kevin Lathrop, and Commissioner Richard Gladue. Commissioner Frank Miceli was absent. A quorum was present.

Also in attendance were Superintendent Derek Albertson and Mayor Lenny Bunnell.

d. Alterations to the Agenda

Superintendent Albertson noted the inadvertent addition of Item h, Executive Session. Chairman Longton remarked the item would be standard item on the agenda.

e. To consider and act on a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 4, 2023

Motion by Town Councilor Lathrop; seconded by Commissioner Gladue to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 4, 2023. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 3-0-0; 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. Executive Session. -- *None*

i. Report from Operations/Administration Division

Superintendent Albertson submitted an Operations/Administrative Report for December 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 2.8 mgd with a total treatment volume of 80 mg of wastewater. Influent flow was considered high; the increase was due to the significant rain events throughout the month. Removal efficiencies for key contaminants (BOD₅ and TSS) were 98%, respectively. Total Nitrogen (TN) loading was discharged in the treated effluent under the state permit limit (with removal efficiencies over 80%).

No (significant) adverse process issues were encountered during the unseasonable 7-inch rain event on December 10 and 11 and 5-inch rain event on December 18. This past calendar year was the fourth wettest on record resulting in process challenges.

Approximately 55% of the treated effluent was recycled (sold) to Rand-Whitney Container Board's paperboard facility.

Grit removal has steadily improved in the pretreatment process resulting in a better (dewatered) material. Waste sludge has been thickened effectively (5.1 %) for December.

1.2 Water Supply

The Montville Water Supply (WS) met required state and federal standards.

A water audit was conducted in December which showed a 5% non-revenue water (NRW) which is well below the national average (16%).

2.0 Staff

2.1 Personnel

Mayor Bunnell assumed office in November 2023 and a new Town Council WPCA Liaison was selected (Kevin Lathrop). An additional commissioner will be appointed to the WPCA and a new Vice Chairman will be elected.

Several senior level workers will retire in less than 18 months. The Superintendent had formulated a succession plan and met with the HR Director regarding the hire of a new Administrator, Mechanic, Collections Operator, Operator and a Laboratory Operator.

Dennis Kexel began work as the new *Collections Operator I* on October 16. Dennis is an experienced worker that will add a lot to our team! The new employee was introduced to the Town's municipal collection system. The goal is that the collections operator will conduct routine pump station inspections, cleaning of sewer pipe by either flushing or jetting, CCTV inspections of target pipe runs and then enter all data into the existing GIS platform as inspection attributes. This work brings the WPCA into the state CMOM directive. An outside operator (Emily Spring) has accepted the job of *Treatment Operator I* position and will begin in January 2024.

To encourage more interest in water treatment (also part of the Superintendent’s formal succession planning), the Superintendent met with the Grasso Technical School Dean of Students on October 16 to discuss student training at the WPCF. The Superintendent taught an Environmental Science class. The Superintendent taught a class at Norwich Technical High School on October 2 and attended a experiential learning open house. Student (UConn, Grasso Tech and Norwich Tech HS) tours were given. Our interns will make a positive impact on our community by keeping our water clean and our environment safe. From fieldwork to ratepayer interactions, our paid internships offer invaluable experiences for high school students.

The *New England Water Workforce Collaborative (Work for Water - New England)* was established following a meeting between the Workforce Committees of *New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA)* and *New England Water Works Association (NEWWA)* in January 2022. Because workforce challenges are widespread and affect our entire region, NEWEA and NEWWA engaged New England drinking water and clean water associations to join this regional workforce collaborative. The Montville WPCA is among the participating associations contributing to this initiative. As of January 2023, the Collaborative began the development of a Strategic Plan with the mission of addressing the most pressing water workforce challenges for long-term workforce sustainability and reliability.

2.2 Health and Safety

Measures of COVID rates including virus levels in wastewater increased dramatically in New London County in the last month. A November 30 New London Day article detailed the Montville’s WPCF findings for virus data as an important early warning signal- detecting COVID-19 infections (approximately seven days prior to outbreak) and before official test reporting. The CDC and the USEPA have reported correlation between wastewater data and clinical surveillance with wastewater data allowing for localized, timely coverage, and in some situations, valuable lead time notification. State health officers have guided jurisdictional partner decisions regarding allocation of resources, deployment of vaccination clinics, updating clinical guidance, and sending respiratory disease notifications and alerts when trends exceed baseline thresholds. A data collection turns into real-time public health action for multiple respiratory pathogens, highlighting the contribution of wastewater surveillance in monitoring disease circulation and helping guide public health response. While a significant spike in virus concentration was observed, recent testing shows a slight decline in the virus in samples collected in New London County. “Pirola” JN.1, the highly mutated Omicron strain, could send COVID infections skyrocketing to the second loftiest level the U.S. has seen so far.

This year was the warmest ever recorded with June through December being the warmest months ever recorded, respectively. Additionally, 2023 was the fourth wettest year on record. A review of warm and wet conditions (and the health and safety concerns) will be examined.

2.2 Training

Staff continued to receive training to meet CTDEEP and CTDPH requirements for (wastewater /water certification) training credits. NEIPCC training schedules were distributed which included online courses for pumps, math industrial treatment and biological treatment. Additionally, ten

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professional periodicals are routinely distributed to the staff. New staff completed site specific safety training (and engaged in several informal or tailgate training) as well as formal First Aid/CPR/AED, BBP and Confined Space Operations training.

Dennis and Greg both passed their written CDL exams and are training for the practical testing to be completed in January. Dennis received a certificate for the NEWEA Collection System Exam Preparation course. He is scheduled for the exam in January.

The USEPA hosted a free webinar with important updates on the recent hacking entitled *Unitronics Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs) at US Water and Wastewater Systems*. The webinar included speakers from the USEPA, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) will provide mitigation actions and cybersecurity best practices utilities can implement to protect against this threat. The USEPA is probing multiple cyberattacks suspected to be conducted by an Iranian government-linked group against American water facilities. These incidents include a notable breach at a Pennsylvania water authority and another cyberattack at a water utility serving 2 million people in North Texas. The St. Johns River Water Management District in Florida is the latest entity to confirm it was the target of a recent cyberattack. The Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, along with the FBI, NSA, USEPA and the Israel National Cyber Directorate recently released a joint Cybersecurity Advisory in response to the active exploitation of PLCs (programmable logic controllers) in water and wastewater facilities.

The USEPA has retracted its earlier guidance on bolstering cybersecurity measures within the country's water system infrastructure; states will no longer be bound by audit requirements pertaining to the cybersecurity of their public water facilities. The American Water Works Association and National Rural Water Association reported that the rule was not consistent with the process Congress put in place to address cybersecurity concerns for water systems under the Safe Drinking Water Act or the American Water Infrastructure Act and was not issued with proper public engagement required by the Administrative Procedures Act. Additionally, the water associations expressed concerns that the rule would create additional cybersecurity vulnerabilities for utilities, as sanitary surveys required in the rule have public notification requirements. Finally, the rule would have required cybersecurity reviews by state regulatory agencies that lack expertise and resources for cybersecurity oversight, according to the associations.

3.0 Equipment

3.1 WPCF/Collection System

The treatment facility is also known as a water resource recovery facility (WRRF) and classified as a Class IV Treatment Facility. As such, the plant must have a Superintendent with a CTDEEP Operator IV certification/license. The plant is composed of six Sequential Batch Reactors (SBRs) in the ICEAS (Intermittent Cycle Extended Air System) continual flow treatment stance with three steps fill/treat, filled/settle and filled decant. Unlike conventional treatment plants, the facility does not require clarifiers or return systems to make high quality effluent. The system is controlled by sophisticated computer software to allow changes in treatment cycles to develop high quality effluent.

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The WPCA sewer collection system is comprised of 74 miles of sewer pipe and 24 pump stations. The system is separated; that is, municipal stormwater is not directed toward the wastewater system. All pump stations were inspected and cleaned during the month as well as a large number of manhole inspections were made including the 168 manholes present on Route 32. There are 1,650 manholes in total. CCTV sewer pipe/manhole inspections will continue in prioritized areas (those areas identified in the 2010 and 2011 URS reporting/CIP Cross-Country Clearing areas). Condition assessments are ongoing to shape appropriate O & M as well as future CIP programs. All work is recorded via inspection attributes in the GIS system.

When risks overlap the result is “risk convergence”. This phenomenon has affected water infrastructure due to a concern of climate change; frequency and severity of wet weather events (and resulting floods). Gravity sewers follow topography and can promote stormwater collection at the low lying pump stations. Most stations were constructed prior to current extreme weather and followed outdated flood mapping guidance. Even with our “separated system”, the extreme rainfall contributes to SSOs (sanitary sewer overflows) due flow exceeded engineered designs. In the event of a significant problems, a sewer backup could lead to basement flooding causing litigation and insurance claims which typically account for 40% of general liability insurance losses suffered by municipalities. Every effort will be made to “harden” existing pump stations to withstand the problem of increasing heavy rain events.

The Town of Montville Water Supply serves approximately 450 connections and is sourced from the Groton Reservoir (piped through the Gales Ferry section of Ledyard and then beneath the Thames River). The distribution system consists of one storage tank, three booster pumping stations, one pressure reducing pumping station, two metering pits, and approximately 13 miles of mains.

4.0 Projects

4.1 WPCF/Collection System/Water Supply

In FY 2023, the WPCF produced 7.7 mg of thickened waste activated sludge (TWAS) at a total solids percentage (TS) of 4.49%. March, April and May of this year represented the most challenging (waste activated sludge thickening related to process control issues) months as indicated by a huge increase in solids volume. We continue to see improvements in thickening. Methods to get us a much higher solids concentration or a reduction in WAS volume by in-house digestion (aerobic versus anaerobic) are being explored. A draft engineering report about the proposed anaerobic digester is forthcoming. Preliminary discussion is provided as an attachment.

The two distribution boxes were examined prior to a formal engineering study for eventual replacement. The cost of the work is approximately \$3 million. Recent inspections in December have shown an increased degradation of the concrete and rebar. An immediate remedy is to have a coating applied to isolate the concrete/rebar and strengthen the structures for approximately \$400,000.

New overhead lighting was installed in the rear of the plant (adjacent to blower building/chlorine contact building) as part of the FY 2024 CIP roof repair project. The lighting allows for better vision in low light conditions.

The recent rain events lead to poor treatment (due to hydraulic overload/short detention times). An increase in influent has caused poor settling within the SBRs leading to some limited solids in the effluent. Approximately 85% increase in hydraulic loading (total 1.545 mgd average to 4.023 mgd) in one day. An incidental flow was noted above 10 mgd. Hydrographs (wetwell pumping charts) for all 24 pump stations were examined to determine which were most impacted by Inflow/Infiltration (I/I). It was determined that Black Ash, Chesterfield, Avery I and Partridge Hollow PSs showed the most (over) pumping.

Recent (transition) manhole inspections showed a degradation at the Black Ash PS. There are several types of industrial coatings which have been shown to remediate the degradation observed, each with its own set of characteristics and applications. Epoxy coatings offer exceptional adhesion and chemical resistance, making them suitable for various surfaces. Plumbing within the station was observed to be degraded to a point where isolation valving was difficult. Concern for breakage is present with work required.

The WPCA website was inspected for areas of improvement. Attention will be made to use this as a vehicle for public notification.

The current GIS platform is being improved by adding sewer and water “as-built” drawings (tied to geographic locations) in an ongoing project.

The Cook Water Tower Project meeting was held on December 20 to define staff, procedures and initial construction concerns. A project walk-through was conducted to examine the project signage.

Preliminary financial analysis provided a baseline increase of water rates to ensure a healthy reserve fund and support for the amortization of the water tower.

Outreach projects including newspaper articles, classroom instruction and website notifications will be increased in the coming year.

4.2 Regulatory Oversight

Ramping up environmental enforcement activity is a priority for the USEPA under the Biden Administration and it has launched 199 such cases in fiscal 2023, marking a 70% increase from the year prior.

No regulatory oversight or action is ongoing for the WPCA; no existing state or federal Consent Decrees or Consent Orders currently exist. The plant is in compliance with its *National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System* (NPDES) USEPA authorized federal permit (administered by the CTDEEP). Additionally, two state permits (nutrient removal and stormwater management) exist for the plant. When untreated wastewater is released to the environment, the wastewater operator is required to notify the situation to local and state officials. At present, the WPCA Superintendent makes all formal notifications. The CTDEEP has made changes to the spill/release reporting requirements and is updating the electronic sewage bypass reporting system.

Iliana Raffa (CTDEEP Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse, Water Planning and Management Division) provided the 2023 *Nitrogen Operation & Maintenance Costs Survey* (O&M Survey) for the *Nitrogen Credit Exchange Program* (for the 64 Nitrogen Project Facilities) was completed and submitted by the December 15 deadline. The WPCF routinely sells Nitrogen Credits as part of this program. The CTDEEP released its Nitrogen Load (graph) 2019-2023 on December 20 indicating a drop in Long Island Sound nutrient discharges. Also, a current copy of the *General Permit for Nitrogen Discharges* was delivered. The renewal of the General Permit (authorizing discharge of total nitrogen from specified POTWs (effective January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2028)). Some notable changes include that monitoring of Nitrate and Nitrite will now be reported individually with electronic reporting (e-NAR, Electronic Nutrient Analysis Report). e-NAR will substitute current reporting system. The state permit limit for the WPCF did not change (still a loading control of 118 lbs/d).

The stormwater permit sampling protocol was reviewed with the WPCA Engineer on December 20.

The Superintendent met with RWCB/CTDEEP to finalize a state Significant Industrial User (SIU GP) wastewater discharge permit. This is not a renewal of their individual federal (CTDEEP pretreatment) permit for wastewater discharges from their manufacturing plant, but the Approval of Registration (AoR) under the SIU GP which authorizes their discharges of boiler blowdown, water treatment wastewater, air compressor condensate and Co-Gen washing.

Recently, the federal district court in Charleston, South Carolina, issued an Order granting preliminary approval to a proposed *Class Action Settlement* between Plaintiff Charleston Water System and Defendant Kimberly-Clark Corporation addressing their flushable and non-flushable wipe products. A sewage or wastewater conveyance and treatment system whose system was in operation between January 6, 2018, and November 21, 2023, is considered part of the Settlement Class. This action could have implications at all wastewater plants in the country; benefits of the settlement produce modifications (i.e. labelling) in business practice for the wipe manufacturers/distributors or in some cases- direct compensation. It costs approximately \$600 to remove a cubic foot of rags (flushable/non-treatable wipes) from the waste stream.

The USEPA issued revisions to the federal Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) on January 15, 2021. The Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR) strengthen every aspect of the LCR to better protect communities in elementary schools and childcare facilities from the impacts of lead exposure. 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. This has been conducted. Additional information was requested from ratepayers (via an October 11 letter) requesting inspections or as-builts to determine construction details of existing laterals. October 16 is the deadline for the EPA's LCRR. To be compliant, all public water systems have to meet a list of requirements, including the creation of a lead service line (LSL) inventory. Also, nine months away is the implementation of the new lead pipe replacement rule, the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements. *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

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distribution system is in compliance with the LCRR. A meeting for discussion/planning was held on December 6 with Wright-Pierce personnel.

On March 14, 2023, USEPA announced the proposed *National Primary Drinking Water Regulation* (NPDWR) for six PFAS. The USEPA is lowering their threshold for PFAS in drinking water to 4 parts per trillion (ppt) effective July 1, 2025, and working on drinking water standards for six different "forever chemicals."

The Montville WPCF had encountered attempts to enter our system by third parties in 2019 and 2021; however, the SCADA firewall enhancement and software protection software installation will combat this kind of problem. No networking is present between workstations. Each workstation is protected aggressive software. A two-part identification is required for remote access. A technical memorandum was issued to the Town and WPCA on December 6 by the Superintendent.

5.0 Development

The sewer and water connection plans have been proposed for residential and commercial development. Residential development is proposed for several locations along Route 32, including 245, 303, 2241, and 2268 Route 32. A site walk was completed on December 13 for Oxoboxo Lofts (42 Pink Row) to determine water and sewer needs. A new animal facility is proposed along Route 163.

6.0 Finances

The WPCA operates within an Enterprise Fund (a business-like account with net-zero goals, that is AR should equal to AP, according to GAAP). FY 2024 began on July 1, 2023. The financial condition of both water and wastewater accounts is considered good. Per WPCA and TC approval, the WPCA FY 2024 Sewer Budget is \$7.1 million and the Water Budget is \$1.9 million. No rate increase is required for sewer for the coming year even with significant investment into the infrastructure.

Equity is a large issue that covers many facets of the public works industry, but the most impactful way that the water industry can enhance equity in our communities is through the fair, just, and equitable distribution of public services and infrastructure. Residents benefit when services and infrastructure investments are provided in an equitable manner.

The ongoing *Track Bill SB916*- to prohibit foreclosure assignment and other enforcement actions for unpaid sewer assessment and other fees and charges in the case of owner-occupied real property for which the principal of such unpaid assessments fees and charges is less than four thousand dollars. This bill would have a strong impact on the ability for municipalities to collect on unpaid assessments, connection charges, or sewer user fees. This year the professional organizations (e.g. NEWEA, WEF, CTWEA) are trying to get an early start on giving WPCAs an opportunity to look at how this may affect them and have a voice with their local representatives on this matter. CTWEA has contacted (Melissa Biggs) the CTWEA lobbyist concerning this matter. She has helped the organization navigate this issue the last few years.

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6.1 Accounts Review

CLA CPAs- Town Accountants) began a formal review of the WPCA accounts in July and continued into November. The utility net position (i.e. fund balance) revenues/expenditures (i.e. income statement) and cash flow statements will be reviewed. Additional “testing” was conducted. No concerns were raised.

Current rates (and ancillary fees) appear to be adequate at this time to cover costs for wastewater activities. A review of first quarter FY 2024 shows under budget status for the sewer funds. For the last four years (on average) the revenues for the sewer account has risen annually (above the national average) with a strong showing during the pandemic due to RWCB billing. It should be noted that the Town has a high collection rate (over 90%) which allows for a dependable revenue stream. Septic receiving continues to show good revenues with increases over last year at this time. A rate study will be conducted for the water account and applied, as required to keep the utility solvent.

Sludge represents the bulk of the cost (outside of energy) of running WPCFs. These costs can range anywhere from 40-60% of total plant costs, depending on the size of the plant and initial wastewater characteristics. Every effort is made to reduce the volume of disposed solids. As indicated in the last WPCA meeting, a study about digester uses to lower volumes.

A debt service audit was conducted for the four bonds most recently procured for the treatment plant. One bond was paid in July 2018 and another was paid in February 2019; thus, reducing debt service by at least \$150,000-\$200,000 per year. The remaining two bonds will be paid in August 2032 (headworks upgrade) and July 2034 (new emergency power generator), respectively.

6.2 Assets

A formal review of the Construction-in-Progress occurred to improve the understanding of existing assets. Several vehicles were either sold or traded in for purchases. The FY 2023 CIP generator purchase (Avery I PS) will free up an old generator for sale. Per contract, RWCB will be billed annually (\$200,000) for the work completed on the discharge/recycle lines in September, October, November and December 2023.

The challenge facing water systems (sewer/potable water) is aging infrastructure. A rate structure designed to provide sustainable revenue for operations as well as capital programs is critical to assure reliable effective sewerage and safe drinking water and fire protection. Existing URS Reporting (from 2010 and 2011) provided an asset listing (permanent attributes detailing the age and construction of the collection system and/or treatment plant equipment) which were installed into the current WPCA GIS system.

Periodic reviews of the existing asset listing is conducted to determine which have exceeded their life (depreciation to zero) and which new assets have been added to CIP or O & M projects.

6.3 Grants/Funding

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Federal grants announced on December 4 will be used to protect Long Island Sound. A total of \$20 million will be directed by the USEPA to promote climate resiliency and environmental justice and over improvement of the surface water body.

Some current wastewater projects are funded by State funds including 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 were 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 \$450,000 margin- this money will be used to remedy the concrete failing in SBR-4 or the influent d-boxes.

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 scheduled completion date of the storage tank is October 31, 2024. A Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF No. 2024-7125) loan agreement package for \$1,360,332.50 was signed by the Mayor on August 30 for the Cook Hill Tank Replacement Project (CTDPH Agreement #2024-7125). An Interim Funding Obligation (IFO) was completed on October 13. The IFO will convert to a Project Loan Obligation (PLO) at completion of the project. There is some expectation that an additional subsidy will be provided thus lowering the overall cost of the project to the town. Recent discussions with the CTDPH have indicated a slow-down in reimbursements. On December 1, the Superintendent was notified of the CTDPH’s load reimbursement schedule and format paperwork. Additionally, it was suggested the project would likely receive a additional subsidy of approximately \$300,000 for the project. The Town Bond Attorney (Sandra Lawson, Esquire) has been notified to explore options for bridging financial gaps, if encountered. A notice of the initial reimbursement (\$484,352.43) was received on December 20.

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The CTDEEP is leading the development of the state’s *Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Priority Climate Action Plan* with 14 proposed actions the state may implement to: reduce air pollution that is warming our planet; clean up our air; and provide important benefits to communities in the state, such as reduced energy bills, improved public health, and more jobs.

A loan balance of \$620,540.89 (as of FY 2022 end: June 30, 2023) remains on the loan defined in the December 10, 2007 *Reimbursement Agreement by and between The Mohegan Tribal Utility Authority and Town of Montville*. The original principal of the note was \$2,642,792.

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

A review of water supply connections is conducted quarterly with connection fees forwarded to MTUA as stipulated in the *Reimbursement Agreement by and between The Mohegan Tribal Utility Authority, Montville Water Pollution Control Authority, and the Town of Montville*.

6.4 Energy

A decrease in plant energy demand has been observed associated with the (more controlled) lower dissolved oxygen (DO) settings in the process tanks due to the new fine-bubble diffusers as well as the new (more efficient) turbo blowers. The (electrical) energy is the single largest monthly expenditure. Electrical Energy is supplied to the plant by the 460 kW Doosan Fuel Cell America, Inc. fuel cell (onsite generation by Unit #10587), Eversource (transmission) and *First Point Power* (generation). The power generation was formerly supplied by *Constellation Energy*. The WPCA is using less public grid kWhs due to this onsite generation. Fuel cell operation issues were encountered during the month. 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). Steve Pearson, VFS Green Energy Financing Executive conducted the (460 kW) fuel cell technical review in December. Things discussed included unit output and production, reliability, ICAP savings (summer peak day), Eversource distribution charges, new battery backup option, 3rd party electrical supply, and anything you'd like to cover.

During the recent (year-end) fuel cell audit, it showed a savings of \$182,000 per year annual savings (i.e. demand charges, ratchet charges) due to this onsite generation (95.5% availability) with the Pure Cell (400 kW) unit; it is the best performing unit of its kind in Connecticut.

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.

Superintendent Albertson summarized key items of his report—two (2) significant rain days in December that resulted in some rainwater getting into the system causing hydraulic overloading of the plant. More water was getting into the plant than normal and in the next fiscal year a sequential batch reactor process may limit this issue so SBRs will function as they should. Additionally, a permit will expire in November and must be renewed six (6) months in advance (mid-April). Viral content from monitoring for covid is down. A primary engineering report on the anaerobic digester, a way to reduce waste solids at the plant by digesting at the facility, a 50% reduction. The report on the same will be forwarded to the Commission. Thickening to a large degree (5%) will cut costs by reducing truck removal. Two new hires, Emily Spring, an Operator

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3 in Rhode Island where she resides but an Operator 1 in Connecticut, and Dennis Ketzal, the Collections Operator. A succession plan has been written to accommodate upcoming plant vacancy. A lab operator will be leaving next week and in June the senior operator will retire. The Administrator position has been readvertised and the application for the position will close today or tomorrow. The fuel cell is performing at 95% and is the best operational one in the State—85% of the energy comes from it and thus does not require a transfer fee—this idea proposed by former Mayor McDaniel, producing savings of 12% or \$8,000 per month. Lastly, a record was hit for septic receiving in the amount of \$345,000, a revenue that puts little strain on the plant and fills the coffers. The Superintendent responded to questions by Chairman Longton about the upcoming vacancy for the lab operator next week who Superintendent Albertson praised as rock solid for his process control measures that he does in the right way. The Superintendent reported there are prospects in house for the position, one (1) recent hire who is certified for the position and Senior Mechanic Bob Fish who fabricates fittings. Town Councilor Lathrop reminded the Commission of the many discussions about the Administrator position and negotiating it with the union as Superintendent Albertson was doing the job. He remarked on having been blindsided that the position was put back on the table without notice to the Commission. Chairman Longton noted that former Commissioner Siragusa referred to having funds in the budget for the position and the Superintendent being compensated for the same. Superintendent Albertson remarked that he is getting towards the end of his career and having to sit in the Administrator chair prevented him from going on vacation or using comp time and fear of the potential to not obtain a grant. As he is the union president, the Superintendent advised that the Administrator position per the union needs to be filled. Mayor Bunnell remarked that he has been looking at vacancies within the Town, where money is spent that should not be, and the buildup of comp time. He has moved the process along to Human Resources regarding these vacancies. Town Councilor Lathrop remarked the time to discuss the advert for the Administrator position was when notice was given of the three (3) positions. The Mayor noted that water and sewer are key to development to continue to make the Town profitable and apologized for the oversight in notifying the Commission of the Administrator posting. Chairman Longton emphasized the need to make sure all procedures are followed and done properly, with no questions asked given the hard work and a lot pain to fix the things that were wrong that warranted a change in procedures, audits, and controls in place motivated by transparency. Commissioner Gladue emphasized more transparency. Mayor Bunnell assured that the position will be kept open longer, two weeks, and he would mail the job description to the Commission for its review. Town Councilor Lathrop inquired about costs; Superintendent Albertson remarked the biggest cost was electricity used for the blowers and as to snowstorms, as questioned by Town Councilor Lathrop, each station and the plant have generators; as well the electricity from the fuel cell that was obtained for free has a license that is good for 20 years. The Superintendent also explained the capacity of the average manhole and the increase in water level with every crack or joint with too much rain. Per Chairman Longton, the Superintendent explained what an anerobic digester does--it reduces solids by 50% that creates natural gas at a low BTU level. Daily 11 thousand pounds of waste are moved per day; 26 trucks at a cost of \$500 per day, the second largest cost for running the plant at a level of 5% which for the industry is a good standard. There were 78,000 truck hauls last month. Superintendent Albertson has asked the PE Wright-Pierce to review the issue per a plant in Massachusetts regarding reduction of waste and saucers for manholes. Chairman Longton asked that this item be added to next month's meeting agenda.

j. Report from Mayor.

Mayor Bunnell remarked he had made his comments and reported interviews are set up for January 9 and the job descriptions will be emailed to the Commission. He also acknowledged the information shared with him by the Superintendent.

k. Report from Engineers -- None

l. Old Business -- None

m. New Business

1. To Consider and Act on the Election of a WPCA Vice Chairman.

THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION HEREBY RESOLVES to Consider and Act on a motion for the election of WPCA Vice Chairperson.
Motion – Discussion – Roll Call Vote

Motion by Town Councilor Lathrop; seconded by Commissioner Gladue to postpone the election for WPCA Vice Chairman to the February 2024 meeting. Discussion: Chairman Longton remarked this item was postponed last month as there one member was not present. Town Councilor Lathrop remarked he would try to reach out to Commissioner Miceli. Voice vote: 3-0-0, all in favor. **Motion carried.**

2. To Consider and Act on the Repair of a Manhole.

THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE AND SEWER COMMISSION HEREBY RESOLVES To Consider and Act on the Appropriation of \$31,944 for the repair of a transitional manhole association with the Black Ash Pump Station by Savoy & Son (pre-vetted contractor) as indicated in their November 27, 2023, Proposal.
Motion – Discussion – Roll Call Vote

SAR-No. 2024-01 THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION HEREBY RESOLVES To Consider and Act on the Appropriation of \$31,944 for the repair of a transitional manhole association with the Black Ash Pump Station by Savoy & Son (pre-vetted contractor) as indicated in their November 27, 2023, Proposal. Motion by Commissioner Gladue; seconded by Town Councilor Lathrop. Discussion: Superintendent Albertson reported that a pump station is known as a lift station to lift water to a point for gravity flow. There are 72 miles of sewer and 62 miles of gravity in the Town system and the pump has a mechanism to push water uphill to a point so it will flow as gravity flow. The force from the mains becomes a gravity line from pressure that creates sulfuric acid that dissolves the brick and mortar of the manhole. A resin is used to coat the manhole giving it integrity and a guarantee for 20 years. Chairman Longton appreciated the ability to use a pre-vetted vendor. Town Councilor Lathrop inquired if any other contractors reviewed this issue or were used in the past. Superintendent Albertson reported on his satisfaction with the company, Savoy & Son, who supplies its own safety equipment that he described as a crackerjack group. He remarked liability occurs with a contractor who does not

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know what they are doing. Town Councilor Lathrop asked about regular inspections that are being done and yes they are and in relatively good shape per the Superintendent. Chairman Longton asked for this item to be placed on the next meeting agenda concerning the transitional manholes so all are aware. Roll Call vote: *In favor*: Town Councilor Lathrop, Commissioner Gladue, and Chairman Longton. *Opposed*: none. Vote 3-0-0, all in favor. **Motion carried.**

3. To Consider and Act on the Repair of WPCF D-Boxes.

THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION HEREBY RESOLVES To Consider and Act on the appropriation of \$357,578 for the temporary repair (Silver, High Build Liner, 3-year Life) of two WPCF distribution boxes by Savoy & Son (pre-vetted contractor) as indicated in their December 12, 2023, Proposal.

Motion – Discussion – Roll Call Vote

SAR-No. 2024-02 THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION HEREBY RESOLVES To Consider and Act on the appropriation of \$357,578 for the temporary repair (Silver, High Build Liner, 3-year Life) of two WPCF distribution boxes by Savoy & Son (pre-vetted contractor) as indicated in their December 12, 2023, Proposal. **Motion** by Town Councilor Lathrop; seconded by Commissioner Gladue. Discussion: Superintendent Albertson reported there was an engineering report for these boxes that showed the boxes could be combined into one. Three million will be spent in Phases 1 and 2 of the project. The interest is to save money there a short-term remedy is to coat the boxes that will be good for three (3) years whereby money can be saved for rebuilding the boxes—the concrete and rebar on them are in bad shape. If the boxes fail, Rand-Whitney presses that must keep running makes \$100 million a day and pays the Town \$165,000 month for sewer. Its load has a very high level of hydrogen sulfide with lines that are 25 years over the level of use. At the request of Chairman Longton, Superintendent Albertson explained the role of the d-box for the benefit of the Commission. Although Town Councilor Lathrop wants to see other bids, the Superintendent does not know any other vendors that does this type of work but he will check. Chairman Longton proposed changing the motion to put the project out to bid at the next meeting. **Motion** by Town Councilor Lathrop; seconded by Commissioner Gladue to send the motion for repair of the d-boxes out to bid. Discussion: none. Roll Call vote: *In favor*: Town Councilor Lathrop, Commissioner Gladue, and Chairman Longton. *Opposed*: none. Vote 3-0-0, all in favor. **Motion carried.** Roll Call vote on Original motion: *In favor*: none. *Opposed*: Town Councilor Lathrop, Commissioner Gladue, and Chairman Longton. **Motion opposed.**

n. Reports/Referral from Planning & Zoning

Chairman Longton remarked that no business at the affected the WPCA. He did report on the resignation of Director Burdick. Mayor Bunnell reported on interviews and contact with the COG to provide the Town with a part-time planner; like the fill-in for the Building Department. So, it is hoped that former Director Burdick may return to oversee the Department. The Chairman also reported on a special meeting scheduled for January 9 regarding the ins and out of cannabis locations in the Town. Mayor Bunnell has no information but will discuss it with former Director

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Burdick and get back to the Commission on it. Superintendent Albertson reported on conversations concerning development, specifically the 230 Route 32 gas station/car wash requiring a connection of sewer and water. Commissioner Gladue, who formerly sat on the ZBA, gave feedback on residents from a public hearing who lived on Podurgiel Lane and the traffic issue with people trying to turn left at the sight as discussed by Town Councilor Lathrop. It was noted that the street is also a school bus stop.

II. Water Commission

a. Report from Engineers

Superintendent Albertson remarked on information regarding system water breaks and the status of nonrevenue water that is low at an average loss of 5-10%--the national loss level is 16%. General inspections and monitoring of the water system and placement of a second manhole near Pennell's was reported. Chairman Longton inquired about the progress of a water line from D & W Transport; the Superintendent remarked on a call he received last week stating the cost for the same is pretty expensive. D & W Transport has had two (2) fires within the last 14 months. Superintendent Albertson and the Commission discussed accessing recycled water from the pond and a loop for possible connections to resident houses on Maple Avenue since there are grants for this purpose on an as needed basis, per Chairman Longton. The Superintendent responded to Commissioner Gladue regarding the water tank for which construction has slowed down for the winter and payments of all monies expended has been received. The project funds are not being split—a little more than \$484,000 has been spent thus far and the appropriation grant is 50% reimbursement of which most has been received with a possible increase to 65%. Plans next are for a ribbon cutting ceremony and project sign.

b. Old Business -- *None*

c. New Business

1. To Consider and Act on a Proposed Rate Study.

THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION HEREBY RESOLVES To Consider and Act on a motion for the appropriation of \$22,000 for the rate study proposed by Wright-Pierce (WPCA Engineers).

Motion – Discussion – Roll Call Vote

SAR-No. 2024-03 THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION HEREBY RESOLVES To Consider and Act on a motion for the appropriation of \$22,000 for the rate study proposed by Wright-Pierce (WPCA Engineers). **Motion** by Commissioner Gladue; seconded by Town Councilor Lathrop. Discussion: Superintendent Albertson reported the current water rate per quarter is \$45, has not increased since 2019, and is too low. A study will be conducted to raise the water rate that would require a public hearing. The water system is getting older and a study will show how disproportionately low the rate is and how to keep costs low. He also reported on the new, replacement meter from Groton Utilities that was running slow and

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providing WPCA with more water than was actually charged. Commissioner Gladue questioned what we were charged; the charge was 30-35 %, this at a time when GU disputed with the Superintendent on the same. Chairman Longton remarked that rate increase is justified but cannot be determined without a study. Superintendent Albertson reported that a preliminary study was done inhouse by he and the accountant but would cost \$20,000 for 450 customers. A study must be conducted so the Commission can make a decision according to the Chairman. The Superintendent also noted that P & H Construction is the preferred company of Rand-Whitney. Town Councilor Lathrop commented on talk about the cost given the engineering is done as the infrastructure is in place. Chairman Longton suggested that the engineers could back to the Commission to justify its cost. **Motion** by Town Councilor Lathrop; seconded by Commissioner Gladue to modify the existing motion to have Wright-Pierce attend the next Commission meeting on rate viability. Roll Call vote: *In favor*: Town Councilor Lathrop, Commissioner Gladue, and Chairman Longton. *Opposed*: none. Vote 3-0-0, all in favor. **Motion amended.** Roll Call vote on Original motion: *In favor*: none. *Opposed*: Town Councilor Lathrop, Commissioner Gladue, and Chairman Longton. **Motion opposed.**

As to the bridge connection due to the Rand-Whitney line was questioned by Town Councilor Lathrop and commented on by Commissioner Gladue that the PE's were to return to the Commission with feedback. Superintendent Albertson reported that PE Therlin Montgomery was to finalize the documents and once done them out to bid. The Superintendent will check with him on the same. Chairman Longton noted the development will increase the load on the WPCA. Per the Superintendent, there is currently \$6-7 million in reserve with the water at \$600,000 - \$700,000. The Commission then discussed potential ideas for the future.

d. Remarks from the Public

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

e. Remarks from Commission Members

Chairman Longton asked Mayor Bunnell if he would on there being a representative from the WPCA on Southeast Connecticut Water Authority (SCWA) that former Commissioner Siragusa used to fill that role. The Chairman reported on his willingness to fill the position. The Mayor will check on the status and inquired who is the WPCA liaison on Planning & Zoning; it is Chairman Longton. Town Councilor Lathrop and Commissioner Gladue agreed that a lot was accomplished and clarified this evening. Chairman Longton remarked on his respect for the Commission, specially its respect and conduct toward each other. He also welcomed Mayor Bunnell for his attendance.

f. Adjournment

Motion by Town Councilor Lathrop; seconded by Commissioner Gladue to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 p.m. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 3-0-0 , 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.**