

**WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL UTILITIES
AUTHORITY**

PUBLIC MEETING: January 22, 2024

In accordance with the requirements of the New Jersey Statutes regarding “Open Public Meetings”, notice of public meetings for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 (with time and place of meeting) was legally advertised in the Courier Post and The South Jersey Times.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Rich Silvesti at 6:15 p.m. in the Board Room located at 152 Whitman Drive, Turnersville, New Jersey.

ROLL CALL: Present from the Board were Rich Silvesti, Chairman; Dawn Passante, Vice-Chairman; Matt Gorman, Secretary/Treasurer; Harry Adams, Member; Scott Behm, Member; and Robert Finnegan, Alternate Member. Also present were Elizabeth Rogale, Executive Director/CFO; Matt Walker, Assistant Superintendent; Dennis Yoder, Authority Engineer and Charles Fiore, Authority Solicitor. Angela Melroy was absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Harry Adams made a motion to approve the minutes of December 27, 2023. Scott Behm seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION MINUTES:

Harry Adams made a motion to approve the closed session minutes of December 27, 2023. Scott Behm seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the board.

ENGINEER’S REPORT:

Matt Gorman moved **RESOLUTION #2023 – 120 AWARDED CONTRACT FOR THE 2024 GIS MAPPING SERVICE TO REMINGTON AND VERNICK ENGINEERS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$60,000.00 AS PER THEIR PROPOSAL LETTER DATED JANUARY 16, 2024.** Scott Behm seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

Scott Behm moved **RESOLUTION #2023 – 121 APPROVING ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR SERVICE OF WELLS 18 & 21 WITH REMINGTON AND VERNICK ENGINEERS FOR A COST NOT TO EXCEED \$22,700.00 AS PER THE ENGINEER’S PROPOSAL DATED JANUARY 17, 2024.** Harry Adams seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

Matt Gorman moved **RESOLUTION #2023 – 122 APPROVING CHANGE ORDER NO. 4 FOR THE MUA OFFICE COMPLEX FOR ADDING EMERGENCY LIGHTING CIRCUITS WITH OGREN CONSTRUCTION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$9,456.05 INCREASING THE CONTRACT FROM \$6,351,500.00 TO \$6,360,956.05 BASED ON REMINGTON AND VERNICK ENGINEER’S LETTER DATED JANUARY 5, 2024.** Scott Behm seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

Mr. Yoder updated the Board that there is a pre-construction meeting for the Route 42 project later in the week and that the 3-year project should begin soon.

He also discussed that the MUA has received new NJDEP regulations from the state regarding PFAS levels and that some of our wells currently operating may be out of compliance. He suggested the MUA may want to start some preliminary testing on the impacted wells.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT:

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Scott Behm moved **RESOLUTION #2023 – 123 APPROVING THE EMERGENCY REPAIR OF 4" SEWER LATERAL AT 112 GOODWIN PARKWAY IN THE AMOUNT OF \$10,600.00.** Harry Adams seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Matt Gorman moved **RESOLUTION #2023 – 124 ADOPTING THE 2024-2025 BUDGET.** Harry Adams seconded the motion, which was approved by the Board, with the exception of, Scott Behm who voted no.

Matt Gorman moved **RESOLUTION #2023 – 125 ADOPTING THE 2024-2025 MEETING SCHEDULE.** Scott Behm seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

Matt Gorman moved **RESOLUTION #2023 – 126 APPROVING THE METLIFE DENTAL RENEWAL FOR 2024-2025.** Scott Behm seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

Ms. Rogale requested a closed session to discuss personnel matters.

ONGOING BUSINESS:

Mr. Silvesti updated the Board that the sign company interested in the Berlin Crosskeys Road and Tuckahoe Road intersections reached out to the Township Council but has not received any response. Mr. Silvesti stressed that this could be profitable for the MUA and that the Township Council should be working together with the MUA.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Silvesti conveyed to the Board his disappointment with the fact that he was not reappointed to the Board. especially after he spoke with three Council members who reassured him he would be reappointed. The Council members agreed the MUA has been running smoothly and efficiently and they were not going to do anything to change that. It made Mr. Silvesti feel grateful that the Council was really acting for the people and trying to do what was in their best interest. Unfortunately, at the last minute, the Council received word from the County that they needed to appoint another individual to the

position. Mr. Silvesti believes that this contradicts a Council working for the people if they easily buckle under pressure and change their decisions. He questioned who was really running the town, the Council or the County. He explained that with the audit in progress to determine the value of the MUA, he is nervous that Council could easily turn around and sell the MUA because their words cannot be taken at face value anymore.

Mr. Fiori reviewed the statute for a township to take over municipal authority. He explained that under the code 40:14 B-13 there is a specific process for dissolving an MUA. First, the township must adopt an ordinance and go through the advertising process and a public hearing. The municipality must undergo an independent audit to determine that there can be a payment of all the debt of the authority being acquired. They also have to demonstrate that they can assume all of the services that the original entity provided. Finally, they must seek approval from the Local Finance Board of the state of New Jersey.

Mr. Silvesti shared that the Council President told him they are hurting for money. He believes, in their eyes, they are doing this audit because the easiest way to get money is to sell the MUA. He emphasized that this would be dreadful for the ratepayers in the township. He warned it would be a big mistake because the WTMUA is such an effectively run agency with low rates, well-maintained equipment and a knowledgeable staff who put their heart and soul into running this impressive agency.

Mr. Silvesti requested a closed session to discuss personnel matters.

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

Dawn Passante moved **THE PAYROLL FUND RESOLUTION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$209,674.16**. Harry Adams seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the board.

Dawn Passante moved **THE OPERATING FUND RESOLUTION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$244,184.88**. Harry Adams seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the board.

Dawn Passante moved **THE ESCROW FUND RESOLUTION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$4,778.00**. Harry Adams seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the board.

Dawn Passante moved **THE GENERAL RESERVE FUND RESOLUTION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$660.95**. Harry Adams seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the board.

Dawn Passante moved **THE BONDING FUND RESOLUTION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$548,016.00**. Harry Adams seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the board.

RECEIPT AND FILING OF THE MONTHLY BUDGET STATEMENTS: #24-11:

Matt Gorman moved the **RECEIPT AND FILING OF THE MONTHLY BUDGET STATEMENTS #24-11**. Dawn Passante seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the board.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Frank Cianci, resident, thanked Mr. Silvesti for his phenomenal service and leadership on the Board for the past ten years. He complimented him for his accomplishments including, but not limited to, ensuring the MUA had up-to-date equipment, keeping rates low while still providing exemplary service and for the construction of the new and improved MUA Office Complex.

Councilman Jack Yerkes stated he didn't know where the audit was going, but he guaranteed that he talked with every Council member and the WTMUA is not for sale. Mr. Silvesti apologized but stated that he has lost confidence in the Council to believe that. As a taxpayer, Mr. Silvesti questioned why the money is being spent on an audit and stated it isn't in the best interest of the taxpayers of this town.

Mr. Yerkes explained that he has nothing but compliments for Mr. Silvesti's leadership on the Board and to Ms. Rogale and the rest of the Board members for the superior service they provide. He extended his personal guarantee that the MUA would not be sold to any other company because the rates would triple. Mr. Silvesti expressed concern since that was only Mr. Yerkes' personal guarantee and questioned the validity of the statement.

Mr. Silvesti questioned why Mr. Yerkes and Donald Brown would support fire suppression systems being installed in the development across from Zimmerman's Farm when he knew it would be a financial impossibility. The residents bought those houses at a discounted rate after being informed that no such systems would be installed there until the Zimmerman land was sold and repurposed. Mr. Yerkes stated that several residents have brought up the issue and he believes it to be an issue of safety. Mr. Silvesti stated that it is not an issue of safety because the fire department has implemented a plan to ensure adequate water is available in case of an emergency. Mr. Yerkes stated that a plan is already in place to remedy the issue, but that he can't explain in detail because it is not in writing yet. Mr. Silvesti noted that the MUA should be involved in any preliminary planning that impacts their utility services.

Mr. Yerkes stated once again his purpose at the meeting was to guarantee that the MUA would not be sold to any outside entity. Mr. Silvesti explained his main cause of worry is for the employees of the MUA and the ratepayers in Washington Township.

Mr. Yerkes updated the Board that the Council is moving talks with the sign company to the Zoning and Planning Board.

Ms. Rogale presented Mr. Silvesti with a plaque and thanked him for his years of service on the Board. Mr. Silvesti thanked the Board and expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the WTMUA.

CLOSED SESSION:

Matt Gorman moved **RESOLUTION #2023 – 127 TO ENTER INTO A CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS CONTRACT AND PERSONNEL MATTERS.** Scott Behm seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

Matt Gorman moved **RESOLUTION #2023 – 128 TO OBSERVE THE JUNETEENTH HOLIDAY ON JUNE 19, 2024.** Scott Behm seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

Matt Gorman moved **RESOLUTION #2023 – 129 TO APPROVE A 2.5 PERCENT SALARY INCREASE FOR THE NON-UNION AND SUPERVISORY EMPLOYEES EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 3, 2024 AND TO ADOPT THE 2024 SALARY RANGES FOR NON-UNION EMPLOYEES.** Dawn Passante seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

Matt Gorman moved **RESOLUTION #2023 – 130 TO EXTEND THE CONTRACTS FOR ELIZABETH ROGALE AND JODI DEERY FOR FIVE YEARS FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2024 TO JANUARY 31, 2029.** Harry Adams seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

ADJOURNMENT:

Since there was no further business to come before the Authority at this time, Scott Behm made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Matt Gorman and then unanimously approved by the Board.

Respectfully Submitted

Matt Gorman
Secretary/Treasurer

Recorded and prepared by Jennifer Rotella