

**LOWER SAUCON AUTHORITY
MINUTES OF MEETING
FEBRUARY 15, 2022**

1. Call to Order

Mr. Gress called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

2. Roll Call

Present were Mr. Gress, Chairman; Mr. Anderson, Vice Chairman; Mr. Corcoran, Treasurer; Mr. Werner, Secretary; Mr. Smith, Member; Mr. Davis, Member; Mr. Keich, Member; Mr. Carocci, Council Liaison; Mr. Ross, Administrator; Ms. Fetzer, Assistant Administrator; Mr. Reccek, Operations Supervisor; Mrs. Kerchner, Secretary; Mr. Backenstoe, Attorney; Mr. Youst, Engineer

3. Citizen Agenda Items

None.

4. Minutes

Motion by Mr. Anderson, Second by Mr. Corcoran to approve the minutes dated January 18, 2022 as presented.

Roll Call 7-0 Motion Approved.

5. Financial Report

Mr. Corcoran said we are one month in the new year. He noted there was not a great deal of revenue for the month of January. He said the revenue will increase the month of February and that goes along with the billing cycle.

6. Agenda

A. Water Rate/Capital Charge Increase

Mr. Ross said in 2020 the City of Bethlehem put out a request to raise the water rates in September of 2020, however that was put on hold due to the COVID pandemic. The rate increase by the City of Bethlehem was approved and put into effect mid-to-late 2021. The new rates were published as required however the City of Bethlehem never contacted the Authority with any form of communications to let us know of the increase. After some

review of the water bills, we noticed that the City of Bethlehem increased the water rate. Mr. Ross said the water rate increased from \$3.969/MG to \$4.498/MG which is about a 13.5% increase.

Mr. Ross said he is proposing to raise our water rates. Mr. Ross said he had initially proposed to increase the rate effective January 1, 2022, which would be reflected on the May bill for our customers. After some discussion with the office staff, it was determined it would be better to wait and have the rate effective April 1, 2022. The increase would then be reflected on the August bill for our customers. The determination of April 1st was made to allow any customer on a fixed income or anyone who is budgeting for their water bill to have advanced notice of the rate increase before they use the water.

Mr. Ross said he also included in the board packet a rate history for the Authority. He went over a brief overview of the rate increases the Authority has made in the past.

There was further discussion about when to implement the rate increase and the Board Members agreed upon raising the water rate effective April 1, 2022.

Next, the Board Members discussed what to include in the letter to our customers and there were some suggestions for minor adjustments to Mr. Ross's proposed letter. Mr. Ross said he will update the letter in the next few days and email a copy of it to the Board Members for their review. Mr. Ross said he will send out the notice to our customers by the end of March.

Mr. Carocci suggested including in the rate letter that one of the reasons there is an increase in the water rate is due to the increase from our supplier which is the City of Bethlehem. He noted that he liked what Mr. Ross said in the summary in the letter.

Mr. Smith noted that we are still going to get questions from our customers, but we will explain in the letter that we looked at our operating costs and did all we could, and we still need to pass along an increase.

The Board Members made the note that some Authority customers may not know that the Authority purchases the water from the City of Bethlehem, and we may want to explain this in the letter, so they understand how their water is supplied.

The Board Members then made a motion to increase the water rate.

Motion by Mr. Corcoran, Second by Mr. Davis to raise the water rates effective April 1, 2022, to \$7.49 per 1,000 gallons as noted in resolution 2022-1 which will be reflected on the August bill.

Roll Call 7-0 Motion Approved.

Mr. Ross said he would like to propose to the Board Members to rescind the water capital rate increase from \$6.00 a quarter to \$9.00 a quarter as was approved last month. Mr. Ross said he does not want to increase the capital charge and the rate at the same time. He would like to have the capital charge remain at \$6.00 a quarter. He said he would like to hold off on the capital charge increase until the beginning of next year. The Board Members agreed to hold off on the capital charge increase and revisit the discussion of the increase next year.

Motion by Mr. Gress, Second by Mr. Smith to rescind the water capital charge increase and to keep the capital charge at \$6.00 a quarter pending further discussion.

Roll Call 7-0 Motion Approved.

B. Creekside Update

Attorney Backenstoe updated the Board Members on the Creekside project. He said Mr. Youst submitted a very well-done conditional use package to Lower Saucon Township. In addition, he submitted a package for the township zoning. Attorney Backenstoe said we will be presenting to Lower Saucon Township Council at their meeting tomorrow February 16th. This meeting will be a general overview of the project. The meeting with the Township Planning Commission will be on February 24th. The next presentation will be with the Township Zoning Hearing Board on February 28th. The last meeting will be the Township Council meeting on March 16th, where we hope to get a final approval for the project. Then we must wait 30 days to see if there are any appeals.

Mr. Corcoran asked for a review of the presentations that are required for the township. Attorney Backenstoe then went over a brief review of the variances needed for the pump station.

Mr. Ross said by our next board meeting we will have completed all of the meetings with Lower Saucon Township.

Mr. Davis left the meeting at 7:20 P.M.

7. Citizen Non-Agenda Items

None.

8. Reports

A. Attorney

Attorney Backenstoe said he completed his update for the Creekside project earlier during the Creekside update. He noted that he continues to stay in communication with Mr. Ross weekly to assist in anything new that arises.

B. Engineer

Mr. Youst said Attorney Backenstoe has covered the activities ahead of us regarding the Creekside Pump Station.

He said he had gotten some additional contact from PennDOT regarding the Meadows Road bridge. He said he must register on PennDOT's online system tomorrow to get approved as an engineering entity to work on behalf of the Authority. This is so he can communicate with their consultants about the Authority utilities that are impacted by the bridge. He said the 12-inch water main will be impacted and he is trying to have it that our main will not be affected by the bridge work.

Also, Mr. Youst said he said he is working on the Chapter 94 sewer report.

Mr. Youst said he has a fair amount of the data for the water report that he submits the end of April to the City of Bethlehem. He is waiting for the City of Bethlehem to provide us with the remaining figures to complete the report.

Mr. Youst said he will begin working on the permitting for the Creekside project once we have completed the meetings with the township and get a formal approval.

Mr. Youst said he is working on the paperwork for the bidding process for the Applebutter Road tank maintenance work. He noted that we do have the DEP permit to complete the work.

C. Administrator

Mr. Ross said we are starting to see more payments with Invoice Cloud this month as that goes along with our billing cycle.

Also, Mr. Ross said he submitted the Chapter 110 water report. He is working on two other water reports that are due by the end of March.

Mr. Ross said we have had several water main breaks recently. He said Mr. Reccek and his crew are working on leak detecting the system and pinpointing where the leaks may be. There is a leak on Black River Road. Also, Mr. Reccek said there is a leak in Saucon Terrace. In addition, the crew found a leak in Steel City on a service line last month. There is a leak somewhere on Applebutter Road as well. Mr. Reccek said he and the crew will

continue to use the leak detection equipment to monitor the system and will continue to do so to pinpoint the exact location of the leaks.

Mr. Ross said he does not have the fourth quarter water usage handout because we still must calculate the water loss due to the water main breaks.

D. Chairman

Mr. Gress had nothing to report.

E. Members

No members had anything to report.

9. Adjournment

Upon motion by Mr. Corcoran, Second by Mr. Anderson the February 15, 2022 Board Meeting adjourned at 7:35 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Kerchner
Recording Secretary

