

**Representative Policy Board  
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District  
March 18, 2021  
Meeting Transcription**

Mario:

We are now being recorded. This is the regular meeting of the Representative Policy Board of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District. It is Thursday, March 18th at 6:30 PM, 2021. Welcome all. Our first item of business is a safety moment about our environment and protecting against pollution, contamination and climate change. So please read through that, think before you buy and try and make a difference. If there's no questions, the next item is the approval of minutes of February 18th of 2021. So the motion?

Tom:

So moved.

Jay:

I'll second it, Mario.

Jennifer:

Did we lose Mario?

Tim:

Looks like it.

Jennifer:

Okay. We'll give him a minute to come back.

Mario:

Is the meeting over?

Mark:

Oh yeah.

Tim:

Yeah we just adjourned.

Mario:

Okay. Good job all.

Tim:

You're fired.

Mario:

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I got to get my IT people working better here. Were the minutes approved?

Tim:

Yes.

Jay:

Yeah. I seconded.

Mario:

Thank you.

Mario:

There was still a vote though, was there?

Tim:

[crosstalk 00:02:00] the vote has been made, Mario.

Mario:

Okay. All in favor of the minutes?

All:

Aye.

Tim:

Perfect.

Mario:

Opposed? Abstaining? Okay. The ayes have it. Thank you. Communications. We have the budget review meetings coming up in April. There's the 19th at 5:30, which is land use and consumer affairs joint meeting. And then finance has its special meeting on April 20th at 5:00. So please attend one and/or both of the budget meetings. Anything else, Jennifer that came in?

Jennifer:

No. That's all we got for communications.

Mario:

Okay, very good. Thank you. Items for consideration and action. We had the public hearing on the West River Water Treatment Plant Project improvements and for the project itself, Mr. Levine, who did an awesome job as the hearing officer.

Mark:

Okay. So resolved that the proposed findings of fact. Conclusions of law and final decision of the Representative Policies Board with respect to the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority.

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Its application or project to construct improvements at the West River Water Treatment Plant located in Woodbridge, Connecticut, which copy is attached here to be in here by approved in the form of submitting to the meeting.

Mario:

Is there a second to the [inaudible 00:03:42]

Tim:

Second.

Mario:

Okay. We have a second. Thank you. Any further discussion? Seeing none. hearing none. All those in favor.

All:

Aye.

Mario:

Okay. Anyone opposed? Anyone abstaining? Okay. Thank you very much, Mark. Project's been approved. And now we have the resolution for the bonding. Tim, are you on?

Tim:

I am on and ready.

Mario:

If you wouldn't mind.

Tim:

I don't mind. Because we get to listen to me and not Mark. I'm only kidding. Okay. This is the proposed resolution approving the issuance of bonds. Whereas the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority proposes to issue bonds, which may be issued as project loan obligations delivered to the State of Connecticut. The bonds in accordance with Special Act 77-98 as amended of the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut and the Water System Revenue Bond Resolution General Bond Resolution adopted by the authority and approved by the Representative Policy Board of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District on July 31, 1980 as amended and supplemented the general bond resolution.

Tim:

And whereas the act authorizes the authority to issue its bonds from time to time, but subject to the approval of the RPB. Now therefore be it resolved that. Number one, the RPB here by approves the issuance of the authorities bonds and an aggregate principle amount not to exceed \$17,500,000. Number two, the bonds may be issued us obligations in one or more series pursuant to the General Bond Resolution and a supplemental resolution to be adopted by the authority for each series of bonds.

Tim:

Each of which shall specify the amount of the bonds, the purposes for which the bonds are to be issued, the date or dates maturity sinking on installments if any, interest rates, series denominations, form redemptions, prices, security provisions, and other of the bonds as the authority shelter determined in accordance with the limits established by the General Bond Resolution. And hereby, the purposes of the bond shall be, one, to finance or refinance the cost of certain capital improvements to the water system of the authority, including improvements to the West River Water Treatment Plant consisting of A, the construction of three new dissolved air flotation, DAF basins within a new DAF building to the South of the existing filter building.

Tim:

B, the replacement of the hyper chloride system with an onsite hydrochloric generation system with a brine or salt silo, day tank, metering pumps and two on-sites sodium hydrochloride generators. And C, electrical service upgrades including new utility transfer switch with walk and enclosure and new emergency standby generator. Two, to provide funds for deposit to the capital contingency fund and the debt reserve fund as necessary pursuant to the general bond resolution and as permitted by the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 as amended. And three, to pay costs of issuance for the project. Four, the bonds may be sold by negotiation as cereal or term bonds, the state of maturities and may be sold in private or direct placement to a bank or the State of Connecticut. Here ends the motion.

Mario:

There're a second?

Jay:

Second.

Jay:

I also second it Mr. Chairman. The general bond resolution, how do you second it?

Mario:

I'm very good. Thank you. Any discussion on the bond resolution?

Mark:

I have a question with all this money coming out for infrastructure and stuff like that, I know I got an email from Beth telling me they've looked into it through Rosa DeLauro's office. But what happens if we pursue this and we get this money? I mean, there's a lot of grant money. There's got to be a lot of money out there for projects like this. And they say water projects is going to be right behind roads and bridges. I just don't know what happens. Are we applying for this money? Are we applying for this money for other projects? And B, my question is, are we making sure that we're going to get looking into the project to be able to get salvage of items that they're replacing? So can anyone answer those questions?

Rochelle:

First, let me address. So we're not going to issue bonds today. And also this resolution, the reason that we're doing this is we do anticipate that this project will be a drinking water state revolving phone

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project loaning grant. So that is through federal and state funds. We need the resolution to be able to meet our tax regulation requirements as far as the start of the project, but we're not going to issue bonds at this point. So there'll still be an opportunity to see if there's other more advantageous funds that are available.

Mark:

Are we in pursuit of these funds?

Rochelle:

So-

Mark:

That's my question. Are you-

Rochelle:

We are watching closely what is in that infrastructure bill and how it's going to pertain to our water authority. We actually have a gentleman that's actually looking out for us for just overall opportunities especially in the federal space. So, we're definitely looking at stuff we can take advantage of grant funds or a low costs financing that's available.

Mark:

Well, I think that we should contact our, especially Rosa because it's her district, in her two States U.S. centers and tell her how bad we need the money to keep our water system going. I was on the news where one water company was upset that water companies weren't in this. And those I think were from profit water company. So, I mean, maybe we have a little better advantage here. But I just want to make sure that we are pursuing this because there's a lot of money coming out of there.

Rochelle:

Even, Larry shared recently a series of letters that were sent on our behalf in conjunction with a number of other water companies too. The Connecticut delegation and other folks in DC emphasizing the needs of the water companies in Connecticut. And I think the nation, but I vaguely remember reading through a bunch of those letters recently. Is that I think is exactly Mark what you're asking about. I think-

Mark:

Yeah. I just want to make sure. It's like Blumenthal, he writes a letter and then goes off. I just want to make sure that we are pursuing it and not just writing letters. That there's somebody actively pursuing this. Because you missed the boat. It's very hard. You got to be in the right channel.

Larry:

Mark.

Beth:

Mark. I understand... Go ahead, Larry.

Larry:

Well, I'm just going to emphasize the comment that Rochelle made about. We have one gentleman that we have contacted who that's what he does for a living. Is he find grants for city towns. And we have asked him to work on our behalf. We have monthly check-ins with him.

Mark:

Oh good.

Larry:

To see if he's done something. And we started working with him, I think December or January. And he's not found anything yet, but he is continuing to work at it. We've asked him to pursue Army Corps of Engineering Funding for the Whitney Dam Project. He's not found anything yet. But I assure you, we are sensitive to the need to have federal funding. Know that there's going to be a lot of money out there and certainly appreciate your commenting on this because it is something that we agree with you that is important to pursue.

Mark:

Yeah. I'm just giving a suggestion. What do I know? But I would stay on Rosa DeLauro's office on this and tell her how important it is. Because she's got the funding in her hand for the country.

Larry:

Yeah, the letter that Jamie mentioned, we not only copied Rosa DeLauro, but a personal note went to her transmitting the letter telling her how important it was that we get funding through grant.

Mark:

Okay, cool. Thank you guys. It is very important that we pursue this.

Larry:

And Lori Vitagliano followed up with her staff person in the Connecticut office to contact. But we can look and see if there's anything more that we can do.

Mark:

Hey, that's my point. Okay. I mean, Beth got back to me on that. And I just know that sometimes you try and you're just not in the right channel.

Larry:

Right.

Mario:

All right.

Tim:

May I raise a question?

Mario:

Yes, Tim.

Tim:

This has to do with the number of station on the funds. Are we thinking about a proposed infrastructure bill because it wasn't aware of one having passed Congress or the Senate. Or are we talking about this rescue package and some component there in? What money are we really talking about here?

Mario:

There's talk of a proposed infrastructure bill in Congress.

Tim:

See, that's what I thought. So it's proposed, there's really nothing approved. So obviously we need to have lobbyists and stuff like that, but getting our ear or whoever we're using, but there really is no money yet. I guess that was my point or my question.

Mario:

Well, there do tend to be from time to time some targeted funds that may be left over from prior bills that weren't used and therefore they become available.

Tim:

Right. Oh, I'm not suggesting our ears not be open and eyes. I just wanted to know what pot of money we were talking about. Proposed pot or something that's already approved. Thank you.

Mario:

Any further questions? Okay. All those in favor of the bonding resolution say aye.

All:

Aye.

Mario:

Opposed? Abstaining? Okay. Thank you very much. Rochelle. Was that okay? Are we covered?

Rochelle:

Yes thank you.

Mario:

All right. I forgot to do that in one of the meetings and I heard about it, Rochelle afterwards, so. Finance committee, Mr. Slocum.

Mr. Slocum:

[inaudible 00:14:59] The report of the Finance Committee that we met a week or so ago. So let me just grab my notes and I'll get you the exact date. It was a very interesting meeting. We met on March 8th.

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We met with the primary purpose of being introduced to the new or the existing team from a new company. But it's formerly BlumShapiro, it's CliftonLarsonAllen, CLA they call themselves. And Mr. Nasic and Mr. Smith just sort of introduced themselves to the Finance Committee regarding the upcoming audit. The engagement letter, the acquisition, they talked about that and then described the scope of their engagement.

Mr. Slocum:

It was a relatively short meeting. We've had these before and they'll be underway and there will be a new person, which is a best practices sort of approach. The last person I've forgotten her name at this point but she sort of left the team for another area of emphasis. And the management will be working with a new person on the audit, but the same firm. And after that we pretty much had a review of the quarterly reports on the approved projects and that was about it. And our next meeting is March 18th, 2021.

Mario:

Questions for Tim. Okay. Thank you very much. This evening, pinch hitting for Peter Vickowski is Bob Harvey on the land use committee.

Bob:

Thank you, Mario. We had our meeting on a Wednesday, the 10th of March just last week. And we started with Mr. Brown and Paxton from the Eli Whitney Museum who gave us an overview of some of the things they do there. And the Water Authority has a very unique relationship with them. And I guess it's a very good relationship on both parties. But they went through some of the historical background, some of the public outreach they do, some of the water labs when they're doing some reaching out to some of the schools systems.

Bob:

And it was a very good thing. And I guess we're looking to possibly do one of our meetings to be held at the museum. We also had some reports from John Triana gave us some percentages of where we stand on water and maybe I'll leave that for Larry to update us later, because data is probably a little more current than ours from last week. And that's basically what we have right now.

Mario:

Questions for the Land Use Committee. Okay. Thank you very much, Bob.

Bob:

You're welcome.

Mario:

And hopefully Steve is here with two reports. Customer-

Stephen:

[inaudible 00:18:13] Good evening. That's correct. Consumer affairs has met twice since our last meeting. And in our February 22nd meeting, Ellen Durnin who is Dean of the Business School at Southern Connecticut attended our meeting to talk about their Public Utility Program. That program is a



collaborative effort with Gateway and a partnership with regional utilities, including RWA. At Southern it's part of a four year degree program as a specialty. It's also offered at Gateway as an Associates Degree. And that program was developed along with the private sector.

Stephen:

And they continue to have a Employer Advisory Board. And that's a great conduit for communication to provide mentoring, internships, job opportunities, technical advice and networking opportunities. Ellen discussed how the program developed what some details of the current program, what their future plans are and the mission. This spring they expect to break ground on the first net zero emissions building for Business School. And that's part of their mission on sustainability and change for good within the community. The Public Utility Management Program is now permanently licensed by the Board of Regents.

Stephen:

It's a successful program. They have students interested and enrolled. Much to the credit of Larry, other people at the RWA who were involved in generating that program. So it's going to provide some of the leadership that's needed in the future. It was a really nice to have her there. It was a good meeting. Jeff reported on two issues at that meeting. One of which had already gotten resolved. There's an issue still pending about a rental property in West Haven. The owner lives in Milford. And currently customer services just generating the information to respond. And there's an expectation that that will be as well.

Stephen:

At our March 15th meeting Monday Dan Doyle attended who is the, if you don't know, the RWA manager of Corporate Communications. And he came to talk about RWAs Community Liaison Program. That program started last fall. Meant to build relationships, establish a regular communication with the communities and improve collaboration. His team is Kate Reynor and Lori Vitagliano. Everyone got the list before in which towns each of those people covers. And I asked Jennifer if she would send it out again, because if you haven't connected with the person responsible for your town please do a so.

Stephen:

They make an effort to make sure that all the RPB reps are involved in the loop when they communicate. So you know what's going back and forth. But it's a really important program in that there's a direct communication to the towns on work projects, on any emergencies, in a community that's ran around the meetings in the summer, again. They try to keep them short. But they do want to have all the town officials and police and fire, et cetera, including contract so that there's no issue in terms of any information that they need. And this effort is also part of RWAs strategic plan. And you've already mentioned our next meeting will be to review the budgets. And that is on April 19th. That's our report.

Mario:

Okay. Any questions for consumer affairs?

Brian:

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Excuse me, on this Contact with this person, I mean, is this just primarily for kind of just because we don't have customers pretty much of RWA in Bethany. And so no one's really reached out to me to have any contact on these-

Stephen:

Yeah, just find out-

Brian:

I'm not sure who the rep is for us.

Stephen:

Yeah. You'll get that list. Or you could give me a call. I have the list also, and let you know who that person is. You should just call them and see if they've contacted any particular officials. You may be able to help in that regard too. It's a lot for each of them to cover because they each have about, I don't know, seven towns or so. Sorry, keep communication with the number of people in those towns is an effort. But it's a very good proactive program because it solves a lot of problems ahead of time, I think. So that there's no issues with communication.

Mario:

Knowing who you need to communicate with when there's no crisis makes it a whole lot easier when there is a crisis somewhere.

Stephen:

Yeah. Absolutely.

Jamie:

Brian, I think when they set this program up because Killingworth is in the same boat. They said that we wouldn't be assigned to anybody at that time because they were really dealing with customer issues.

Brian:

That's what I thought too. Exactly.

Jamie:

They said that whenever they set up, was it last year earlier, but that as it developed further, they would engage us. So maybe they've got a lot on their plate, I think. One point I wanted to make I thought the presentation from Southern was excellent and the work that Larry and the team did in creating the educational program is tremendous. A couple of statistics really jumped out at me and I can't read my own writing, Larry. Even with my glasses, I can't read it. But I think if I heard you correctly was 48% of the current workforce in water utilities can retire in the next 10 years. Is that right?

Larry:

Yeah. I think it's something like that.

Jamie:

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Nationally. And-

Larry:

I think, 40% but somewhere in that neighborhood-

Jamie:

Was it 560,000 jobs nationally in the next 10 years? Is that right?

Larry:

Yes. There's 500,000 utility workers across United States. And 40% of them will be eligible to retire in the next 10 years.

Jamie:

Yeah. I thought those were amazing statistics. I just thought that everybody might enjoy hearing that. Thank you.

Larry:

Thank you.

Mario:

Yeah. Thanks Jamie. Also this is the first program in the country.

Larry:

Yeah. Really exciting too.

Mario:

Excellent. Are there questions for Steve? Okay. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Greg Malloy, if you wouldn't mind updating on the Nominating Committee.

Greg:

I wasn't planning on speaking, but we had a meeting I believe it was March 11th and we decided to interview the candidates one more time. And so and that's next week and you'll be getting the person that we recommend very shortly to the RPB.

Mario:

Okay. Thank you very much. It's been a long road, I know. So I appreciate everything that the committee has been doing.

Greg:

Yeah, no. And it was like two months since our last interview with the candidate. So we decided to just give them one more turn at it.

Mario:

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Okay. Thank you. Any questions for Greg? Okay. Thank you very much. Jeff, I don't know if you have anything from the OCA.

Jeff:

Nothing tonight from the OCA. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mario:

Okay. The executive committee met on March 2nd. We received an update in executive session on non-core revenue and game plan for moving that forward. Can't talk about it here in open session, but we're making great strides and I'm sure we'll get to a point where you'll start hearing some information as things move forward. We appreciate that David and Larry. And we also got to meet Dennis Donovan at that meeting who is actually spearheading part of that program. So that was very beneficial.

Mario:

We discussed the RPB self-assessment and realized that we should wait until after the pandemic is over before we try to reassess ourselves and figure out where we're going and the same we discussed when to get together in person again. And we figured the summer would be the earliest. We don't know exactly when or whether to have the committees meet. Probably land use will be the first one who start to do meetings out in the public out at a recreation facility. So it was a very brief meeting after that. If there's any questions. Okay. Thank you very much. I'll turn it over to David and Larry for the authority and management report.

David:

All right. Mario and members thank you. I hope everybody's having a good evening. We met as the authority this afternoon, our monthly meeting. And we met as two of our committees and they are both headed by Kevin Curseaden. So I'm going to ask if he would give a report.

Kevin:

Thanks, David. Good evening, Mr. Chairman, members of the Representative Policy Board and management and guests. We did we first met as the non-core committee. And most of the session was spent in executive session talking about some of the opportunities and challenges that chairman Rick Cozy just discussed with potential acquisitions of two businesses and also the pipe safe product road map, the progress for that and the next steps to potentially expanding that.

Kevin:

Unfortunately, as it's an executive session and these are ongoing, I was trying to establish what would be of value to explain to you tonight what we did. And I think the important thing is that we have Dennis Donovan on board to continue the work that's been done in the past by Beth and Larry and Rochelle and other members, Ted. And to continue on with that there is a lot of work being done, there's a lot of effort, and here's a lot of time spent on it. So you should be seeing some applications or if not an application, some news in the near future.

Kevin:

One of the other things that we did is we voted to establish a subsidiary, a holding company. Larry, we'll talk more about that later tonight possibly. And the other we also went over our work plans. And then

the Environmental Health and Safety Committee, you're going to actually hear the same presentation from Mr. Henley and Mr. Tracy that we heard today, which is a great presentation. And it's the starting to show the fruits of Mark Levine's and other members of the RPBs, concerns about invasive species and this one's about aquatic invasive species.

Kevin:

And I appreciate management's attention and time and Ted's attention and time. Specifically as well these two gentlemen who will give the presentation tonight. And it's starting to show some dividends and we have a plan in place and it's starting to work. And then we also talked about our work plan for the Environmental Health and Safety Committee. So pending your questions that's the report.

Mario:

Any questions for Kevin? Thank you.

David:

All right and we also met and heard our quarterly financial report, which Larry I'll give more details on it. And we also approved an application to you folks for a disposition of a property in Hamden. Well, I'll hand it over to Larry for the business center.

Larry:

All right thank you Kevin and members of the RPB. We'll have Beth start managing employee safety with the COVID update.

Beth:

Thanks Larry. Good evening, everyone. Just an update on our COVID data every month we report on our employee health metrics. As of March 16th, we have a total of 29 confirmed cases since the start of the pandemic. That's an increase of three since our last report. Good news is we continue. We have not had any hospitalizations and all of those cases seem to be recovering from COVID. We continue to lead our efforts with our incident command team meeting once a month, as well as our return to work committee meeting twice a month.

Beth:

In terms of vaccinations, as you all are well aware we're tracking the progress and the eligibility for obviously our staff as the governor had some recently made some changes to make it more age base eligible with more and more openings starting as early as tomorrow for those 45 and older. So we're actively watching that and encouraging and promoting with internal messaging our employees that are eligible to get vaccinated. In terms of operations and remote work we continue to focus our staff on remaining remote through the beginning of April.

Beth:

The return to work committee is planning to meet within the next week and discuss whether that date needs to be pushed out one more time as we continue to wait for the vaccination rollouts to happen. But overall status quo, we continue to try to minimize transmission within the organization and protect those critical areas like our treatment plants and our control room. So with that, I'll be happy to take any questions.

Mario:

Questions for Beth. Thank you.

Larry:

Okay, thank you Beth. To supplement Kevin's report on the non-core business committee and the authority action today, the authority did approve establishing a non-core subsidiary, which we will call the RWA commercial enterprises. And that will be the holding company for non-core businesses. Now, in connection with that we are also changing the name of non-core to commercial.

Larry:

So we'll refer to our non-core revenues in the future as commercial revenues, the non-core committee will become the commercial business committee. And of course we'll have the RWA commercial enterprise going forward. So as we acquire businesses in the future, they'll be tucked under this non-core or commercial business holding company which will act as an additional layer of protection to the Regional Water Authority. So we're excited about being able to change the name.

Larry:

Rochelle is working with council to file the necessary paperwork. They've done a search and the name of RWA commercial enterprises has not been taken by anybody else. So she'll proceed with getting that filed and doing the necessary paperwork to establish that subsidiary. After nine months of actual results through February 28th, our operating revenues are over budget by about 4.2 million dollars, which is about 4% due to total water revenues being over budget by about 3.2 million, primarily due to the higher than anticipated consumption.

Larry:

And our commercial revenues are over budget by \$920,000. And of course that includes the outside lab our pipe safe programs, our garage services, as well as miscellaneous charges and jobbing revenues. Our operating and maintenance expenses are under budget by about 2.4 million dollars. And about 987,000 dollars of that at this point in time is viewed as being permanent or deferred.

Larry:

So when you do all the puts and takes we are now projecting a coverage of 117% with no shortfall, if you would have to draw from the Rate Stabilization Fund. And of course a key point there is that we continue to have the cash collections that we have experienced today, as well as having the lower operating and maintenance expenses continue at their projected lower level. And of course we're still cautiously optimistic.

Larry:

There is uncertainty regarding the financial impact of pandemic going forward. And we had assumed they returned to normal in January, and of course that hasn't happened and the virus is still lingering. So we're still cautiously optimistic that we'll be able to come in, but things are looking good at this point. And as of March 15, raw water storage was at 93% compared to a long-term average of 87% for this time of the year. So we're in good shape so far for having a warmer summer and higher consumption.

Mark:

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You sure with those figures?

Larry:

What's that?

Mark:

I said you sure with those figures?

Larry:

I'm sure of those figures that was taken on Monday by Mr. Triana and you know that's accurate.

Mark:

I just wanted to check.

Larry:

It's absolutely. You can take that to the bank.

Mark:

Thanks Larry.

Larry:

Sure. You're welcome. Any questions?

Kevin:

Larry-

Frank:

So Larry, it's Frank Pepe, I got a question. On that non-core the 900,000. The outside services besides pipe safe in the garage and lab, what are the other services that when you're run to fire aligns into?

Larry:

Yeah, our job in a large diameter fire and domestic service installations, merchandise sales like hydrants, valves and pipe fittings, and things like that.

Frank:

Okay. Thank you.

Larry:

Sure.

Greg:

Hey Larry, this is Greg. We had a pretty good fire at Malby Lake; brush fire.

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Larry:

Yes. Beth you want to address that?

Beth:

Sure. So we responded to a fire last Saturday, the 13th I believe it was around 9:30 in the morning. We had a brush fire at Malby Lakes. It was about an acre of property. The Fire Department estimated we had response from multiple towns for that fire. And as of tonight I just checked with our police chief, the start is still unknown. I guess they don't know what caused it.

Greg:

That was my next question.

Beth:

Yeah. I did check with our police chief and the Fire Department still has not determined the cause. Other than we knew it was obviously a red alert warning for brush fire with a low humidity in high wind.

Greg:

Thank you.

Beth:

Yep.

Brian:

Beth, there was no damage just brush fire, right? Not the wooden building.

Beth:

Correct. It was across from the lake from that wooden building. Yeah.

Brian:

Yeah. That's the one I'm saying. Thank you.

Mario:

Any other questions?

Kevin:

I just had a comment if I might and it kind of speaks to Mark Levine's comment about getting grants and everything, and I thought it would be timely to share. I didn't know another time to share this. That the water company got a 95,000 dollar grant. So it's called an [inaudible 00:40:18] grant which came back to them for the purchase money that they had sent the Town of Cheshire to acquire 45 acres around the Mill River watershed area. And I thought that was a nice surprise for all of us.

Kevin:



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Cheshire itself got 95,000 and the water company got 95,000 dollars of this grant money as well, which I assume will go back into the Land Acquisition Fund. But credit goes to John Triana for that and the authority for helping the town out with that piece of property. And I just thought it was appropriate to mention that happened in February. So that was it. And I thank you for the time, Larry. I didn't know when to plug that in.

Larry:

Okay. Thank you, Kevin. And that's something that John pursues with each land sale or acquisition if there's grants available. So he does a good job at that. Thank you for mentioning.

Greg:

Anytime there's grant money that's coming to the authority. It's a good time to mention it.

Kevin:

I figured.

Larry:

Okay. I have nothing further to report. Thank you. Did we lose Mario?

Tim:

Mario is Trying to join.

Jennifer:

Yeah. He's been dropping off a few times.

Mario:

Okay. [inaudible 00:41:54] sorry. We opened with the environment on our safety moment. Our last item of business is the environment. Will and Josh are here, I believe both to share what's going on with water chestnuts.

Will:

How are you folks tonight? I'm William Henley water resource scientist here at the Water Authority. We are going to give you guys a brief update on the water chestnut on infestation at Furnace Pond and Lake Saltonstall and the ongoing management initiative that we have there. So just to give you guys some background this is what the plant looks like. It's a really aggressive aquatic invasive plant from Eurasia. On the left is what the leafy element looks like. It has a surface leaf and also a submerged leaf. So it's a really well adapted to overcome native species. What you see on the right is the fruiting body.

Will:

These seeds grow each year, each plant, each rosette can produce up to 10 of them. So the plant can really expand exponentially fast. And these seeds can be easily carried by water file or the current within a lake to other water bodies. Can I get the next slide, please Josh. So we discovered this infestation in Furnace Pond, which is the pond that's directly below Lake Saltonstall, in 2017. In 2018, we came up with a management plan and confirmed the presence.

Will:

This image that we have here is kind of a time series showing how fast the aquatic plant can grow. The plant was solid present in 2010. And within six years it's covered over nine acres of the pond. First pond is about 30 acres, so this is about one third of the surface coverage of the pond. Like I said, this has a huge negative impact on the water quality. It shades out native species. It adds a lot of nutrients to the water which can increase the amount of organic material that's in the pond. And it can also create a lack of oxygen in the habitat that's beneath it because it shades out all light.

Will:

So it's a really negative thing for our water body and its proximity to Lake Saltonstall is what's really dangerous. We don't draw water directly out of Furnace Pond, but the water quality there does impact Lake Saltonstall and this plant can spread to the North into the lake under certain conditions. One important element here is that these plants each produce 10 or more seeds each a year. Those seeds go into a seed bank and the sediments in the ponds, and they can be viable in the sediments at the bottom of the pond for up to 10 years. Next slide here Josh.

Will:

So Furnace Pond is an important ecological resource, but we draw water directly out of Lake Saltonstall and having this plant in Lake Saltonstall would be a much more catastrophic. This is a map showing the risk. The plant is really constrained by the depth in water clarity of the water body. Lake Saltonstall is much clearer and deeper and larger than Furnace Pond. So this map shows the areas that are at risk if the plant could expand into Lake Saltonstall. So it's anywhere between 25 and 50 acres of surface that could be covered by the plant, this would shade out native vegetation that is organic material for the lake which can create problems with the treatment process and result in disinfection byproducts.

Will:

And it also has a negative ecological impact on the lake, which impacts the health of the lake as a whole. So our management plan here we did find some water chestnut in Lake Saltonstall. It was anywhere between a quarter to an eighth of the way up the lake. But only small stands. We were able to remove those stands by hand. In recent years we've only found a handful of fragments in Saltonstall which we've removed. And so right now our plan is to aggressively attack the population that's in Furnace Pond using mechanical harvesting to remove the plant before the seeds drop-off and replenish the seed bank and really getting that organic material out before it can add those nutrients and biomass into the pond.

Josh:

So I'm going to show you guys some drone footage that we took during the harvest. So the contractor we ended up using is Solitude. It's kind of a niche market getting someone out with a boat like this, to do this kind of work. This boat is designed to use two paddles on the side of the boat with a conveyor belt in the front to pick up all of the floating plants. This contractor Solitude specializes in this sort of work and they have close to a dozen boats throughout New England doing this kind of work. Whether it be invasive or just removing floating plants from water bodies.

Josh:

So you can see on the front of the boat it kind of has these scissor like jaws on the side of the conveyor belt that help cut the water chestnut and away from the main pack. And then there's a conveyor belt

that brings the plants up underneath the operator. And that whole area under the operator is a hopper system that holds 435 cubic feet of material. The whole hopper runs also on a conveyor belt. So all the person has to do is drive the boat up to shore and eject the plant material onto shore, where we had a facilities member waiting with a payloader.

Josh:

This person with the payloader brought all of the material up to a de-watering site that was just uphill from Furnace Pond, where the plants can be left to desiccate once the plants die and the seeds dry, they're no longer of worry to us. So that's kind of the real interesting part about this plan from Will. Is that once we remove the plants and the newly developing seeds from the water body it exposes the seeds in the seed bank that will then subsequently grow. And hopefully by the time winter comes around a second generation of plants will die. Hopefully expediting the process of removing this plant Furnace Pond.

Josh:

And what you see here is the end result. You'll see that there's still a large population of water chestnut and that's due primarily to time constraint and drought. So we had budgeted for 80 hours from this contractor and it's worth noting that these plants can grow and stacks of three, four or five plants. So typically when this operator does this work, they find that it takes 45 minutes to fill the boat. Whereas on our site it was taking them 25 minutes per trip. So there was significantly more dense than they were expecting. So there was significantly more material to remove. And because of some drought conditions we were experiencing this past summer, the water level was reduced in Furnace Pond and it made access to certain areas limited.

Josh:

This boat can go in some fairly shallow waters but not as shallow as what Furnace Ponds had gotten to. So playing with drones is really fun and getting these shots, but the main reason we got the drone was to take maps like this. This will allow us to take some flights before the harvest was conducted and after the harvest was conducted. And just using our GIS programs, we can estimate how much water chestnut was removed, which was about four and a half acres of the eight and a half to nine acres of water chestnut that was in the pond.

Josh:

So using these maps, if we follow this procedure every year, we can monitor how much the population grows in conjunction with how much we remove. It's also worth noting now that everyone's talking about grants. We applied for a State of Connecticut Aquatic Invasive Species grant. They just announced that this monies can go to water utilities and other sectors that have invasive plants in their aquatic bodies. So we put in an application to get all of all of one season's harvest done, which is about 22,000 dollars. We'll find out right at the beginning of April, if we were successful in getting that grant.

Josh:

In order to get the grant, we had to show them that we were planning on conducting this harvest until the plant was controlled which in our estimates could be perhaps five or six years getting this contractor in. And after that, having hand pulling conducted by employees at RWA. So with that I want to say, thank you. And if you guys have any questions for Will and I we'll be happy to take that.

Frank:

I have question. Frank Pepe.

Josh:

But of course.

Frank:

Does this have to be done every year?

Josh:

Yeah. So our plan is to do this every year and it's almost like taking antibiotic where once you start, you really need to see it through to the end. If we stop this harvest process for a few years, it could significantly rebound on us and put us back in a bad position. So it's important that we conduct this harvest every year until we can get it to the point where we can control it by hand pulling with small water vessels.

Frank:

And the other thing is when is the heaviest growth?

Will:

The heaviest growth is in the summer, the plants start to grow when the water reaches nine degrees celsius, and then they will max out sometime late July, early August. We do the harvest at when they're at this maximum. So that way we can get the plants when it has the greatest surface coverage, but they haven't dropped their fruiting body. They haven't dropped the seeds into the water yet. So we're getting the plants out of the water, removing those nutrients from the system and we're also preventing additional seeds from being added to the seed bank.

Frank:

And one more question. That boat, how far does it go below the waterline to cut the weed?

Will:

I would guess. So Furnace Pond is fairly shallow. It can probably go deeper than Furnace Pond is, but it probably cuts only from the top foot of water. Because the key part is to remove the surface leaf, which is where the seeds grow. But I think that they can cut deeper than that. I'm not exactly sure on the exact specifications of the equipment.

Frank:

Okay. Thank you. Nice presentation you have there.

Josh:

Thank you.

Mark:

Josh. Mark Levine.

Josh:

Hello Mark.

Mark:

I'm sorry I missed your presentation at the land use but great job. And it looks it's going to work. It's not eliminating the problem, it's controlling it. Okay. Right? Is that what we're trying to do? I mean you're never going to eliminate completely, you got to control it every year.

Josh:

Well, Will and I talked about this with a lot of invasives that is true, where control is really the game plan. This is a plant that could be eradicated with enough time. Considering like Will had said the seed bank last 10 years. If we keep removing plants before they drop seed, that theoretically after 10 years there will be no more seed left in the seed bank to come out.

Mark:

Yeah but it looks like there's a lot of different areas and even the... Okay. Let's hope so.

Josh:

It's optimistic to say that it can be done and that's our goal is to eradicate it. Whether or not that happens in truth, is up to if there's enough water in Furnace Pond for us to get to all the plants and it's definitely doable.

Mark:

Well, this guy looks like he's doing a good job. I do I have a question that's not pertaining to the water invasive species, but how are we doing on the land invasive species?

Josh:

Good. I've been kind of developing a system to take into account a lot of different parts of invasive plants. Whether it's the way their seeds spread, whether it's certain parts of them that make them invasive and put them into categories to help decide what plants either myself or other surrounding people who have questions about it should be attacking first. We have some plants that have seed banks that last 25 years. And maybe that's not a plant that you want to spend time on. But if you have a plant that the seed bank lasts three years it's worth your time to get rid of that because in three years you could have eradication.

Mark:

And the land invasive species are you putting together a plan that you would need more help or money to really attack it, or just until you can handle this?

Josh:

I mean for land obviously more people, more money is incredibly beneficial. Yeah, right now I'm kind of coming up with different thoughts for what could be accomplished with additional personnel. Whether that means full-time or part-time as well as monies.

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Mark:

So you may be making a presentation for more help soon?

Josh:

Yeah. If it comes to that, I'd be more than willing to do a presentation for more help. There's plenty of plants to kill. With 27,000 acres-

Mark:

To people.

Josh:

The more people you can help... And in both circumstances money allows you to get contractors with big equipment for large areas, but personnel let you get into really small areas that equipment can't get to. So there's benefits to everything.

Mark:

Well I'm in your corner. So if you come up with a plan and you want some help to push it through, I mean I'm in your corner and I'd be hella glad to help you push it through. Because I know how important it is that we get rid of as much of these invasive species on our land as it is with water.

Josh:

I agree Mark.

Mark:

And I think you're doing a great job, man.

Josh:

All right.

Mark:

You and your crew and everybody.

Josh:

Thank you for the support.

Mark:

Okay.

Mario:

Are there questions for Josh?

Stephen:

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Yes. This is Steve Mongillo. Following up on Mark's comments, do we know how this got there and how easy it get reseeded? And I was also wondering if you knew what function this plant serves, it's native sort of original environment.

Will:

So I'll answer your second question first. In its native environment, there's a beetle that eats it. So it doesn't become as extensive as it does in the United States. We don't have those insects in the United States. So it could really grow exponentially in Barrios Farms. With that I don't know if you got the most feedback.

Stephen:

Yeah, I did. Thank you.

Will:

Okay.

Mario:

Somebody got too many microphones.

Will:

Could you repeat your first question again? I'm sorry.

Stephen:

Yeah. Do we know how this got into the pond originally?

Will:

No. One thing of note is that it has been expanding across Connecticut in the last few years. There are a lot of invasive species in Connecticut and this one is one that is becoming more prevalent. We do know that this plant is present upstream of Lake Saltonstall in the farm river. It's not really close enough to our diversion that I think that's where it came from. It's also present in which I believe is called by Barrios Farms upstream of possibly road. They do have it there in some of their trenches but it could be that our population was spawned by migratory birds.

Will:

One positive ecologically of our ponds is that they're not recreationally used. So a lot of waterfowl use them. So it's possible that's where it came from. It came from a bird. It's possible that it came from upstream. It's really hard to tell whether these other spots that we found it came from our population or that's what seeded our population. So I guess the short answer is we don't really know where it came from. But getting control of it means that there's not a huge population sitting right on our back door staff waiting to get into one of our other water bodies. All of our water bodies are pretty close to Furnace Pond in the grand scheme of things geographically. A bird can easily fly from Furnace Pond to Bethany or Lake Watrous or Whitney or any of the other reservoirs so.

Stephen:

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Is this the only places you have it?

Will:

This is the only place we have it so far.

Josh:

It's worth noting as well that as Will said it's spreading across Connecticut. But if it's not the largest population in Connecticut, it's within the top five populations in Connecticut as a whole which is another reason to get rid of it.

Mario:

Any other questions? All right. I want to thank you guys for the presentation and the aerial videos. Very helpful. You've done-

Josh:

Thank you for having us.

Will:

Thanks for having us.

Mario:

Yeah. [inaudible 01:01:26] And it is a budget season starting up. So Mark, that's your cue to ask questions when you go to the meeting on the budget.

Mark:

No doubt I'll be there to do that.

Mario:

All right. You can stop sharing your screen if there's no other business. Jennifer, anything else as for a motion to adjourn?

Jennifer:

No, I think that's it.

Mario:

Okay.

Mark:

All right. The motion can adjourn.

Mario:

All right Mark.



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Frank:  
Second.

Mario:  
And Frank seconded. All in favor?

All:  
Aye.

Mario:  
Opposed? All right. Thank you all very much.