

Rye Water District Annual Meeting
Saturday, March 25, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
Rye Junior High

On March 25, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. at the Rye Junior High School, Moderator Joshua Scott convened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Moderator Scott introduced the Water District Commissioners Scott Marion, Ralph Hickson, and Arthur Ditto. He thanked Art Ditto for serving on the Commission for the past fifteen years. Commissioner Ditto will not be seeking reelection for his seat. Mr. Scott noted that the Commissioners hold monthly meetings, and workshops. There is a tremendous amount of work that goes into being a commissioner for the Rye Water District. Commissioner Ditto has put in a lot of work and effort over the years.

Commissioner Marion stated that he has been on the Commission for a year. During that year, he has benefited from Art's tutelage. The amount of knowledge that Art has in the District's water system, and water systems in general, is immense. He thanked Art for his service to the District over the past fifteen years.

RWD Superintendent Arik Jones commented that he has worked with Commissioner Ditto since 2008. He is a phenomenal individual with the capacity to always make a solid strong decision based on logic and rationalism. Commissioner Ditto deserves a lot of applause for the time he has served on the Commission.

Business Manager Dyana Ledger thanked Commissioner Ditto for his guidance and expertise over the years in navigating the State RSAs to the minutiae of the budgeting process. He will surely be missed on the Commission.

Commissioner Hickson stated that he has worked beside Art on the Commission for the past fifteen years. There is not a more dedicated individual who is more committed to Rye Water with no other agenda other than to help provide good Rye water. He will surely miss working with Art on the Commission.

The Water District Commissioners presented Commissioner Ditto with a plaque in appreciation for his service.

Moderator Scott explained that the vote for the open commissioner seat is going to be done a bit different this year, as there has never been more than one candidate running for the position. He will be accepting nominations for commissioner. The candidates will then be asked to come forward to give a brief speech about themselves and why they wish to be a commissioner. Voting will be done by written ballot and dropped in the ballot box at the clerk's table. Every voter was given an index card to use for voting upon check-in. While people are voting, the meeting will continue on to the next article to give time for the counting of the ballots.

Article #01 To choose a Commissioner for the ensuing three (3) years.

Moderator Scott called for nominations for commissioner.

Steven Borne, 431 Wallis Road, thanked everyone for attending. He noted that people in the District can vote to change the meeting structure where people would actually vote on election day. Mr. Borne continued that over the past ten years, every time he has had questions, Art Ditto is the first one to get back to him. He thanked Commissioner Ditto for all the work he has done, and for being so responsive and helpful. Mr. Borne continued that six months ago, Dr. Rosalie Lopresto started asking questions about the PFOAs. He did his best to answer her questions but suggested that she go to the Water District meetings. Dr. Lopresto started attending the commissioner's meeting on Wednesday mornings. She has also been to PFOA conferences and talked to experts. When she learned that Commissioner Ditto was stepping down, she said that she could do the job. Mr. Borne noted that a person with medical experience is really needed right now with all the issues and concerns with water.

Motion by Steven Borne to nominate Dr. Rosalie Lopresto as the next Rye Water District Commissioner. Seconded by Katy Sherman.

Moderator Scott called for further nominations for commissioner.

Motion by Joe Tucker to nominate Julie Tucker as Rye Water District Commissioner. Seconded by Ben Tweedie.

Moderator Scott invited the nominees to speak.

Rosalie Lopresto-Drakatos, 64 Liberty Common, stated that she would like to start off with a quote by 17th Century Historian Thomas Fuller: "You never know the worth of water until the well is dry." She and her husband moved to Rye in 1999, raised two children in the community, and is a very proud dog owner. She has recently retired as a board certified doctor after twenty-five years and CEO of her own practice. She is also a licensed realtor for Bean Group and has been since 2016. She attended Kenyon College in Ohio majoring in Marine Biology on the pre-medicine track. Dr. Lopresto-Drakatos continued that at this stage of her life, she has the opportunity to give back to the Town. Her interests circle around Rye's natural resources and drinking water. For the past six months, she has performed her own due diligence by making inquiries and contacting leaders in the State, the Town, and other local water purveyors. She has attended meetings about Rye's drinking water wells, landfills, and PFAS. This month, she attended the Coakley Landfill Group meeting, as well as the Safe Water Advisory Group in Portsmouth. Dr. Lopresto-Drakatos is involved in the SB 85 Legislative Commission to study environmentally-triggered chronic disease. On March 8th, she attended a New England stakeholder conference on PFAS and drinking water for utilities with the Rye Water District. At the end of the meeting, people in attendance received a personal tour of the Pease Tradeport facility. Next week, she will be participating in the EPA Professional Community webinar on the proposed PFAS regulations eminent this year.

Dr. Lopresto-Drakatos stated that she wants to be crystal clear and assure the citizens that Rye Water is not a partisan issue. It involves health and science. Having been the CEO of her own successful business for twenty years, she considers herself to be prudent financially. As such, she is mindful of the costs and benefits of building a new PFAS water treatment facility for seventeen hundred households before exploring other options; such as, the potential to join another municipality with a Rye system that is already in place. A commissioner at one of the meetings quoted an estimate of eleven million dollars. Just this week, it was reported that the Pudding Hill aquifer plant in Dover will cost fifteen million dollars; notwithstanding, the additional thousands yearly in operational and management costs associated with staying compliant. With her background in biology, health, business, and real estate, in addition to be fiscally responsible, she believes she would be a benefit to the Rye Water District team, in collaboration with the citizens as friends and neighbors, to help tackle the challenges ahead for access to clean, healthy, drinking water. She commented that Craig Lounsborough once said: "Men can dig wells but they can't create water."

Julie Tucker, 960 Washington Road, stated that as a Rye resident for twenty years, she is seeking a position on the Rye Water District Commission. Her goal in asking for this position is to help the Rye Water District to provide a clean, safe, consistent water supply system that is able to meet the needs of Rye Water District consumers and to ensure the water system is meeting the needs of the Rye Fire Department to be sure there is adequate fire control within the Town. She will seek to keep Rye Water District consumers well informed about their water supply in an accessible, understandable manner, and will solicit public input at all times. Rye's water supply is a complex system and there's a lot to be considered in meeting those goals. The Rye Water District is currently looking for new water sources and is considering different options for a water treatment plant, all while addressing water system maintenance and safety needs. With these challenges, a commissioner must research extensively, use experts for information, know what questions to ask, and carefully assess the costs and benefits to every action that may be taken to provide the best quality of water for the Town. Commissioners must also keep the public well informed and ensure citizens that they are listening to their concerns.

Mrs. Tucker continued that her interest in Rye's water quality began when an old well on her property was one of the fifteen tested in Rye by NH DES for possible PFAS contaminants. She noted that her yard abuts the old Grove Road Landfill, which is a source of PFAS in the community. She was appointed by the Governor to the Seacoast Cancer Cluster Investigation, in which two years were spent looking at water safety issues in Rye and the surrounding areas. More recently, she has attended the Rye Water District monthly meetings. She lives with her husband Joe on Washington Road where they have a small farm and a pollinator field for the protection of wildlife. She started her career after obtaining a master's degree in regional planning and worked for the Strafford Regional Planning Commission in Dover, NH. She now currently works for a local landscape company. She was also a NH Fish and Game licensed wildlife rehabilitator, helping injured and orphaned wildlife to be sure they can be sent back to the wild. She thanked everyone for attending and asked for the voters' support.

At 10:17 a.m., Moderator Scott opened the ballot box for voting on commissioner and paused the meeting to give everyone time to vote. The meeting was reconvened at 10:26 a.m.

Article #02 To choose a Moderator for the ensuing two (2) years.

Motion by Scott Marion to nominate Joshua Scott as moderator. Seconded by Steve Borne.

Moderator Scott called for further discussion on the nomination. Hearing none, he called for a vote on the nomination of Joshua Scott as moderator.

Motion passed.

Article #03 To choose a Treasurer for the ensuing three (3) years.

Motion by Ralph Hickson to nominate Amy Thibodeau for treasurer. Seconded by Art Ditto.

Moderator Scott called for further discussion on the nomination. Hearing none, he called for a vote on the nomination of Amy Thibodeau as treasurer.

Motion passed.

Article #04 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$30,000) to be placed in the District's existing Storage Tank Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund established for the purpose of maintaining the water storage tanks. This appropriation is in addition to the operating budget. (Majority vote required)

*THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS: 2-0
THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE: 10-0*

Motion by Scott Marion to move Article #04 to the floor. Seconded by Ralph Hickson.

Commissioner Ditto explained that this particular expendable trust fund is for maintenance of the three water tanks in the District located on Washington Road and Route 1. The current balance in this particular fund is \$185,000. Those funds will probably be used in a couple of years for the painting of one of the tanks on Washington Road, which has lead paint under several other layers of paint. This will require a special process for removal of the lead paint. The intent of these reserve funds is to help control the tax burden brought on by major capital projects.

Joe Cummins, 990 Washington Road, asked if a public hearing is necessary to take funds out of this trust fund.

Commissioner Ditto noted that when the original warrant article was presented to the voters to establish the trust fund, included in the wording was that the commissioners would be authorized to expend from the trust fund. A public hearing is not needed for the commissioners to expend from the fund.

Moderator Scott called for further discussion. Hearing no further comments, Moderator Scott called for a vote on Article #04.

Motion passed.

Article #05 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000) to be placed in the District's existing Equipment and Buildings Capital Reserve Fund established for the purpose of purchase, repair, modification, or replacement of equipment and buildings that support operations of the water distribution system. This appropriation is in addition to the operating budget. (Majority vote required)

*THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS: 2-0
THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE: 10-0*

Motion by Ralph Hickson to move Article #05 to the floor. Seconded by Scott Marion.

Commissioner Ditto noted that this capital reserve fund is for the repair and replacement of buildings and equipment. The current balance in this fund is approximately \$55,000. A good portion of this fund was used last year to purchase a truck, which was on order for over a year and was just received.

Moderator Scott called for further discussion. Hearing no further comments, Moderator Scott called for a vote on Article #05.

Motion passed.

Article #06 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000) to be placed in the District's existing System Replacement Capital Reserve Fund established for the purpose of replacing or enlarging the distribution system. (Majority vote required)

*THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS: 2-0
THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE: 10-0*

Motion by Scott Marion to move Article #06 to the floor. Seconded by Art Ditto.

Commissioner Ditto explained that this particular reserve fund has a balance of approximately \$154,000. The reserve fund is used to replace or expand the existing system.

Moderator Scott called for further discussion. Hearing no further comments, Moderator Scott called for a vote on Article #04.

Motion passed.

Motion by Scott Marion to restrict reconsideration of Articles #02 through #06. Seconded by Art Ditto.

Moderator Scott called for a vote on the motion to restrict Articles #02 through #06.

Motion passed.

Article #07 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Million One Hundred Fifty-Nine Thousand Four Hundred Forty-Six Dollars (\$2,159,446) for general district operations and to defray Water District charges for the ensuing year. This article does not include appropriations contained in any other article addressed. (Majority vote required)

THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS: 3-0
THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE: 10-0

Motion by Ralph Hickson to move Article #07 to the floor. Seconded by Scott Marion.

Mr. Borne commented that at one of the select board meetings, there was discussion about \$500,000 that the Town received in American Recovery Funds. There was some discussion about some of that money going to the Water District. He asked if the Water District received any of the money.

Commissioner Hickson replied that the Water District did not receive any of those funds. The funds were split into two payments to the Town. The Water District was supposed to receive the second payment. He believes the money was used by the Town for reconstruction of a culvert.

Mr. Cummins commented there are seventeen hundred connections in the District. As he understands, somewhere between twelve and fifteen hundred connections have been installed or updated with a backflow preventer. There are a few hundred connections that are not protected by backflow preventers. Since those connections will ultimately be updated, he thinks it's reasonable to have them done sooner rather than later. He would suggest increasing the budget to cover the expense.

Motion by Joe Cummins to increase the Rye Water District Budget by \$50,000. Seconded by Carissa Magri.

Moderator Scott called for further discussion on the motion to increase the budget by \$50,000.

Commissioner Marion stated that it's unsure what the cost would be to do this work and whether or not the District has the authority to do so. However, he would suggest that this be studied for future budgets. He pointed out that for this kind of one-time expenditure, it would probably need to be a separate warrant.

RWD Superintendent Arik Jones explained that he and Mr. Cummins had a discussion about how many backflow preventors are not in service in the system. He cannot say one hundred percent what value that is. He would say probably ninety-nine percent of the services in the system have a backflow preventor. He noted that the backflow can fail or sometimes be removed inadvertently. However, the Water District does replace meters on a consistent basis,

and almost every time, a cross connection survey is done at the same time. As licensed operators, RWD is required to inspect residences to ensure the connections are compliant, not only to protect the system but the consumer as well. He agrees with Commissioner Marion that it's unknown at this time what the costs would be to dedicate a person to inspect seventeen hundred connections.

Mr. Cummins commented that he is just asking to have room in the budget for the potential to hire outside help to certify the backflow preventors now and not in a few years.

Mr. Borne noted that the District is working on asset management to get a handle on its assets. However, the backflow preventors are personal property. They're outside of that asset. He asked if there is a plan and a way to keep track of where they are located. Instead of waiting until next year for a warrant article, he suggested using the fund balance from the end of 2022 to start the work.

Commissioner Ditto explained there are licensed backflow preventors in the system that are permitted. There are also backflow preventors that are an integral part of the meters, which are untestable. He further explained the District has a program for monitoring the devices that are permitted.

Superintendent Jones explained that as required by the EPA Safe Drinking Water Act, as well as NH DES, the District has to have a cross connection control program in place. The District created by-laws that follow the regulations set forth by EPA, which were adopted by NH DES. He pointed out that the District has just recently revised its cross connection program. He further explained that cross connection is the connection of a potable water source to something that poses a potential risk to the system. In the District's cross connection program, residential check valves are required, which are non-testable. The device protects against backflow. The commercial properties and a few residential properties have testable devices. The District tests high and low hazard testable devices twice per year, except for irrigation which is tested upon installation.

Moderator Scott called for further discussion on the vote to amend Article #07 to increase the budget by \$50,000. Hearing none, he called for a vote.

Motion failed.

Moderator Scott called for further discussion on Article #07 as written.

Mr. Borne asked how new developments and accessory dwelling units impact the budget and the cost of Rye water to the consumer.

Commissioner Ditto commented that he thinks it is minimal. He explained the increases in the budget are due to the hiring of another water operator and the purchase of a vehicle for that person. The increase is also due to the cost of living adjustment, which is twice as high this year

as it has been in the past. This year, the District will be working on a new building at the Garland pumphouse property for a single point of entry for the injection of chlorine into the system. Other increases to the budget are due to increases in energy rates for running the well pumps.

Superintendent Jones noted the cost of chlorine and treatment equipment also add to the increase of the budget.

Moderator Scott called for further discussion on Article #07. Hearing none, he called for a vote.

Motion passed.

Moderator Scott announced the results of the election for commissioner:

Rosalie Lopresto – 93 votes

Julie Tucker – 63 votes

Rosalie Lopresto-Drakatos has been elected as commissioner for a term of three years.

Motion by Michael Bean to restrict reconsideration of Article #07. Seconded by Scott Marion.

Moderator Scott called for a vote on the motion to restrict reconsideration on Article #07.

Motion passed.

Article #08 To transact any other business which may legally come before this meeting.

Briand Wade, 101 Grove Road, stated that he knows there have been discussions about bringing the Aquarion Water system into Rye Water. There's a great discrepancy between bills in Hampton and North Hampton where Aquarion runs. He knows someone who pays five hundred a month during the summer using Aquarion Water for their water bill. He asked if there will be discussions with Aquarion Water on price caps and other issues before bringing the company in.

Commissioner Ditto explained that in December Aquarion approached the Commissioners, unsolicited, about taking over the Rye Water District. The Commissioners entertained their discussion and listened. That's as far as it has gone. It hasn't gone any further down the road in regards to ending the Rye Water District or entering into any type of agreement. He further explained the Commissioners don't have the authority to dissolve the Rye Water District, as that decision belongs to the voters. As stated in RSA 52:21, if a village district chooses to dissolve, it requires a three-fifth vote of the voters in that district. He reiterated that the Commissioners have not pursued any type of agreement or gone into any type of economics associated. There hasn't been any movement in that area at all. If it were to go any further, the Commission would certainly bring all information before the residents in the District.

Carissa Magri, 354 Wallis Road, asked if there are line items for education or communication with the public. As a parent and a homeowner, she wants to be able to understand the things to look for as a preventative measure, not a reactive measure.

Commissioner Ditto explained that the 2023 budget includes funds to hire a public relations firm to deal with this specifically. Just recently, a level of service survey was conducted to find out what the residents in the District are interested in. It was quite evident during the boil water order that it's a necessity to have good dialogue and simple discussions to be able to explain to customers what is going on, not in technical terms. The goal of the District is to be more responsive and to have more information available in simplified language. The District is working on its ability to communicate with the public.

Commissioner Hickson pointed out that the Rye Water District has a website that is updated weekly.

Joan Tierney, 7 Acorn Acres, asked how Aquarion, based in North Hampton, take part of Rye.

Commissioner Ditto explained that the Rye Beach Precinct may have been served in the early 1900's by Aquarion before the Rye Water District was established, which was in 1948 to service the north end of Rye. The Rye Water District then extended down Route 1A and eventually up Wallis Road. It's really an evolution of how Rye was serviced by water. The Rye Beach and Jenness Beach areas were tied into North Hampton. His guess is this happened before the Rye Water District was even established.

Shawn Maxwell, 24 Park Ridge Ave., asked if they would be in a scenario where they could reduce the chlorine, or stop it altogether, if the District ever found the source of bacteria causing the boil order.

Commissioner Marion replied that even if they found the "smoking gun" that caused this past event, there could certainly be something else that could cause another contamination. Right now, Rye Water District is mandated by NH DES to chlorinate. If in fact the District goes down the road of a treatment plant, there will absolutely have to be chlorination.

Commissioner Ditto pointed out that most of the systems in New Hampshire are chlorinated. Not chlorinating is the exception to the rule. Once the chlorination is balanced, it will provide another level of security in the water that the consumer is receiving. There are a lot of contaminants that can get into the system. With chlorination, it can be assured that the water is sanitized to some extent with some degree of protection. He commented that if the District goes with a treatment plant to deal with the PFAS issue, it will require chlorinating as part of the treatment. Right now, it's an esthetic issue with the taste of the water and smell. With a single point of entry, there will be a better balance of chlorine flowing into the system and it will minimize the negative esthetics received from the chlorination activity. He reiterated that chlorinating provides a level of sanitation.

There was some discussion about how to sign up for Rye Water District alerts, which can be found on the District's website: Ryewaterdistrict.com

Moderator Scott called for further comments. Hearing no none, Moderator Scott called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by Art Ditto to adjourn at 11:20 a.m. Seconded by Joe Cummins.

Moderator Scott closed the Rye Water District Annual Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Donna DeCotis
RWD Clerk