

RYE WATER DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, May 22, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Rye Junior High

On May 22, 2021 at 10:00 a.m., at Rye Junior High School, Moderator K. Joshua Scott convened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Moderator Scott introduced the Water District Commissioners; Chairman Thomas Clifford, Arthur Ditto and Ralph Hickson.

Moderator Scott stated the ground rules for the meeting. Anyone wishing to speak should come to the microphone, state their name and address. All questions and comments should be directed to the moderator. Any amendment to any warrant article must be presented to him in writing.

Moderator Scott read Article 1.

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

Joseph Cummins, 990 Washington Road, called for a point of order.

Moderator Scott recognized Mr. Cummins.

Motion by Joseph Cummins to move the vote on the new commissioner to the end of the meeting. Seconded by Alexandra Cummins.

Mr. Cummins commented that the commissioners have done a wonderful job. Unless it is against statute, he thinks it's nice to have the potential candidate be active in the meeting before the vote on a new commissioner. He thinks it encourages them to be more participatory and more forthcoming in their answers.

Moderator Scott called for a vote on Mr. Cummins motion.

Motion failed.

Moderator Scott continued with the Warrant as posted and reread Article 1.

Motion by Thomas Clifford to nominate Ralph Hickson as commissioner for the next three years. Seconded by Scott Marion.

Moderator Scott opened for comments.

Mr. Cummins stated that Mr. Hickson did a great job during his last term.

Hearing no further comments, Moderator Scott called for a vote.

Motion passed.

Moderator Scott read Article 2.

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

**Motion by Ralph Hickson to nominate Joshua Scott as moderator for the next two years.
Seconded by Thomas Clifford.**

Hearing no further comments, Moderator Scott called for a vote.

Motion passed.

Moderator Scott read Article 3.

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

**Motion by Arthur Ditto to nominate Donna Decotis as clerk for the next three years.
Seconded by Thomas Clifford.**

Moderator Scott opened for comments.

Scott Marion, 71 Washington Road, noted that the annual report shows that the clerk's term expires in 2022.

Commissioner Ditto explained that the Water District's bylaws specify the clerk's term as three years. However, in 2019, Ms. Decotis was actually elected for two years. That is the basis for the reelection, so it will now go back to a three-year term.

Hearing no further comments, Moderator Scott called for a vote.

Motion passed.

Moderator Scott read Article 4.

**Article #04 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Seventy-Five Thousand Dollars (\$75,000) for the purchase of a new truck and snow plow to replace the existing Ford F-250 and authorize the withdrawal of up to Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$60,000) from 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 operation of the water distribution system; with the remaining Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000) to come from general taxation.
(Majority vote required)**

**THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMISSIONERS: 3-0
THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE: 9-0**

Phil Winslow, 100 Harbor Road, asked for the current balance in the Equipment and Buildings Capital Reserve Fund.

Commissioner Ditto noted that the current balance is \$63,845.

Motion by Arthur Ditto to move Article #04. Seconded by Thomas Clifford.

Moderator Scott opened for further comments.

Mr. Marion commented that he assumes there is an existing truck. He asked if the District is assuming they are not going to get any money for the current truck.

Commissioner Hickson replied that they will get something for the truck as a trade. If that does not appear to be adequate, the District will hold a public sale for the truck.

Mr. Marion asked if there is a reason why the Town does not plow for the Water District.

RWD Superintendent Arik Jones explained that for years, the Rye Water District has taken care of its own infrastructure for plowing, including the hydrants. There are approximately three hundred hydrants in the District. In his opinion, it would be an extensive cost for the Town to take on the District's plowing. The Water District has always burdened the responsibility of its own infrastructure.

Hearing no further comments, Moderator Scott called for a vote.

Motion passed.

Moderator Scott read Article 5.

Article #05 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 COMMISSIONERS: 3-0
THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE: 9-0**

Motion by Scott Marion to move Article #05. Seconded by Joseph Cummins.

Mr. Winslow asked the balance in the Tank Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund.

Commissioner Ditto noted the current balance is \$122,472. In 2022, the Water District will be doing maintenance on the tank that is located at Breakfast Hill off Route 1. Right now, the District is working on the design and will get the estimated cost. It is anticipated that the cost

will be over \$150,000. This fund was set up to be used for tank maintenance, so there wouldn't be a big impact on the tax rate.

Mr. Borne asked if that tank has cellular equipment on it.

Commissioner Ditto confirmed.

Mr. Borne asked how much money is received and where the money goes. He asked if the money goes into the tank maintenance fund.

Commissioner Hickson replied that the rent received goes into the General Fund.

RWD Business Manager Dyana Ledger explained that the District receives approximately \$3,500 per month for telecommunications rent. In 2020, the total received for the year was about \$43,000. The lease agreements with the cellular companies call for an increase every five years.

Hearing no further comments, Moderator Scott called for a vote.

Motion passed.

Moderator Scott read Article 6.

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 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 COMMISSIONERS: 3-0
THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE: 9-0**

Motion by Ralph Hickson to move Article #06. Seconded by Arthur Ditto.

Moderator Scott opened for comments.

Mr. Winslow asked for the current balance in the fund.

Commissioner Ditto replied the current balance is \$63,847. Most of those funds will be used for the purchase of the truck this year. The District has three vehicles and those are on a six-year replacement cycle. The intent for this warrant article is to help rebuild that fund.

Mr. Cummins suggested including the balance information in the annual report.

Hearing no further comments, Moderator Scott called for a vote.

Motion passed.

Moderator Scott read Article 7.

Article #07 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Million Seven Hundred Twenty-Two Thousand Three Hundred Twenty-Five Dollars (\$1,722,325) 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 COMMISSIONERS: 3-0
THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE: 9-0**

Motion by Scott Marion to move Article #07. Seconded by Arthur Ditto.

Zachariah Malpass, 120 Garland Road, asked if there is an amount included in the budget for easements necessary for sanitary radius proposals.

Commissioner Ditto replied no.

Mr. Malpass asked if there is an appraisal for that purpose.

Commissioner Hickson noted that an appraisal has not been done yet.

Mr. Cummins questioned the increase in the legal budget. He also questioned the legal expenses for 2020.

Commissioner Ditto stated that the proposed legal budget for this year is \$15,000. Last year, the budget was \$10,000. He explained the reason it was raised for this year is because the District is dealing with trying to get an easement, or some sort of agreement, for a sanitary radius for the new well they are trying to put on line. He reiterated that last year the budget was \$10,000., in which \$2,057 was spent for legal expenses.

Mr. Cummins asked if there has been any approach, which can be legally disclosed, to purchase the Rye Water District by a private party, within the last two years.

Commissioner Ditto denied.

Mr. Borne commented that the District has done a great job in communicating and getting the word out about the annual meeting. There are a lot more people present than normal from when he first started attending the meetings. This is probably due to better communications, so he appreciates that. He noted that the budget is up to 1.7 million. He pointed out that there is no table in the annual report that shows how much it has been going up over the years. Also, he did not see a summary of what the drivers are that are pushing up the budget. He continued that in looking through the pages in the annual report, he couldn't find a section addressing the volume of water that Rye needs. It was brought up in one of the meeting minutes that the

Commissioners are a little concerned about the development on Route 1. He knows that in developing a new well the District works with the State. However, he doesn't think the State says there is so much development in town that there will probably not be enough water to support what is going on. He asked if it is known what that limit is. Also, there were some notes in a planning board meeting that the planning administrator did some data on the encroachments on the wetland buffers. Some of those are for the oceans; however, some are also for the wells. That protection area is getting encroached on. He asked if there is a sense of how many variances have been given for things going into the wellhead protection areas, over the past fifteen years, as it is trending that way. He noted that with a 1.7 million dollar budget and throwing in sewer, Rye is spending almost 2 million dollars to manage water. This is a pretty big number. He asked if there could be any consolidation. He asked if the Town would be spending less money if the two entities worked together.

In regards to how much water the District uses, Commissioner Ditto explained that they do track water usage. Typically, the District uses between 130 to 150 million gallons per year, which has been pretty constant through the various years. One of the concerns in regards to water usage for new development, from the Commissioners perspective, is the use of irrigation. That is what really burdens the District's system during this time of year, especially during a drought. He pointed out that on June 20th of last year, a million gallons of water was used in one day. This really stresses the system and affects how much can actually be pumped from all three wells. He also pointed out that the State tracks the water usage according to the District's conservation plan. The State mentions every year that Rye doesn't really have a problem of quantity of water, but a problem with conservation. He commented that it seems there is going to be the same issue this year as last year. At night, all the sprinkler systems go on and burden the water system to keep the tanks full, or up to minimum capacity, just to meet the need. The District has sufficient quantity of water. It is more of a surge quantity, which is no different than a surge on electricity for air conditioners. There is a peak demand for a short period of time and this is the same for water.

Mr. Borne asked if there is a cap of how much development can be done, which drives water and irrigation, where Rye may run out the ability to produce enough water on a regular basis to support the Town. There has to be a ceiling of how much water can be reduced and how many homes can be supported. He wonders if it should be known when the Town is approaching a level of development where the system is overstrained and does not have the ability to provide water to the residents.

Commissioner Ditto commented that another way to say it is; "How can the existing water that the District has on hand be managed, in order to support development?". In his mind, the question has to do with conservation or wise use of the water. He continued that one thing to think about is that the Cedar Run well has marginal quality of water with high iron and high manganese. Right now, NH DES and EPA are working on a standard for manganese. The current manganese levels in the Cedar Run well would exceed those standards, so, the current Cedar Run well would no longer be useable. The well the District is trying to put on line for replacement, doesn't have the same volume of water. How to use a well of marginal quality, and putting it back into the system, comes back to a treatment plan. This was discussed several years ago and it is not a cheap cost. This is another option to consider. This is the same for PFAS

contamination. Right now, the District is below the current New Hampshire standards, which were put into place a year ago last fall. If for some reason, the standards fall lower than they are now, that would also drive a treatment plant. He commented that this would be long term, but the District is still paying attention to it. He pointed out that Rye is not the only town that would be dealing with that issue.

Mr. Borne asked what is driving up the budget.

Commissioner Ditto stated that biggest item would in capital outlay. In the capital outlay budget, there is \$55,000 for a generator for the Bailey Brook complex. If power is lost, water would still be able to be provided through the District's system. He continued there is also \$160,000 in the capital budget for engineering, which includes the new Cedar Run well permitting process, the design for the Breakfast Hill tank renovation and the design for quantity of the new replacement well. There is also \$300,000 in the budget for actually connecting the new well. He thinks this is the biggest increase to the budget. He continued that they are sensitive to the tax rate and user fees, but the system still has to be maintained.

Mr. Cummins asked if the amount in dispute is under \$10,000 for people saying they didn't use the water.

Commissioner Ditto clarified that he is asking how much is being contested in the billing.

Mr. Cummins confirmed.

Superintendent Jones explained that when people call the office, they have concerns about their usage. He continued that they will go out and determine if that usage is from a leak or from actual usage. In most cases, people use the water. There are very few people who have an issue with their usage. So, the answer would be zero.

Mr. Cummins clarified it is under \$10,000.

Superintendent Jones confirmed.

Hearing no further comments, Moderator Scott called for a vote.

Motion passed.

Moderator Scott read Article 8.

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

Mr. Marion pointed out that the water sample tables in the annual report do not note the new N.H. regulations. He thinks it should have the N.H. criterion listed for clarification. He continued that he is not sure if they are officially in a drought. However, last year, there was a drought so conditions are behind. He asked if the District has parameters for issuing restrictions

before it gets too late. He encourages the District to act sooner, rather than later, in terms of a serious conservation effort.

Commissioner Hickson explained that the Commission has been working with the Select Board on a drought use plan and conservation of water.

Commissioner Ditto stated that in order to get ahead of the curve, it is important for people to start conserving and being in tune now versus waiting.

Mr. Winslow stated that the intention is to move forward with the State's five categories of drought. The Select Board and Water District Commissioners have developed a plan that calls for a level of action in each of the five categories. These actions will be communicated with homeowners within the next week or two. As each category increases, there will be set requirements to address use and irrigation.

Mr. Marion stated that he hopes everybody in town will be subject to the restrictions, when these are developed. He wants the golf courses to be subject, the same way as private residences.

Mr. Cummins commented that at the last Select Board meeting, the Commissioners and Selectmen did a great job laying out the restrictions. However, he is not going to take anything seriously until he sees signs saying not to irrigate.

No further business came before the meeting.

**Motion by Arthur Ditto to adjourn the meeting at 10:52 a.m. Seconded by Scott Marion.
Motion passed.**

Moderator Scott closed the Rye Water District Annual Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Donna Decotis".

Donna Decotis
RWD Clerk