

Lewes Board of Public Works
Special Meeting Minutes
August 23, 2024
1:00pm

1. WELCOME, CALL MEETING TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Panetta called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Board Members

Thomas Panetta

Barbara Curtis

D. Preston Lee, P.E.

Richard Nichols

Bob Heffernan- Zoom

Ex-Officio Members

Andrew Williams, Mayor

Austin Calaman, General Manager

Robin Davis, Assistant General Manager- Absent

Michael Hoffman, Legal Counsel

Others

Sharon Sexton, Special Project Coordinator

Charlie O'Donnell, GMB

Benjamin Hearn, GMB

Madeline Nichols

ACTION: *Mr. Nichols motioned to move to the executive session. Ms. Curtis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.*

- 3. Executive Session** *A strategy session including those involving legal advice or opinion from attorney-at-law where an open meeting could have adverse effect on the position of the public body with respect to pending or potential litigation; and discussion of the content of documents, excluded from the definition of "public record" where such discussion may disclose the contents of such documents. 29 Del. C. Section 10004(b)(4), (b)(6).*

ACTION: *Mr. Nichols motioned to return to the open session. Ms. Curtis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.*

4. Return to Open session at 2:00 pm

The Board returned to the open session at 2:00pm.

**5. Open forum/general discussion on a new water main canal crossing
INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/ACTION (Austin Calaman)**

President Panetta thanked BPW staff during the recent water main break under the canal and GMB for helping to get the process moving quickly to remedy the situation. The Board appreciates municipalities and the county for reaching out and offering assistance, especially the City of Lewes.

Mr. Calaman stated the new 16" water main project started about a year ago and pursued SRF funding that would cross on Gils Neck Road. Mr. Calaman reviewed the status of current canal crossing lines. Currently there are two lines under the canal. In 2019, a line was damaged during bridgework and was repaired. The same pipe failed later, the pipe was repaired again and kept offline as a backup. Teal was contracted to add a gate valve on Savannah Road for the ability to bring the pipe online if needed.

Mr. Calaman recapped the events of Tuesday, August 20, 2024:

- An electronic communication screen was frozen that displayed a full level at the tower, which signified the wells were not needed to run.
- When the event (main break) occurred, the tower drained quickly and created an instantons demand. The highest demand is typically in the morning anyway.
- Staff arrived onsite soon after the alert and wells were turned on to the manual version. The system could not overcome the 25–30-foot level.
- BPW staff reached out to state regarding the precautionary boil water notice. BPW staff collected and tested two samples for bacteria.
- At this point, it was undetermined where the break was, since you cannot see the water in the canal. When staff isolated the line under the canal, staff could detect a difference in pressure.
- GMB called in a dive team to confirm break.

Wednesday, August 21, 2024:

- While waiting for the test results from the State of Delaware, staff requested SPI Pharma back off on usage, which helped to stabilize pressure.
- Divers determined that the broken main was not in a condition to be repaired and was no longer below mud line.
- The second line that was previously repaired, was determined to be acceptable to use. This 12" line was tested for bacteria.
- Received test results and systemwide boil notice was lifted.

Thursday, August 22, 2024

- Received results from the 12" line and staff was able to move the line online.
- Repair is holding and pressure equalized.

Mr. Calaman stated that for the new canal crossing project, three potential locations were determined. Crossing at Gils Neck Road has less coordination with private property and less disruption to the community. Staff is working with the property owner and the State of Delaware. Permitting was submitted for the Army Corp and subaqueous. DelDot permit still needs to be submitted. The permits were submitted in 2024 as an emergency.

Ms. Curtis questioned what caused the communication failure. Mr. Calaman stated that a low-level alarm comes in every day throughout the week because of the high demand in the morning. It appears on the SCADA system and staff monitors it. When the tower dropped very quickly, a backup alarm kicked on. The communication froze and the display showed the water tower was at an extremely high height, which turned the wells off. The water level showed 230 feet which is not physically possible. Staff is actively discussing with SCADA integrators tighten how the alarms come through. With the rapid drop, the wells could not keep up with the demand, even with all five wells on.

President Panetta stated the staff, and the Board will complete lessons learned.

Mr. Lee stated that he received complaints that no one was answering the phones. Ms. Sexton stated that when a flood of calls come in, once all lines are busy, the phone continues to ring. Before regular business hours, the on-call service answered the phones.

Mayor Williams asked for confirmation that pressure across the system has returned. Mr. Calaman stated that pressure has stabilized, and staff tested pressure at the furthest hydrant in the system and the hydrant was reading 50 psi.

Mr. Hoffman clarified the city water is in service and stabilized. Today's discussion is about the timing of the new canal crossing. President Panetta stated that the Board approved moving forward on the new crossing last year.

ACTION: *Mr. Nichols motioned to authorize staff to proceed with the new crossing, obtain pricing and report back to the Board within two weeks. Mr. Lee seconded the motion.*

Staff will provide updates and progress of the project at the next meeting.

Mr. Lee questioned whether there is any need to identify how many prices are in the motion. Ms. Curtis stated that ideally the Board would like three, but since this is an emergency, the Board may have to go with what is received. The agenda for next week will be updated to include canal crossing watermain topic.

Mr. Nichols questioned the status of design documents. Mr. Calaman stated that the design is 98% complete.

Permits needed: Denrec, DelDot, SED, Core of Engineer, and Office of Drinking water.

Charlie O'Donnell, GMB suggested inviting three contractors and asking them to expedite their pricing. Specifications are close to being complete. Staff is working to still use SRF funds. If the BPW is not able to use SRF, the Board would take on funding on their own.

GMB, next week will be ready to solicit pricing next week.

President Panetta requested to set up meetings at the end of next week.

Mr. Hoffman clarified that prior to Tuesday's event the BPW had a watermain and an emergency redundancy line. Currently the BPW only has one line. The exigency is there because BPW does not currently have that redundancy.

Mr. Nichols asked what the magnitude of the permitting comments. Mr. O'Donnell stated generally there are none or very few comments. However, this project is out of the ordinary from most projects. DNREC has stated that they will be expediting the permitting review. GMB will contact Army Corp right away.

Since using SRF funding the project would be subject to prevailing wages.

The Board voted unanimously.

Call to the public

None.

Call to the press.

None.

6. **Executive Session** *A strategy session including those involving legal advice or opinion from attorney-at-law where an open meeting could have adverse effect on the position of the public body with respect to pending or potential litigation; and discussion of the content of documents, excluded from the definition of "public record" where such discussion may disclose the contents of such documents. 29 Del. C. Section 10004(b)(4), (b)(6).*

None.

7. **Adjournment**

ACTION: *Mr. Nichols motioned to adjourn. Mr. Lee seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.*

President Lee adjourned the meeting at 2:35pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Sharon Sexton
Special Projects Coordinator

D. Preston Lee, P.E., Secretary

Date