

TRI-TOWN JOINT REVIEW COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
December 10, 2024
10:00 AM-11:00 AM
MS Teams

In attendance: Bruce Hoar, Chelsea Mandigo, Jess Morris, Annie Costandi, Aaron Martin, Kendall Chamberlin, Jeff Lewis, Wayne Elliott, Regina Mahony

1. Draft meeting minutes from May 15, 2024, approval

- a. Bruce made a motion to accept the minutes as drafted, Kendall second. Approved.

2. FY24 Reconciliation

- a. The group reviewed and discussed the initial fund balance for each community. Final reports will be received from the auditor soon. Historically, fund balances are not returned to the respective community unless a request is made.
- b. Williston will likely be requesting for some of their balance to be returned since it is approaching \$350,000.

3. FY26 Preliminary Budget and Wholesale Rate Discussion

- a. Discussion occurred around the FY26 Preliminary Budget.
 - i. The City Council instructed each department to limit their proposed budget for FY26 to a 3% increase over FY25. Achieving this will be nearly impossible for the utilities this year, as Wastewater has proposed a 5.2% increase.
 - ii. The primary reason for the cost increase is related to the management of chemicals and biosolids. Additionally, there is a new line item for a stormwater fee of \$4,000. This fee is associated with the amount of impervious surface area at the Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) as part of the new stormwater utility.
 - iii. The budget was created in September and submitted in October. Notifications of service increases have already exceeded the estimated amounts.
 - iv. Chelsea mentioned that vendors providing budget quotes for parts and capital projects indicated to estimate a 10% price increase for purchases made after July 1, 2025.
 - v. Jess noted that the budget for capital transfer did not increase by \$20,000 as it has historically but remained level because the facility needs to replace 11 computers. By keeping the amount, the same, it funds the necessary replacement.
- b. Discussion occurred around the wholesale rate.
 - i. It is too early to determine the final wholesale rate for FY26, as the calculation depends on the flow rates of each community. However, the preliminary rate indicates a decrease of 2.6%. There have been signs of inflow and infiltration (I&I), particularly regarding the City's flow. To establish the preliminary rate, the average flow from the past three fiscal years was used.

4. 10-year evaluation presentation and discussion by A&E

- a. Wayne Elliott reviewed Sections 1, 8, and 9 of the 10-year evaluation report which included the Executive Summary, Selection of Alternatives and Capital Projects.

i. Key points discussed.

1. The addition of secondary clarifier #3 provided an increase of 100,000 gallons in flow but it was chosen not to amend the wastewater permit after the 2011-2014 upgrade.
2. A discussion took place regarding the advantages and disadvantages of adding this flow to the permitted total, increasing the facility's capacity to 3.4 million gallons per day (MGD). It was mentioned that the state is significantly behind in processing permits for facilities, which might make this request a lower priority for the state to review or approve. Additionally, there needs to be a discussion about who would have ownership of the additional flow, considering that each facility currently holds about one-third of the permitted flow.
3. Section 5 of the report discusses a software model designed to assist operators in making process decisions. The City has allocated a budget to purchase this software, ensuring that the model developed during the evaluation process can be transferred and utilized in the future.
4. The projects developed as part of the 10-year evaluation were reviewed in detailed. A discussion occurred about which projects could be conducted in-house and utilize capital funds versus which projects would likely need an outside funding source.
 - a. Main projects discussed- flow equalization building, aeration tank expansion, digester waste gas burner, filtration, UV addition, sludge dewatering equipment, Anaerobic digestion upgrades.
5. A project priority ranking system was developed to evaluate projects, classifying them into three groups: high, medium, and low priority.
6. A discussion occurred on the fate of the land application of biosolids program which likely can go away if PFAS regulations are issued by EPA. Chelsea is working on applying for recertification of the land application which can last for 5 years before needing to reapply.

- ii. It was highly recommended by the group that the 10% increase in transfer to capital funds be restored to ensure we continue to have sufficient funds.

5. High Strength waste surcharge policy BOD Allocation

- a. The influent design BOD from the 10-year evaluation was inserted into the policy.
- b. A discussion occurred on tracking the BOD per community if allocations were assigned as it's hard to isolate the Town of Essex flow from the City of Essex Junction flow given it enters the City in multiple areas. Also, the BOD of septage received would need to be accounted for and subtracted so it's not applied to the community's allocations.
- c. More work needs to be done to figure out these details before the policy is finalized.

6. Proposed meeting dates for 2025-all Tuesdays

- a. February 25, 2025, April 8, 2025, July 29, 2025, December 9, 2025

7. Adjourned: 11:20 AM