

# Blandford/Chester Shared Water Services Meeting Notes – June 2, 2022 (prepared by Ira Brezinsky)

In attendance: Christopher Dunne, Brad Curry, Bob Daley, Tom Bean, Lyle Snide, Ira Brezinsky

## Draft Job Description

- 40 hour per week salaried position is preferred in Chester.
- Position Purpose specific details need to be provided by each Board. Once these details are provided, the Position Purpose will be updated.
- Currently, the Blandford Water Operator reports to the Superintendent. The Water Board has not been receiving reports, but
- 

## Feedback from each town

Bob Daley (Chester)

- Chester has been dealing with the ongoing issue of large water loss of unknown origin. Daily usage should be approximately 35,000 gallons, but has been at 100,000 gallons. It has recently been reduced to 65,000 gallons. Clear wells have now been replenished.
- Once under control, hydrant flushing will be the next step. This has not been done in years.
- Since December 6, the town has been testing for TOC twice per week. Total TOC's in Horn Pond are double that of Austin Brook Reservoir.
- Pending resolution of water loss and flushing issues, the Board is planning to commence discussion with DEP to allow for a potential water source change.
- Tom Bean and Mass Rural Water, as well as 2 other contractors, have been utilized to get things under control.

## Comparison of Blandford and Chester Water Departments

- Updated spreadsheet is attached.
- Although staffing is handled differently in each town (i.e. varying use of contracted services, other departments, internal staff), total amount of time and resources needed in each town is comparable.
- There is general agreement that, in a shared services arrangement, two fulltime staff will be able to handle most responsibilities for the two departments. The two shared positions would combine water operator, distribution, and maintenance duties, and should significantly reduce the need for contracted services.
- Going forward, Highway Department in Chester will not be used as often (or at all) to handle Water Department emergencies and/or maintenance. A retired Water Operator has recently been hired to handle those responsibilities, in conjunction with contracted services. Immediate activities will be hydrant flushing, valve exercising/replacement, etc.
- Water bills in both towns are significantly higher than larger systems. Blandford is substantially higher than Chester, however Chester is proposing a 33% increase for FY23.
- Both towns are doing a rate study. RCAP study is expected to be arrive in Chester any day.

## Job description Shared Water Superintendent/Operator

A draft job description was presented with several questions left to be resolved.

- Who will the person report to?
- In Chester, Water Board hires water staff.
- In Blandford, Water Board screens and SB hires.
- Chester prefers salary. Blandford TBD

There is concern over how to find qualified people at competitive wages.

#### **Next Steps**

- Review and finalize Water Superintendent job description.
- Consider a separate short-term agreement with an end date that would allow the towns to begin working together (sharing services) on an interim basis.
- Determine timeline for posting a position
- Analyze and discuss budget similarities and differences with a goal of drafting a proposed shared services budget.

#### **Action Items**

- Follow up in both towns to complete the questionnaires (Ira) - Done
- Prepare draft job description, including potential salary and benefits (Ira) – Done (salary/benefits to be included as part of budget discussion)
- Prepare a report of existing conditions (Ira) – To be completed for July meeting
- Chester to forward report from RCAP - Done

#### **Timeline**

- May – August Committee to meet at least monthly to determine if a shared services agreement makes sense and is achievable
- September 15-30 Provide a draft proposal to the committee which identifies the most advantageous solution.
- October 1-31 Present findings to the public, soliciting feedback through public hearings and other methods.
- November 1-30 Refine the proposal, based on public feedback, and construct a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)
- December 1-31 Approve and begin implementation of the MOA.