

## **Working Group # 6 – Report to Water Resources Task Force**

**Responsible for Questions 4, 5, 6 and 7**

### **Town Responsibilities, Authority and Accountability**

#### **#4.) How is the town acting to manage water demand?**

Town has a tiered water rate structure based on the number of cubic feet of water used. The lowest rate for the lowest water users. Now at \$8.36/100 cubic feet for the first 900 cubic feet of water used. The highest rate on the highest water users. Now at 8.96/100 cubic feet of water over 39,000 cubic feet used. There are six user categories based on the amount of water used.

Rates are reviewed annually and recommendations made from the DPW to the BOS to establish the rate for each fiscal year. Water and sewer bills to the homeowners on a quarterly basis.

Conservation/Use of Gray Water: Conservation practices are not as common in MBTS as they are in surrounding cities and towns. Many communities around us are now in water restrictions. MBTS has an adequate water supply at present in the LSW and the Gravelly and Round Pond Complex. Restrictions on water use for watering. Lawn irrigation and vehicle washing have been instituted in the past. Conservation practices need to have the acceptance by the users as well as enforcement. In 2016, the last big drought impact in MBTS, the BOS instituted watering restrictions. Many large volume users continued to use the water for their irrigation systems and the BOS received many letters and e mails basically saying – “as long as I can pay for the water, I am going to use it.” Historically, the largest volumes are pumped in the summer due to the large number of irrigation systems in use around town.

Possible Use of Gray Water for irrigation systems needs to be investigated. How can the gray water be collected and then re-used in the irrigation systems?

#### **#5.) How is the town acting to manage the water supply?**

**DPW** – The DPW manages all aspects of the town infrastructure and property related to the water distribution system. DPW also manages the collection of a waste water, but that is not part of this discussion.

Two Reactions: The Town is fortunate to have Chuck Dam as DPW Director. He is extremely knowledgeable in water systems and issues. After many years of not putting enough money in the capital budget to fund capital improvements in the water system, the last 8 to 10 years have seen major improvements in this category of capital budgeting.

**BOS/Select Board**- This group acts as the Water and Sewer Commissioners. They set the yearly rates for water and sewer as previously mentioned. The Board can issue use/conservation restrictions based on drought or conditions on the distribution system. The Board also negotiates an agreement with the ECC for an easement of the town-owned land as part of the 6th and 7<sup>th</sup> holes of the ECC golf course.

**BOH** – Ultimate responsibility to assure safe drinking water gets delivered to residences and locations where food and drink are served in town. Also administer Title 5 to prevent contamination of drinking water supplies from septic system and cesspools. The BOH as monitors the water quality at beaches and public bathing area to assure those are safe from contamination and safe for swimming.

The BOH can also recommend adopting local water supply regulations to protect present and future water supply sites. The MECT has proposed regulations to preserve drinking water in the context of public health. The proposal is being reviewed at present and may come before the BOH for discussion soon.

Now that the DEP has lifted the sewer consent order with a letter dated December 7, 2021, the use of the new sewer capacity limits is up to the town and BOH. The letter lifting the consent order suggests using the additional capacity to tie into residences with problematic existing septic systems as well as growth and small commercial establishments. The ultimate decision is under the jurisdiction of the BOH under Title 5 regulations.

**Planning Board and ZBA** - PB receives yearly reports from the ECC on the actions taken by the Club on the town-owned land near the LSW and covered by the easement.

Work to develop new water protection overlay districts and/or By-laws to protect present and /or future water supplies. The Zoning By-Law (Section 10.3) is the Overlay District for Ground and Surface Water Protection. With the research being done by Scott Horsley and other working groups, the town may need to expand this district as we learn more about the town's water sources.

#### **#6.) What are neighboring towns doing to manage their water supply and demand issues?**

This information can come from Senator Tarr's North Ashore Water Resiliency Task Force. Chuck Dam and others from MBTS are representing MBTS. This task force will report major differences between the cities and towns that are in the Ipswich River Watershed and those that are not. (MBTS is not in the Ipswich River Watershed.) The neighboring cities and town have varied water supplies, including groundwater supplies and/or wells.

Currently the MBTS, the water supply is adequate for the existing residential and business customers. But one large build-out like the 40B project on Shingle Hill could use a portion of our excess capacity and put us into more frequent water conservation emergencies.

Also, in MBTS, the adequate funding of water infrastructure for I & I detection and remediation, re-lining or replacing of water supply pipes and work to improve our water supply facilities is a high priority.

The Town of Hamilton has received a grant to investigate regionalization of water supplies with their neighboring towns and as well as the Salem-Beverly Water Board.

#### **#7.) What are some of the best practices nationally?**

**There are many areas to be investigated to gather all possible information on this topic.**

**Protecting Watershed Areas:** Purchasing land in the watershed areas or getting Conservation Restrictions on the land can make major differences to protect the land as well as the water supplies in the land area or in close proximity to the land. This purchasing is made more difficult is when the

property comes available, the town cannot spend money that it does not have approved for the purchase. The expense has to be approved by the town meeting and the town is not able to spend above the assessed value of the land.

**Managing Demand:** Demand can be managed by raising the water rates to keep the use down or by instituting conservation rates. More research is necessary to investigate how conservation rates can be instituted and how they work.

Long Term Planning: The MBTS long-range budget looks at infrastructure expenses in a 5 year and 10-year model. Making sure proper planning and then adequate financing occurs at the annual town meeting. This is one topic we can consider mentioning in our flyer and at town meetings where water expenses are discussed. The town is also working on a CREAT Grant (Climate Resiliency Evaluation Assessment Tool) from the EPA. Chuck, Nate, Sue Croft and Peter Colarusso are working on this for the town.