

**WATERTOWN, CONNECTICUT  
WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY  
SPECIAL MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2023**

**1. Call Meeting to Order**

Chairman James Sugden called the Special Meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

**2. Roll Call**

Members present: Keith Franson, Michael Garassino, Edward Wilk, Mario Mancini, Joe Masi, James Sugden

Members excused: Marisa Mancini-Cavallo

Others present: Vincent Caterino, Mark Raimo, Jerry Lukowski

**3. Public Participation:**

Mr. Sugden: Item #3, Public participation. I don't see any members of the public here this evening. That being said we'll move along to Item #4.

**4. Executive Session – Discuss Waterbury Litigation**

A motion was made by Mr. Masi to move into an Executive Session. Mr. Franson seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passes.

*The meeting goes into Executive Session at 7:02 P.M. per recording device.*

*The meeting comes out of Executive Session at approximately 8:00 P.M.*

**5. Correspondence – None.**

Mr. Sugden: We are now out of Executive Session. Moving along to Item # 5, Correspondence, we have none.

**6. Old Business:**

a. Discussion regarding Water and Sewer Department Organizational Analysis

Mr. Sugden: I'll turn it over to the Town Manager at this time.

Mr. Raimo: Mark Raimo, Town Manager, thank you. I'd like to congratulate Vinny on his 15 years of service. He's been very helpful in me integrating back into the town. We wish you a lot of luck. I'd like to introduce Jerry Lukowski, our Public Works Director. I don't think Jerry knows everybody, if you want to introduce yourself, go around the table.

*Board members introduce themselves to Jerry Lukowski.*

Mr. Raimo: Today Jerry, myself and Vinny had a long discussion on where Water and Sewer is, where we need to go in the next twelve months. As we talked about, a week or so when we met, we'd like to reevaluate over the next year and figure out if this would be a workable organizational plan where Public Works Director oversees the Water and Sewer Authority. We concluded the next twelve months I think is light enough, although there are quite a few infrastructure things that have to be taken care of, that we can work through this analysis. I thought it would be a good idea for Jerry to come, you can ask him questions of his background, so you can get a good feeling of where he's at and his command ability to actually do this thing because we are not only busy on the town side but there's enough work that goes on. Vinny has agreed to stay on as a consultant and we did do a little research and we do understand even though he will be retiring from the Town, if he stays under a certain amount of hours, we could keep him on. So, we're going to work him very hard between now and the time he starts his new job but then thereafter we can probably work Saturdays and to get us transitioned. That's kind of the jest of it. We did talk about meeting with the staff tomorrow to give them a general idea of the changes that are going to happen, so nobody as to worry about where we're going as an organization. We want to make sure everybody feels solid and comfortable that the Watertown Water and Sewer Authority is staying in business.

Mr. Masi: You're speaking as though this is complete. When we left at the meeting, all of us were supposed to review this, come back and discuss it. You sound like you've arranged this whole thing in terms of how it's going to operate.

Mr. Raimo: Well we have to transition in some way or the other by January 6<sup>th</sup>. So I'm going to need somebody to at least take over, if we can't come to some agreement that we're going to analyze the position, then I'm going to have to find somebody to run Water and Sewer temporarily, I'm not capable of that.

Mr. Masi: Mark, that's fine, that's one of the things we were going to discuss, whether Vinny was going to stay on or whether perhaps we were going to get a consultant or whether or not we were going to use Jerry. And we had not made any decision.

Mr. Raimo: Correct. And again, just as a reminder, the authority to make the decision is under my hat as Town Manager. So I have to make these plans to at least move forward for the short term. I'm not saying, I want to have a discussion, I want to bring along the Water and Sewer Authority Commission and work together to move forward. But I have to make some contingencies, temporarily.

Mr. Masi: I understand that the policy making body of the Water and Sewer Authority is the Water and Sewer Authority. The ultimate decision on how this departments run, is the Water and Sewer Authority, you're the Administrative Assistant.

Mr. Raimo: I beg to differ with you. I don't agree with you actually.

Mr. Masi: I for one, have a different view. My view is that we should either get a consultant to take over from the time Vinny leaves to the time we get a Superintendent that's an LSPE, unless you have a PELS we're going to have to contract all this stuff out. Now, we're going to contract big stuff out no matter what. We need that service. But the normal short-term extensions and such work, we always did in house. And we're not going to be able to do that unless we have an LSPE.

Mr. Raimo: I do have a letter from Attorney Jessell, that does state that the Authority is strictly on my position, to make this decision. I'd be happy to go upstairs and make a copy of it, but again, I want to work with the Water and Sewer Authority to move forward. And again, I have to make some decisions because come Friday, Vinny walks out the door, if he gets hit by a bus, he's out of the picture. And this is a temporary transition period.

Mr. Masi: You know I made an effort to get meetings going weeks ago so we wouldn't be in this position.

Mr. Caterino: Here's the thing. What Mark didn't mention is that they will be advertising for an Assistant Superintendent / Engineer, I think right away.

Mr. Raimo: Yeah, I'm working on the job description and I'll be presenting that at the next Town Council meeting.

Mr. Masi: But that's backwards. You should be looking for a Superintendent. You don't hire an Assistant and introduce him to a potential Superintendent, then they're at odds. You want the head of the class directing the class. And if you want help, you advertise for help after that.

Mr. Caterino: The situation here is Jerry Lukowski has a very strong background in Water and Sewer. He was the Director of Operations.

Mr. Masi: But you have to understand, up to this point I haven't heard one word about what your qualifications are.

Mr. Sugden: I think Mark has a plan and he just asked us to ask questions to Jerry for those of us who don't know Jerry, to ask him his qualifications and background if anybody cares to ask, I'm sure he'll be glad to tell us.

Mr. Lukowski: Good evening, to the Board and to Mark, if you want me to help out, if you don't, you know, you don't need me. I probably have seventy years of experience because I have two jobs throughout my career. I just retired from the Army National Guard with thirty- six years in uniform. Held every rank. Retired, I was a General Officer. The majority of those thirty-six years, twenty-five of them I was full time. So, those other eleven years I've held full time jobs in other

municipalities in towns. Combat Engineer for the first seventeen years. I've learned more to blow up things, than to build things. The middle part of my career I did \$975 million dollars' worth of construction in the state of Connecticut. Where I had a lot of Engineers working for me. Throughout the State, wearing a federal hat and a state hat, bringing the federal and state money into Connecticut. We probably brought more money in than Texas, Florida, and California who had much bigger National Guard units than us. In between I worked for the city of Stamford, ran all their facilities. So good they gave me the Board of Ed with eighteen schools. Unfortunately, 9/11 happened, I went back full time into uniform. And that's when I took the facilities program. I got stuck in facilities; they didn't want me to leave. And then I had an opportunity to go to MDC. So I had about a thousand full time employees, I had the water and sewer, had all the sewer treatment plants, I had all the water treatment plants. And about a dozen municipalities, about four hundred thousand customers. So I think it is kind of a unique opportunity to be here for the Board and for Mark and for the residents of the town. Then they offered me to come back in as Chief of Staff for the National Guard. So the last five years I was the Chief of Staff working for the Commissioner, as a Colonel in the Guard and I ran the Operations for the National Guard out of the Hartford Armory. Today was tough for me because I served in every inauguration since the late 1980's, every four years helping out up at the State Capitol. So that's kind of the short version, I can go on and on. I do have an Undergrad in Civil, got my Masters in Environmental and unfortunately when I was trying to get my other credentials, 9/11 happened. We got four kids. Last year all four are in college at the same time. So even though I'm retired and collecting retirement, I still have to scrap and pay some bills for college. It's been pretty neat coming in, I've been onboard for two months. It's also like a shock to me too because there's a lot of great projects. We got the Woolson St. bridge out to bid. Geunseytown's going on and just as you take a project down, other projects are coming up. I think I'm fortunate, we have a great Highway Department. We got a great Transfer Station. We got a great Engineering Department and that's what attracted me the most here. Is having Engineers on staff. Some of our GIS experts and how they put things together. You want to go out to a consultant, it's two to three times the cost for that. And who are you going to find that's out there? I would still be in uniform. If they asked me to come back in uniform today, I'll go back in uniform. But unfortunately there's discrimination for age in the military for a good thing and all I could serve was thirty years as an officer. So, I'm a mustang, I made Sergeant first, before I went to become an officer. My thirty years was up plus my six years enlisted for a total of thirty-six years. When I first started in the military, I was construction surveyor. That's how I got into the engineering battalion, how I got into construction. It's been a neat ride to come to this point. It's been a surprise too, talking to Vinny and to Mark and I thought we had a very productive meeting, hitting all the points with pressure reducing valves and meter stations and if one tank goes down, could you run the rest of the town on the other tank? Also there's a well field for the Fire District that comes into the third tank that's in town for the Fire District. That's probably without saying. Put a lot of water mains in across our camp in Niantic, Bradley Air National Guard Base, Groton Airport, both water and sewer and the MDC was great but the opportunity to come back in full time once again to be the Chief of Staff, the Colonel of the National Guard. With the MDC it was an interesting year, one winter in 2014 we had four hundred plus water main breaks. So, we had three to five crews out every night repairing water

mains. I think a few things on our system, just from a quick look, is the redundancy. Just that great thirty-six inch main that we have, but that's all we have. What happens if that main goes down? I love infrastructure, I love studying things to see how things work. Sir, if you have other options then either way I'm good with it and I just know right now Vinny could tell you if you're going to try and find somebody that's out there, with all the funny money coming out of the federal government that our kids are going to have to pay for, you can't find anybody out on the street. I think Lou put out a Water Superintendent for Cromwell, it's been out for a long time. You can't find folks that are in the room with Mike and Michele and Vinny and myself that are out there. It's not going to be easy because I still have to keep the other operation going. Roy set up the town with all these great projects and Mark kept them going. I live in Middlebury, next town over. One of my mentors I use for Public Works is Ed St. John.

Mr. Masi: One of the things that I was concerned about was the fact that you have all these projects as the Director of Public Works. Is there time to give this Authority and it's customers what it needs in terms of the existing system and the fact that we want to spread out within some of the infrastructure money that's coming down? We started on that, we went sour on it for a while because of the breakdown of the cost. But if you can, then that's great.

Mr. Raimo: Can I just interject. My thought process is I want to look at all these positions from a leader's position. You know, how do we move forward and make the town better? We have staff members and they're in attendance tonight that work very hard for the Water and Sewer Authority. How do we develop them to move further in their careers? Normally I would say yes we need to go with the top dog and bring him in and then let him fill his position in. We have a unique opportunity to bring in a second person, evaluate the process and see where we go from there. Maybe if Jerry finds that he can't maintain this, that we can then take that person who came in as a secondary person and move them up and we've had time to develop our younger staff members to move up through that process. But if we don't take a chance and try something new, we're going to just keep doing what we've been doing. This is a perfect opportunity and I feel more comfortable because Vinny's willing to be in the background to help us make this transition. If Vinny was leaving completely, I may have some reservations because there's a lot of institutional knowledge in his position moving forward. But its almost a safety matter.

Mr. Mancini: How much time are you willing to pitch in?

Mr. Caterino: Right now, I can do maybe six hours a week.

Mr. Sugden: I think we have a unique opportunity here and coming from the Public Works world myself, I certainly understand the need of getting qualified people and talented people has become more difficult. We have people within our own organization that are willing to help here, it only makes sense to build them up. We've got some people here that certainly work within the towns, knowing what they need here and working in other towns. This town has a

unique opportunity because we do have an engineering staff. Watertown's definitely got a unique situation.

Mr. Mancini: Mike is capable. He very well knows the system.

Mr. Boutote: I know the system very well. I'm perfectly capable of every, day to day operations. It's the engineering and the capital projects that I'm concerned about. I would definitely need help with.

Mr. Franson: The office staff up there, they run the office all by themselves. All they need is somebody to over see them. Jerry's going to be the overseer, let's try it.

Mr. Caterino: Michele and Mike could handle day to day operations, no problem.

Mr. Raimo: Mr. Mancini for your benefit, last meeting, we actually talked about upgrading the office staff so there's really no supervisor in the office, so Vinny was tasked with having the over seeing of that office. I'd like to restructure that office as well and putting a manager in the office to worry about collections and billings so that we can take that off the plate of whoever's in charge of that as we move forward. Our tax office, although Water and Sewer doesn't deal with as much as the tax office, is the same structure with a supervisor in there with two employees underneath and I feel very strongly that we should do that with water and sewer because right now you have three people who really don't answer to anybody. And the burden has been on Vinny to regulate things. Michele has stepped up and done a lot of improvements in that department but I think we should finalize that and memorialize that and actually have a supervisor in there. So that would be part of that plan as well.

Mr. Garassino: Jerry, how does your day start now? Does it start at 7 o'clock with the Public Works?

Mr. Lukowski: I probably get on the road about 6:30-7 o'clock and take about an hour to get to the office because I'm looking at different things across the town. Mostly what I look at is drainage issues that we have. Mainly around Steele Brook and Turkey Brook. There's been a few of them that we've had and I'm trying to figure them out. This morning I got a great GIS map. Usually my goal is to get to Highway every other day, and I haven't and Jim could attest to this part is I think it's very tough to do the budget here in town because there's about 200-250 line items here in Watertown, in Southbury there was 39 line items. So, lately the past week or two I've been all about budget. And trying to recreate the past two years making sure everything's there. I talked to Bob daily, twice a day, I try to get out there every other day. I don't like leading from my desk, you need to be out in the field to see what's going on, and not to get in their britches, but to see what kind of support and help that they need.

Mr. Garassino: So how would you do both? How would you do Public Works and Water and Sewer in a forty-hour week?

Mr. Lukowski: It's a thirty-five-hour week. But I probably do about forty-five. I'm not going to be there every day at roll call when everyone's coming in the office with a great board on the side with who's got the assignments with all the work orders that day. If I could hold and maintain the line, I think that would be a huge task.

Mr. Garassino: So, you're aware of everything going on it sounds like?

Mr. Lukowski: Correct. And Vinny and I were talking about this where usually you try to get the SCADA system to tell you there's high flows, and you get alarms set up so you know what's coming in in the middle of the night. Unless you see something, usually the police will give you a call that there's water flowing down the road or you get an alarm on a tank because you totally drained the tank for storage.

Mr. Mancini: Is Paul still the town Engineer?

Mr. Lukowski: Yes, he is.

Mr. Mancini: He's a lot of help too.

Mr. Raimo: He is. Actually we talked today about how we can integrate utilizing our Assistant Engineers, our technicians, to help Water and Sewer and we talked about how we can use some of the line item money to have individuals work on Saturdays which would save greatly from going outside the direct engineering.

Mr. Lukowski: The GIS, the geographical mapping information system is taking all this information and making sure that it's on the map. When something goes down you want to have that tablet in front of you when you're trying to figure out and looking to as build to where everything is going in the town.

Mr. Garassino: So we're looking to maybe elevate Mike and Michele in the job positions, maybe?

Mr. Raimo: Well, I can't say that we're going to elevate Michele because I have to put this out for general application but Michele has a lot of experience and I would assume that she would rise to the occasion and we would be able to hire. Mike, we would have to look and see as we move along and identify how that position would look. And again I'm not saying let's make this move and let it happen, there's a lot of work that Jerry's going to have to take on and there's going to be a lot of work that I'm going to have to take on. It's easier for us to say let's just go hire somebody else because it makes it easier for him and I. I just think for you as a commission to buy into this, it gives you a short amount of time to make the evaluation to say yes it's going to work or no it's not going to work. We're getting the best bang for our buck. And we can walk away in a year from now.

Mr. Garassino: Are we going to advertise for an assistant?

Mr. Raimo: As soon as I can do that, we'll have that listed by the end of this month.

Mr. Sugden: To reiterate what I said earlier, I think we've got a great opportunity here, I think the towns got a great opportunity with Jerry's background and having individuals here that we can –

Mr. Franson: If Jerry's brave enough to take it on.

Mr. Lukowski: The DOT has an Engineering Department of like a thousand engineers and they lost five hundred in the past two years. So, everybody's getting sucked up by the DOT and then they're outsourcing everything. As we were talking about this this morning, if you outsource Vinny's job, you're going to pay three hundred thousand a year. I can't say I can do thirty-five hours and thirty-five hours, a total of seventy hours. Part of it to for retirement is to give back a few things to my family when I was never home. I'm definitely going to give the town forty to forty-five. And during emergencies I'll be here all the time. But I need to devote time to my family too.

Mr. Mancini: Are you familiar with the entire system?

Mr. Lukowski: Not yet. But the questions I have from this morning, I want to go look at the meter station. Vinny probably has plans and different things to keep on working on different areas.

Mr. Raimo: My suggestion to you, as a commission, I need to move forward so that we can be consistent. Maybe we meet back in ninety days and then in six months we can do short-term evaluations. If we find its not working, we go out and we fill the position. If we find that it's working and its settling in, then we continue to move forward. But again, its easy for us to go out and get the job filled, I just think from your perspective it would be good to just do the evaluation and then we move forward. As an interim, that way if we find the work load is just too much, Jerry can say it's not working, it'll be his call, and we move along.

Mr. Garassino: I'd like to have Jerry come aboard, if it's too much, it's too much. We're still going to look for an assistant?

Mr. Raimo: Immediately. I'm going to start the process. I'll make sure that job description is done and to the council for the next meeting and then post it immediately. The only question is, I would like to move forward right away with restructuring the office staff. Because I'm going to have to work with the union, as long as you're in agreement because there would be some money changes, we'd have to figure that out.

Mr. Sugden: I strongly agree that we need to have somebody who's in charge in that office rather than have an equal. That's just my opinion.



Mr. Raimo: So, I'll work with the union to get that ball rolling and then get that process rolling as well. Are we in agreement?

Mr. Sugden: I think we have a consensus that we agree on the concept and move forward.

Mr. Raimo: The other thing is I will have to discuss with Jerry, a stipend to compensate him a little bit. I'll have some discussions with him and I'll bring it back to the commission at your next meeting to approve that. He's already on the books for Public Works, it would just be a stipend that you would pay out of the budget for water and sewer. Which could come out of Vinny's line item, which any consulting could come out of as well. I think there's enough money in that line item without issue.

Mr. Sugden: Okay, any other discussion on that? Hearing none, moving along on the agenda, # 7.

**7. New Business – None**

Mr. Sugden: We have none. Which brings us to item #8.

**8. Adjournment**

A motion was made by Mr. Franson to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 P.M. Mr. Mancini seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Keith Franson, Secretary  
Water and Sewer Authority

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_