

# AQUARION CUSTOMER ADVISORY COUNCIL

## HINGHAM/HULL DISTRICT

JANUARY 17, 2006

### Organization of the Meeting

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Hingham/Hull District Customer Advisory Council was held on January 17, 2006, at the Hingham Water Treatment Facility, 900 Main Street, Hingham, MA.

**Present:** Alison Ferrante, Hingham  
Rick Mattila, Hull  
Jay Meschino, Hull  
Michael Nuesse, Hull  
Roger Sullivan, Hingham  
Calvin Wilbur, Hingham

Larry Bingaman, Senior Vice President – Operations  
Shawn Bradford, Director – Operations  
Robert Roland, Water Resources Manager  
Ann Hiltz, Executive Assistant

**Absent:** Robert Gaughen, North Cohasset  
Jay Meschino, Hull

The meeting was called to order at approximately 6 p.m. by Larry Bingaman. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the September 23, 2005 meeting. After opening comments, a presentation was given that provided updates on Aquarion's Cohasset Interconnection, Water Supply, Free Street Well No. 4, a proposed Cell Tower on a section of land at Aquarion's Hingham Water Treatment Facility (HWTF), and a review of Aquarion's Capital Budget.

### Cohasset Interconnection

The interconnection with Cohasset was activated on November 17, 2005; it was a smooth transition and to date there have been no customer complaints. Cohasset water is mixed with Aquarion water at Aquarion's Turkey Hill storage tank nightly at 1 a.m. and then distributed in the morning to customers in Northern Hingham, Hull and Northern Cohasset. Currently, approximately 20,000 gallons per day (GPD) is being taken into our system or about 0.66% of the storage capacity of the Turkey Hill storage tank. Aquarion and Cohasset operators are monitoring the transfer and quality of the water nightly.

A news release was sent on Tuesday, November 15, 2005 to the *Hull Times*, *Hingham Journal* and *Cohasset Mariner* to inform customers, as promised in meetings with Town officials, that the interconnection would be activated on November 17. While articles appeared in the *Journal* and *Mariner* informing Aquarion's customers of the activation, the *Hull Times* did not do a story.

## **Water Supply Update**

On July 14, 2005, the Weir River Basin was reclassified by the MA Water Resources Commission from “unclassified” to “highly stressed”. As a result, Aquarion will need to achieve certain benchmarks concerning water supply, including reducing unaccounted-for water to 10 percent of less, maintain per capita water consumption at 65 gallons per day or less, and promote further conservation so water consumption in the summer is no more than 20 percent greater than winter usage.

As discussed previously, these new standards could become a requirement as part of the approval for a new water supply (such as Free Street Well #4) or to increase the Company’s existing registration to allow more production from existing wells. The new targets could result in such actions as the imposition of mandatory outside watering restrictions starting as early as May 1<sup>st</sup> each year to bring the summer/winter usage ratio into compliance. Aquarion has also had discussions with the Hingham Water Supply Committee about introducing a by-law requiring rain detectors for new irrigation systems, and imposing fines on customers who violate the outside watering restrictions.

In order further reduce the unaccounted for water, which is currently about 11-13 percent, a leak survey of the entire Hingham/Hull system was conducted in the fall 2005.

## **Free Street #4**

The Company is evaluating bringing Free Street Well #4 on line to help meet future growth and water demands. Under the Water Management Act (WMA), Aquarion is only permitted on an annual average daily withdrawal rate of 3.51 million gallons/day. The WMA withdrawal limit is a numerical average based on the average daily production from 1980 – 1985. When a water utility seeks to increase its WMA registration/permit or permit a new supply source, the DEP has rigorous review process to ensure no impact on stream flows or the aquifer. Included in the DEP’s consideration is the summer/winter water consumption differential referred to above. The DEP has yet to determine a policy to deal with the increased summer demand in coastal communities caused by the seasonal influx of customers.

Various water supply options are being reviewed by the engineering firm Tata & Howard who was selected through competitive bidding. Tata & Howard is expected to have completed by the end of the first quarter of 2006 an initial evaluation of projected population growth, projected water demand, various water supply options, including permitting of Free Street Well #4 and the amount of water to be sought.

## **Cell Tower**

A Town of Hingham Bylaw was passed in 2003 that created an overlay district for a cell tower to be placed on Aquarion Water Company property at 900 Main Street, Hingham. Sprint is seeking a permit to place the cell tower on the property. While Sprint’s application with the Hingham Planning Board is for a 120-foot monopole tower (flag pole style), the Planning Board has suggested a 140 ft. monopole, which would be approximately 45–55 feet above the tree level, and could accommodate more than three carriers. The electro magnetic waves from the tower would be significantly lower than the minimum allowed by the Federal government.

Representative Garrett Bradley is leading a group of abutters in opposition to the cell tower and has asked the town to consider alternative sites, such as the Town forest and DAS technology, which places a small antenna on light poles throughout a town in lieu of a single tower.

The cell tower on Aquarion's property would improve reception along Main Street in Hingham, the Fire and Police Departments would be allowed to use the tower without a fee and the revenue Aquarion derives from the lease would offset any future rate increases. Sprint considers the proposed rent competitive information and confidential.

On January 21<sup>st</sup> Sprint will conduct a siting test from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the 900 Main Street, Hingham location. A crane will be raised 120' from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. then 140' from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. to determine the visual impact of the proposed monopole. The Hingham Planning Board must approve the construction site while the Hingham Zoning Board will determine if it meets the by-law requirements and Aquarion's special permit for the water treatment facility.

### **Capital Budget Review**

Shawn Bradford presented an overview of Aquarion's Capital Budget. He pointed out that Hingham, Hull and North Cohasset are treated as one system. The capital invested in the system is done where the need exists for the installation of mains and services. While it is not always possible to invest in the system on a percentage of customer basis, generally the capital is allocated proportionally with 60% of the customer base in Hingham and 37% in Hull. Ten percent of the meters are replaced in the system annually as a stipulation of Aquarion's Administrative Consent Order issued by the DEP as a result of exceeding the Water Management Act withdrawal permit in 2001. The planned capital investment budget has been increased to account for work to be done in the Hingham Water Treatment Facility (HWTF).

Recently Aquarion retired some bonds used to finance the HWTF and applied to the DTE to reduce the amount of debt on the Hingham Water Treatment Facility. This will result in the surcharge being reduced by approximately \$24.00 per year, or a 4% decrease in the annual customer bill. A news release will be issued in the next week informing customers. Long-term debt refinancing is being looked into at the Corporate level.

Aquarion is presently reviewing Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) technology for the reading of its water meters. Most of the meters are external read. A vendor meeting is scheduled to review the possibility of retrofitting current meters or replacing with the new AMR technology. The new technology would enable a meter reader to read water meters as he drives by the customer with the AMR meter.

Aquarion is waiting the completion of a Distribution System Study that is being prepared by Tata & Howard and a draft is due by the end of the first quarter. The plan will help identify and prioritize improvements to the system. When the Plan is completed, it will be reviewed with the Hingham Water Supply Committee, other town officials in the district and the Advisory Council.

### **Customer Education Program**

Robert Roland reviewed the existing programs in place with regard to customer education:

- The largest outreach is through the annual Water Quality Report, which took third place in its division in a competition held by the New England Water Works Association.
- Aquarion has provided lesson plans to all schools in its service territory and the plans are included on the Aquarion website.

- Tours of the treatment facility are provided to classes on an as requested basis. Although the tours have been offered to the schools in the area, there have only been a few classes that have shown interest.
- Sponsor Greenscapes in its effort to inform the public about the importance of using water wisely and conservation, especially during the summer.
- A monthly Water Supply Update is distributed to town and state officials in an effort to help educate the public.

### **Scheduling**

Members agreed to the next meeting being held in early April at the Hingham Treatment Facility, 6-8p.m. with a light supper. Ann will be in touch with a date.

Ann will also send out invitations for a Customer Education Subcommittee Meeting.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Advisory Council, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8 p.m.

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Ann Hiltz