



Making a difference...together

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE Wilderness Mountain Water Service Commission, held Monday, June 12, 2023 at 9:30 a.m., In the Goldstream Meeting Room, 479 Island Highway, Victoria, BC

PRESENT: Commissioners: D. Pepino (Chair); M. Lechowicz (Vice Chair); A. Wickheim (EA Director); L. Cutler

Staff: S. Irg, Senior Manager, Water Infrastructure Operations; G. Harris, Senior Manager, Environmental Protection; M. Risvold (Recorder)

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 am.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOVED by M. Lechowicz, **SECONDED** by L. Cutler,
That the agenda be approved.

CARRIED

2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by A. Wickheim, **SECONDED** by M. Lechowicz,
That the minutes of the February 6, 2023 meeting be adopted.

CARRIED

3. CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair provided the following remarks:

"Since taking the role of Chair in 2022, I have attempted to ensure clarity of intentions by both reviewing the Capital Regional District's (CRD) stated goals and mission, and by communicating to the CRD the messages from the Wilderness Mountain Water Service (WMWS) community.

To date my perception remains that we are in a stalemate, which ultimately leads to a lose/lose outcome.

I want to attempt again today to provide clear input from the community to the CRD about the issues that are important, which stated as completely as I can are these:

The community was told that starting in 2008, they would receive a potable water service that met all health regulations. The CRD, as the only authorized service supplier, had delivered input to the government on appropriate upgrades needed, and in response was awarded a grant in 2005 to upgrade the private system to comply. In exchange, the community agreed in 2007 to a large financial burden increase (on the order of a 500% annual increase) to gain that degree of confidence in the water supply.

Since that time, instead of the communicated reduction in rates and more users were added, the financial burden per connected household has increased by 45.9% from \$1,515.00 to currently \$2,210.00 per year.

This places Wilderness Mountain water rates near the highest rates anywhere in the Province of British Columbia.

We now fully understand those initial 2012 upgrades never met, and today 11 years on still do not meet those regulations.

The only solutions so far presented by the CRD, seem to expect the WMWS community to increase those already too high rates by anywhere from 350% to over 400%, a stunning annual rate approaching \$9,000.00 per year.

What remains unspoken is why? Why is the CRD going down this path? Other solutions exist at much lower cost.

Today I look forward to understanding where we go from here that will change the current trajectory to financial ruin for the WMWS Community.”

4. PRESENTATIONS/DELEGATIONS

There were none.

5. SENIOR MANAGER’S REPORT

S. Irg advised the Electoral Areas Water Conservation Bylaw was approved by the Board and is now in effect. Sandwich boards have been placed in the community and staff are working on a communication plan for the public. Staff noted the bylaw is similar to the Juan de Fuca and Greater Victoria water conservation bylaws, and all the electoral areas will be affected. If there is a compliance issue, a CRD bylaw officer will attend to the area.

Staff advised that prior to the meeting, treated water turbidity was at 0.7 NTU (Nephelometric turbidity units). There was a minor event at the end of April where treated water was above 1 NTU for one day. The event was resolved by shutting down the plant and replacing the filters.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- The possible cause of the filters clogging.
- How well water affects water conservation.

6. COMMISSION BUSINESS

6.1. 2022 Annual Report

S. Irg spoke to Item 6.1.

Staff responded to a question from the commission regarding the drawdown over the years. Staff advised the 2021 drawdown was due to the heat dome. There was no significant impact from the auto flush in 2018.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- Reporting on the pipe distribution side.
- Any indicators of items that should be addressed.

Staff advised treated water is monitored to ensure there is no bacteria in the residual supply and all parameters are met for potability.

Staff responded to a question from the commission regarding a potential major rebuild approaching. Staff advised the system is Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) pipe which is approximately 33 years into an 80-year lifespan. The connections and saddles on the mains will see failure over time, like the Juan de Fuca water system. Sections can be fixed as necessary.

6.2. Project and Operations Update

S. Irg spoke to Item 6.2 and noted the following:

- There are currently no capital projects for 2023.
- Monthly inspections are being completed at the dams.
- The platform at the dam has become a safety concern.
- A structural engineer has reviewed the platform and advised the structure is near end of life.
- Only one person is permitted to be on the platform at any time.
- A sign has been made indicating a lifejacket is required while on the platform.

Staff responded to a question from the commission regarding the ultraviolet (UV) power supply. Staff advised there are three reactors installed noting two are required at one time. There is one additional reactor on standby if needed.

6.3. Budget Discussion [Verbal]

S. Irg advised the wooden platform on the lake is a safety concern. Informal quotes received estimate the cost to be between \$30 and \$35,000. Staff recommend including this work in the 2024 capital plan. Director Wickheim will determine if \$45,000 of Community Works Funds can be used towards the platform. Discussion ensued regarding potential changes to the plant and the current intake.

Staff informed the commission of an internal grant opportunity for Growing Communities. The grant would fund 75% and the commission would be responsible to pay 25%. The minimum grantable portion is \$100,000. Staff advised the application has been prepared if the commission would like it submitted.

Staff responded to questions from the commission regarding water sampling. Staff advised samples are taken from the current platform and tested for turbidity, temperature, overflow, bacteriological and chloroform profiles. The samples are provided to the lab for testing and reports will be provided. Additional tests can be done at an additional cost. The commission provided information on an instrument they would like to purchase and use for water sampling. The commission will provide further details on the instrument to staff after the meeting. Discussion ensued.

MOVED BY M. Lechowicz, SECONDED BY L. Cutler,
That staff apply for the Growing Communities internal grant for \$150,000.

CARRIED

Staff reiterated that if the grant is successful, it will fund 75% and the commission would be responsible to pay the remaining 25%.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

7.1. Letter from Island Health – Wilderness Mountain Water System (CRD) – 706 Cains Way, Sooke BC

S. Irg spoke to Item 7.1.

Staff responded to the following questions:

- Plans for a response to Island Health. Staff advised there are no capital projects planned to improve the system. There are potential projects for 2024.
- Regulation interpretation. Staff advised Island Health has been clear on interpretation, and staff will not speak on behalf of Island Health.
- Whether Wilderness Mountain would be required to follow Island Health's regulations if it became a private water system. Staff advised the water system can become an Improvement District water system again, however, it would still operate under Island Health's requirements.
- If the commission and staff can meet with Island Health. S. Irg will request a meeting with Island Health after the summer.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Wickheim advised he spoke with the owners of a property located around the lower reservoir. The owners advised they have provided the fire department with access to their property in the event of an emergency.

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by L. Cutler, **SECONDED** by M. Lechowicz,
That the June 12, 2023 meeting be adjourned at 10:49 am.

CARRIED

CHAIR

SECRETARY