

**DISTRICT COMMITTEE- GREATER NEW BEDFORD  
REGIONAL REFUSE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT MEETING**

Meeting minutes

Tuesday, January 16, 2024

The Greater New Bedford Regional Refuse Management District Committee held a publicly posted meeting on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 8:00 AM at the Dartmouth Town Hall - Room 309, 400 Slocum Road, Dartmouth, MA 02747.

**District Committee Members in attendance:** John Beauregard, Dan Patten, Christine LeBlanc, Michael Gagne.

**Also in attendance:** Anthony Novelli, Executive Director; Michael Forbes, District Accountant; Matthew J. Thomas, District Counsel

1. **Call to order / Salute the flag**

Chairperson Beauregard called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and led a salute to the flag.

2. **Legal notices**

Chairperson Beauregard read the following statement:

“Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, any person may make an audio or video recording of this public meeting, or may transmit the meeting through any medium. Attendees are therefore advised that such recordings and transmissions are being made, whether perceived or unperceived, by those present, and are deemed acknowledged and permissible. All legal notices of the meeting were posted in Dartmouth and New Bedford more than 48 hours prior to the meeting.”

3. **Roll call of members**

Chairperson John Beauregard- Yes

Christine LeBlanc- Yes

Daniel Patten- Yes

Michael Gagne- Yes

Kelley Cabral-Mosher- Absent

4. **Approval of Minutes**

4a. Minutes of December 14, 2023 meeting

**MOTION to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2023 meeting made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. LeBlanc. All voted in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

4b. Disclose Executive Session Minutes

**MOTION to disclose previously approved Executive Session minutes made by Ms. LeBlanc, seconded by Mr. Patten. All voted in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

5. **Warrant Report and Ratification**

5a. Approval of corrected Warrant 5-24

Mr. Novelli explained that the payroll section of warrant 5-24 listed September as the pay dates and should be corrected to October. The payroll amounts and total warrant amount were correct.

**MOTION to ratify the corrected Warrant 5-24 dated September 6, 2023 made by Ms. LeBlanc, seconded by Mr. Patten. All voted in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

5b. Approval of warrants 11-24 and 12-24

**MOTION to ratify warrant 11-24 dated December 13, 2023 and warrant 12-24 dated December 28, 2023 made by Mr. Patten. All voted in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

6. New Business

6a. Introduction of new Accountant

**MOTION to receive an introduction of the new accountant made by Ms. LeBlanc, seconded by Mr. Patten.**

Mr. Novelli introduced Mr. Michael Forbes to the Committee, noting that he previously worked for a nonprofit organization in Boston and that he is a resident of New Bedford.

Attorney Thomas entered the room at 8:04 and greeted Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes mentioned that he is accustomed to regular reporting and setting up policies and procedures to make the accounting system work best.

Chairperson Beaugard welcomed Mr. Forbes.

6b. Draft FY2025 Budget

**MOTION to consider the draft FY 2025 budget made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. LeBlanc.**

Mr. Novelli mentioned that the salaries and wages had been reviewed by the Personnel Subcommittee in November and that the full budget was reviewed by the Budget Subcommittee in December. He reminded the committee that the District's budget needs to be accepted by January 21.

Mr. Novelli reviewed the memo as presented. He began by discussing projected revenues from assessments, commercial waste, reused materials, and other sources.

He mentioned that each committee member had reviewed the salaries and wages budget and mentioned that three employees were now at the top step of the pay grade.

Chairperson Beaugard asked what happens when an employee reaches the top step. Mr. Patten explained that the scale is intended to be comparable to other communities and that the top step is the goal salary for each grade, plus the yearly COLAs. If other towns increase their wages for a certain position, the steps can be reviewed. Mr. Gagne recommended reviewing the differential between the top step and bottom step in the City of New Bedford's pay scale to ensure consistency, since they have more steps per grade.

Mr. Novelli continued to review the projected expenses for each budget category and explained projected changes and significant variances from the FY24 budget.

He mentioned that \$901,675 is budgeted for deposit into the phase 2 reserve, which would get the District close to its projected goal for constructing a new landfill cell. He noted that revenue is considerably less than the previous year, which can mostly be attributed to the decrease in commercial waste and decreased projection in landfill gas revenue.

Mr. Thomas mentioned that there is no revenue projected from the AD. Mr. Novelli confirmed and mentioned that the site lease is set to expire in June. At that time, the tank would become property of the District.

Mr. Gagne asked about the future of the AD project. Mr. Novelli mentioned some of the challenges of

upgrading the system, but that the District is still interested in exploring this further.

Attorney Thomas mentioned other AD facilities in the area and that most received subsidies to make them economical. He mentioned that the benefit to the member municipalities and to the District is not yet certain if the AD was expanded, and that subsidies may be required. He suggested that more information be presented at a future meeting.

Mr. Gagne agreed that further discussion was warranted at a future meeting and mentioned that there is a demand for processing organics with the decreasing landfill capacity in the state. Chairperson Beauregard agreed with Mr. Gagne and returned the conversation back to the budget.

Mr. Novelli continued to summarize the key points of the budget. He mentioned that the available FY 2025 commercial tonnage would be advertised for bidding and that he hopes the revenue would be higher than the projection. The group discussed the advertisement and tip fees to be advertised.

Mr. Gagne commended the format of the budget presentation. There were no further questions.

**MOTION to adopt the FY 2025 budget as presented made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. LeBlanc. All voted in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

6c. Vote to Update the Salary Schedule

**MOTION to consider an update to the District's salary schedule made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. LeBlanc.**

Mr. Novelli explained that the Personnel Subcommittee had recommended a 3% COLA to the existing salary schedule, which was presented in the draft budget. He recommended that the Committee vote to adopt the updated salary schedule effective July 1, 2024.

**MOTION to adopt the updated salary schedule as recommended by the Personnel Subcommittee effective July 1, 2024 made by Ms. LeBlanc, seconded by Mr. Patten. All voted in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

6e. Payment of District Expenses without appearing on a warrant

**MOTION to discuss the payment of District expenses without appearing on a warrant made by Ms. LeBlanc, seconded by Mr. Patten.**

Mr. Novelli mentioned that upon reviewing expenses for life insurance, it was discovered that some payments of District expenses had not appeared on a warrant. He explained that there are two different types of expenses for life insurance paid by the District- employee withholdings and District contributions. Employee withholdings are not considered District expenses and do not appear on warrants, but the District contributions should. In this case, multiple payments were included on the same P.O. and it was not caught at the time that they should have been separated. The payments are legitimate and have been made already, and he wanted to make the Committee aware of the situation.

He also explained that for District contributions to the Health Savings Accounts (HAS), the amount for the full year usually appears on a warrant at the beginning of the year. In FY23, two employees were hired in the middle of the year that chose the high deductible insurance plan and received District contribution to their HSA, but these contributions had not appeared on a warrant.

Attorney Thomas recommended the Committee ratify these expenses. He mentioned that these were appropriate expenses and that there are processes being implemented to ensure that this does not happen again. Mr. Novelli mentioned that the staff is aware of how this happened and will take extra precautions to prevent a future occurrence and that additions to the internal controls and procedures manual will be made.

**Motion to ratify the identified expenses made by Ms. LeBlanc, seconded by Mr. Patten. All voted in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

6d. Staff Report

**MOTION to receive the staff report made by Ms. LeBlanc, seconded by Mr. Patten.**

Mr. Novelli mentioned that he and Mr. Ferry have been prioritizing reviewing and updating the District's safety policies and procedures and that regular safety meetings are being held with the operations staff. The most recent meeting focused on proper hearing protection.

He noted that increased efforts are being made to deter seagulls and other birds from the landfill after communications with the New Bedford Regional Airport relating to increased bird activity around the airport in recent years. Pyrotechnics are used to scare birds away from the active face of the landfill, but it is difficult to keep them off the entire property, especially after working hours. He mentioned that he met with wildlife biologists from the USDA, who are experienced in this field and offer services to help manage the birds at the landfill. He mentioned that this can be a serious hazard and requires significant attention. He noted that the USDA offers different pricing packages depending on the frequency of visits.

Attorney Thomas asked if there had been any other complaints regarding birds. Mr. Novelli said that there have not been.

Mr. Novelli noted that more formal proposals would be acquired and presented at the next meeting.

Mr. Novelli mentioned that a liquidated damages clause is being proposed to Milton CAT in the contract for the wheel loader rebuild that was advertised, as requested by Mr. Gagne. He noted that the District has two other machines to use while this one is being repaired.

He reviewed the rest of the memo and mentioned recent updates.

**MOTION to receive the staff report and place on file made by Ms. LeBlanc, seconded by Mr. Patten. All voted in favor. Motion passes 4-0.**

7. **Old Business**

7a. Discuss eligibility for step increases

**MOTION to discuss eligibility for step increases made by Ms. LeBlanc, seconded by Mr. Patten.**

Mr. Novelli explained the rationale behind the motion accepted at the previous meeting to award step increases for new hires after one year of service. He made the Committee aware that the way the motion was worded excluded an employee hired in November.

Mr. Gagne mentioned that situations like this tend to arise as new policies are implemented and should be rectified with the Committee on a case by case basis.

Attorney Thomas noted that the date in the previous motion could be amended.

**MOTION to amend the date from the previously approved motion from December 14, 2023 to November 27, 2023 made by Ms. LeBlanc, seconded by Mr. Patten. All voted in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

8. **Items That Could Not Be Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours In Advance.**

Attorney Thomas noted that the reason for entering into Executive Session was not known 48 hours in advance.

**MOTION to go into Executive Session pursuant to General Laws Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(7) made by Ms. LeBlanc, seconded by Mr. Patten. The District will discuss policies that have not been fully formulated. The draft documents are exempt from the public records law under Mass. General Law Chapter 4, Section 7, Clause twenty-sixth (d), so any discussion regarding those non-public documents should be in executive session. Once the document is fully formulated, the document and the discussion will become part of the public record.**

**Roll call vote: Chairperson John Beauregard- yes; Michael Gagne- yes; Christine LeBlanc- yes, Daniel Patten- yes. Motion passed 4-0.**

The Committee entered into Executive Session at 9:11 a.m.

The Committee adjourned from Executive Session and returned to Open Session at 9:24 a.m.

9. Set Meeting Schedule

**Next meeting is February 15, 2024 (Bartholomeu & Associates will make a presentation regarding the District's investment accounts.**

**March 14 was tentatively scheduled for the following meeting.**

10. Adjourn

**MOTION to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. LeBlanc, seconded by Mr. Patten. All voted in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:29 a.m.

Approved by vote of District Committee on February 22, 2024.



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Anthony Novelli, Executive Director

## MEMOS

- 4B. Disclose Executive Session Minutes dated 1/16/24
- 5A. Approval of corrected Warrant 5-24 dated 1/16/24
- 5B. Approval of warrants 11-24 and 12-24
- 6A. Introduction of new Accountant dated 1/16/24
- 6B. Draft FY 2025 Budget dated 1/16/24  
Attachment - Fiscal Year 2025 Budget  
Attachment – Income Statement – Budget and Actual – Current Accounts (For the twelve months ending June 30, 2024).
- 6C. Vote to Update the Salary Schedule dated 1/16/24  
Payment of District Expenses without Appearing on Warrant memo dated 1/8/2023
- 6D. Staff Report dated 1/16/24  
Attachment – Commercial and Municipal Tonnage: January-December 2023
- 7A. Discuss eligibility for step increases dated 1/16/24