

NORTHWEST OTTAWA WATER SYSTEM

Administrative Committee Minutes

November 20, 2024

A regular administrative committee meeting of the Northwest Ottawa Water System was called to order by Derek Gajdos at 9:22 a.m. Wednesday, November 20, 2024, in the Council Chambers at Grand Haven City Hall.

Present: Craig Bessinger (City of Ferrysburg); Bill Cargo (Grand Haven Charter Township); Gordon Gallagher (Spring Lake Township); Derek Gajdos (City of Grand Haven); Brady Selner (Village of Spring Lake); Pat Staskiewicz (Ottawa County); Matt Wade (Grand Haven Charter Township); Karen Sherwood (Grand Haven Charter Township)

Absent:

Also present: Mike Vredeveld (Vredeveld Haefner LLC); Emily Greene (City of Grand Haven)

First call to the audience:

Dr. John Leitner, 575 Robbins Road, Grand Haven, MI:

Dr. Leitner is in advocate of community fluoridation in the NOWS. Dr. Leitner described his extensive work in areas that did not have access to optimal fluoridation levels within the United States and around the world which correlated to higher incidents of oral decay. Dr. Leitner contrasted the increase number of tooth extractions and root canals for children in rural areas of Pennsylvania with no access to optimal fluoride levels and that of the children in the NOWS system which practices optimal fluoridation. Dr. Leitner discussed how children today have greater challenges with dietary issues that promote poor oral health than any generation preceding them and warned that removal of fluoride additives would only lead unnecessarily to added costs, pain and suffering to the average family in the NOWS.

Cargo:

What is the current level of fluoridation additive added to the NOWS process?

Law:

0.50 mg/L is the average amount supplemented to the 0.20 mg/L natural occurring fluoride in the source water to achieve the minimal recommended amount of 0.70 mg/L.

Cargo:

What is the level leaving the plant?

Law:

The plant targets and achieves a consistent 0.70 mg/L on average. The NOWS plant has been awarded recognition annually by the CDC for achievement this consistency.

Cargo:

Wanted clarity that the NTP study that is being cited was associating potential issues with areas reporting more than twice the rate that NOWS consistently achieves.

Law:

Confirmed that was correct.

Anthony Frost, 1131 Franklin Ave, Grand Haven, MI:

Mr. Frost is an opponent of community fluoridation in the NOWS. Mr. Frost has been following the fluoride debate for decades and has attended many of these types of meetings and points out the absence of toxicologists at these meetings. Mr. Frost claimed there are contrasting opinions on fluoride use between toxicologists and medical doctors and scientist. Mr. Frost claims to see dental fluorosis rampantly throughout the NOWS community and throughout United States. Mr. Frost claims that fluoridation is a leading cause of cancer. Mr. Frost made reference to the EPA lawsuit and claims this forces the EPA to regulate fluoride.

Dr. Chris Smiley, President of the American Association of Dental Editors and Journalists – 11965 Bluewater Trail, Grand Haven, MI:

Dr. Smiley, an advocate for community fluoridation, discussed the historical reasons for its practice and criticized the NTP study, noting it relied heavily on research from rural China and India, where other environmental factors may have skewed results. He emphasized the importance of proper dosage and highlighted the NTP report's failure to pass peer review due to bias and conflicting data. Dr. Smiley referenced a New Zealand study showing no IQ difference between communities with and without fluoridation and cited negative impacts in communities like Juno, Alaska, and Calgary, CA, after removing fluoride, as evidence of fluoridation's benefits.

Jen Stuppy, 16200 Harbor Point Dr. Spring Lake, MI:

Mrs. Stuppy is an opponent of community fluoridation. Mrs. Stuppy believes she is being prescribed something that she does not want. This places a burden on her to purchase a device to remove fluoride from the water.

Dr. Peter Rick (retired), 19176 Elizabeth Ct. Spring Lake, MI:

Dr. Rick is an advocate for community fluoridation in the NOWS. Dr. Rick emphasized the fluorosis is a concern but only at higher dosage levels and that what will be certain is the oral decay that will result if community fluoridation is removed. Dr. Rick acknowledged that there are in fact no toxicologist present to speak against community fluoridation and he and his fellow dentist are confident in the benefits of community fluoridation because of the education and training they have received.

Victoria VanZalen, 303 Stickney Ridge Rd. Grand Haven, MI:

Mrs. VanZalen is an opponent of community fluoridation in the NOWS. Mrs. VanZalen cited the FDA designation of fluoride as a drug and feels it is not right that it is in the water without consent.

Victoria Little, 16139 Harbor View Dr. Spring Lake, MI:

Mrs. Little is an opponent of community water fluoridation. Mrs. Little cannot afford to use reverse osmosis to remove fluoride from her water and wants the committee to consider the removal of fluoride from the Nows.

The conclusion of call to the audience:

A motion by Cargo supported by Bessinger to approve the minutes for the August 21, 2024 Nows Committee Meeting passed unanimously.

Manager's Report, AUG, SEP, OCT, '24– By Law

Seasonally dry conditions to finish the summer contributed to heavy demand, which led to system-record pumpage totals for September and October. The combined quarterly total for the three months of 890.740 MG pumped is also a record high. System demand this quarter has lifted the total system pumpage to a positive 7.6% comp to last year. The system allocation breakout has the Northside at a positive 9.3% comp, GHCT at a positive 4.8% comp, and the city at a positive 8.5% comp. System YTD allocation remains typical, with the Northside at 39%, GHCT at 31%, and the city at 29%.

As of October 31st, 34% of the fiscal year is complete, with revenue at 40.5% and expenditures at 32%. Cash is at \$392,788, with the replacement fund and money market at \$630,764. FY 2024/25 capital project expenses are projected at \$213,000, mainly for the SCADA upgrade. Cargo asked if the SCADA changes would integrate smoothly with the distribution system, and Law confirmed it would be a priority with no expected issues. Power and chemical costs remain stable despite increased pumpage, due to a new chlorine contract and optimized chemical application. Future reports may show increased Alum costs. Energy consumption is flat from last year despite rate hikes, attributed to staff efficiency. Graphs for chemical and power consumption were provided.

Source water quality remains outstanding and filters are performing well providing consistently low turbidity and TOC results. Trending graphs provided and show a 5-year downward trend for TOC. Turbidity removal efficiency rates have been very good with August, September and October reporting at 66.5%, 69.1% and 65.6% rates of removal. DBP quarterly results show all communities well with in regulatory compliance limits. PFAS monthly sample results remain either non-detected or well below regulatory compliance limits. Cargo, Law and Gajdos help define PFAS results to the extended audience.

Agenda Item 1: Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Nows Financial Audit Review – By Mike Vredevel

Mr. Vredevel gave a brief overview and rated it a good clean audit. A motion by Cargo supported by Staskiewicz to approve the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Nows Financial Audit was unanimously approved.

Agenda Item 2: *Fiscal Year 2023-2024 NOWS Working Capital Excess – Law*

Law requested a motion allowing the COGH finance department to reimburse the wholesale units the year end operating surplus amount total of \$33,451, and for this to be divided based on the end of year individual pumpage allocation percentages. A motion by Cargo supported by Bessinger to approve the reimbursement of the NOWS WTP operating surplus to the municipal units as described was unanimously approved.

Agenda Item 3: *2025 NOWS Committee Meeting Schedule – Law*

A motion by Cargo and supported by Gallagher to approve the proposed 2025 NOWS Committee meeting schedule was unanimously approved.

Agenda Item 4: *Bakertilly Analysis of Water Rates and Charges (Draft Copy 2024) - Law*

Law presented two rate analyses: the BT rate study and the NOWS Annual Water Rate Recommendation memorandum. These provided the Committee with enough data to compare and choose a rate strategy. The BT analysis applied 4-5% inflationary increases and removed pumpage projections. The NOWS analysis was similar but more detailed, incorporating pumpage trends. Law highlighted the significant payroll increase due to the new FTE maintenance relief operator. Cargo requested that Law demonstrate how the FTE would reduce OT hours in next year's budget. A motion by Cargo and supported by Staskiewicz to approve adopting the recommended wholesale rate of \$1.17 per thousand gallons outlined in the NOWS Annual Water Rate Recommendation memorandum and implement that rate change starting July 1st, 2025, was unanimously approved.

Agenda Item 5: *Fluoride Discussion – Law*

Law reviewed NOWS WTP fluoridation practices, which have been in place since the 1950s and consistently comply with EPA guidelines. The facility has earned annual recognition from the CDC for its adherence to these regulations. Lake Michigan's natural fluoride level is around 0.25 mg/L, and NOWS adds hydrofluoro-silicic acid to achieve a target dose of 0.70 mg/L, with an average of 0.50 mg/L. Removing fluoride would require a different treatment method. Annual cost of fluoridation is estimated at \$14K. The chemical feed system follows strict safeguards, with regular calibrations and manual checks to ensure proper dosage. Regular testing for contaminants, including lead, has shown no issues with the fluoride additives.

Law also addressed the recent NTP monograph and the lawsuit against the EPA, clarifying that neither linked cognitive developmental issues or health concerns to the current optimal fluoridation dose. He acknowledged community concerns, especially after these events, with some calling for a halt to fluoride use. Law emphasized that he takes these concerns seriously, but also cited support from medical professionals in favor of fluoridation. His role is to make a recommendation to the NOWS Committee on next steps. Law stated that his priority is the health of the community and, as a water treatment professional, he follows the guidance of relevant governing agencies. He recommended that NOWS continue to follow these guidelines and make any necessary changes only if directed by the authorities.

Cargo:

Cargo asked for clarity on the NTP report's concern levels and whether the studies were US-based. Law confirmed that the NTP's findings were based on naturally occurring fluoride levels over twice the recommended US level, mainly from rural areas in China and India. Cargo expressed concerns about other environmental factors, like arsenic, not being considered in the NTP monograph. Law agreed that the monograph faced peer review issues due to omissions and conflicting data. Cargo noted that the NOWS Committee couldn't decide on removing fluoridation based on the NTP findings and referenced a California court ruling that didn't question current fluoride levels but required the EPA to prove their safety. Cargo

agreed with Law that it's best to wait for the EPA's response and follow regulatory guidance. A motion by Cargo and supported by Gallagher to table any decisions regarding changes to community fluoridation within NOWS, is done only with guidance and at the direction of the regulatory agencies governing public health relevant to municipal water treatment passed unanimously.

Staskiewicz: Pointed out that the contractually it would be the decision of the City of Grand Haven to make this kind of change and reminded that the Committee has an advisory role in that decision.

Second call to audience:

Lauren Mottone, 1131 Franklin Ave. Grand Haven, MI:

Mrs. Mottone is an opponent of community fluoridation in the NOWS. Mrs. Mottone states that she has stopped drinking the water in Grand Haven ten years ago and currently purchase water for consumption. Has concerns about physical contact with bathing and washing with NOWS water. Points out other communities locally without community fluoridation.

Donna Miller, 15302 Cantberry In, Grand Haven, MI: (Dental Assistant)

Mrs. Miller is an opponent of community fluoridation in the NOWS. Mrs. Miller believe that oral decay issues should be addressed with better oral care practices and that it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that happens. Mrs. Millers primary complaint is a personal health issue related to her hypothyroid/graves diagnosis and states this can be triggered by additional toxins in her body.

Anthony Frost, 1131 Franklin Ave, Grand Haven, MI:

Mr. Frost asked about fluoride shipping costs, and Law confirmed it's included in the estimated \$14K annually. Mr. Frost expressed distrust in the federal government, citing mishandling of 9/11 and lack of historical records on GR applications and a Muskegon study. He noted that Scandinavian and Japanese countries don't fluoridate and have no oral health issues. He also linked PFAS to fluoride, calling it one of the most dangerous chemicals, and claimed fluoride is industrial waste sold to humans, making it hard to track.

Other:

Adjournment: 11:01 a.m. – Submitted by Eric Law