

MPIC Minutes for March 15th, 2023

Attendance: Dave Golden, Timothy Cienciwa (chair), Michael Dee (vice chair), Amber Kumpulanian (secretary), Chris Connolly (superintendent for Palmer Water District)

Absent: Mark Caci,

Meeting start: 6:00pm

The committee welcomed Chris Connolly, superintendent from Palmer's Water District. Chris gave some information on his background. He has worked for Palmer's Water District for over a year now and previously worked for Three River's Water District.

Chris gave an overview of how Palmer runs their water district. What assets they have including two treatment plants. He also shared that they are working towards a big infrastructure plan that the DEP requires. They are submitting asset plans and waiting on inspections. He expects it to be a 6 year process that will also include a rate study. He did caution that fines might happen if they don't meet deadlines.

Chris believes that consolidation of water districts would be beneficial for many reasons. The districts could share resources and staffing. More money would be available for upgrade projects should the districts combine. Chris believes the districts could be consolidated with minimal interruption to the citizens. The town would not take over the water. Rates and cost would stay the same for most of the transition. He also thinks it's beneficial because as the town grows and businesses seek out Palmer, having one water district makes it easier and more efficient for that growth. Also it would give the citizens a clear place to go for any problems. Right now the water districts and how each one is set up differently is so confusing for citizens. They don't know who to call to get problems addressed. Consolidating would help with that problem.

Tim asked about the mentality of the water districts on consolidation. Chris said he could only speak for Palmer and Three Rivers but that he could see them being on board. He was not sure about Bondsville or Thorndike.

Nick asked if the districts ever get together regularly to discuss things. Chris said they had never met all together. Sometimes they will meet or get together for larger projects but nothing where every district is there.

Chris stated that from what he knows most of the people that work and run the water districts are for the consolidation but it is the boards that might be hesitant. He doesn't see them dissolving themselves. He believes that since a survey asking about consolidation was sent out by the state, that the districts might have to be fined or forced into it.

Chris also spoke to Tim's question about the fire districts being wrapped up in the water districts. Chris gave some background historically on how that happened with the mills needing fire protection and then the fire departments needing water. He believes there might be a way for the fire to separate from water and do their own consolidation.

The committee thanked Chris for his time and asked who they should contact next. Chris said Three Rivers Water District would be a good one next and gave the committee some contact info.

The committee agreed to contact the Three Rivers Water District to bring them in for the April 5th meeting.

Tim also agreed to reach out to Marc about his availability.

Meeting ended at 7:30pm