

**Safe Water Advisory Group (SWAG)**  
**A City Council Advisory Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes Thursday, March 21, 2024**  
**City Hall Conference Room A and via Zoom**

Attending in person: Brian Goetz, co-chair; Andrea Amico, co-chair, James Hewitt, Katrie Hillman, Rich DiPentima, Kim McNamara, Councilor Rich Blalock, Councilor Vince Lombardi, Chief Bill McQuillen. Remote: Laurel Schaidler, Elizabeth Barrett. Staff: Mason Caceres, Stephanie Seacord PIO, recording secretary

Full SWAG meeting recording: <https://youtu.be/8h9vhUz4nsM>

Meeting presentation slides: [Reference Documents | City of Portsmouth](#)

1. **Welcome** – Co-chair Andrea Amico advised that the order of the agenda items would be changed to put the Schools lead report first.
2. **Minutes for the December 13, 2023 meeting approved.** Moved: Chief McQuillen, second Councilor Lombardi.
3. **Lead Updates**
  - a. **SAU 52 School District Superintendent Zach McLaughlin and Director of Buildings and Grounds Ken Lynchey** reported that SAU 52 remains committed to the standard of zero tolerance for lead in school drinking water.
    - i. Signage has been posted at all outlets saying “Do Not Drink, Hand-Washing Only”
    - ii. On December 16, 2023, follow-up sampling was done to better understand the reliability of the August samples. See detailed spreadsheet. [Portsmouth School Lead Testing Summary 032124.pdf \(cityofportsmouth.com\)](#)
    - iii. During Christmas break, the school tested two different types of filtration systems: one in a classroom and one in a kitchen. Both filtration systems yielded great results based on their application, so new fixtures and filtration systems were purchased and installed at all 47 outlets (out of the 167 total) that registered above 5ppb in the August 9, 2023 test results. Councilor Lombardi suggested testing the spent filters to measure what is being captured.
    - iv. Water bubblers that registered above 5ppb were removed from service. New water bubblers are being installed.
    - v. Round 3 sampling will be conducted within the next couple of weeks.
    - vi. The filtration is an immediate, medium-term solution. Long term the school would have to deal with the cost and logistics required to replace the water infrastructure, a major capital expense.
    - vii. Andrea suggested messaging to parents about home lead testing and screening children’s blood for lead.
  - b. **City of Portsmouth Water Quality Specialist II Mason Caceres** provided an overview of the City’s initiatives to address the EPA Lead and Copper Rule and NHDES requirements:
    - i. As there is no lead in the City’s water service lines, the City has launched a program enabling free lab testing for 100 homeowners to sample interior water for lead. Outreach through postcards, City Newsletter, website and press release. City has received 44 responses to outreach postcard: 22 samples returned/results obtained, 22 need follow-up. Liz Barrett volunteered to be a “renter testing” example. Only 1 test allowed per building – if they qualify under EPA protocols. Kim McNamara suggested outreach based on NH DHHS lead reporting maps.

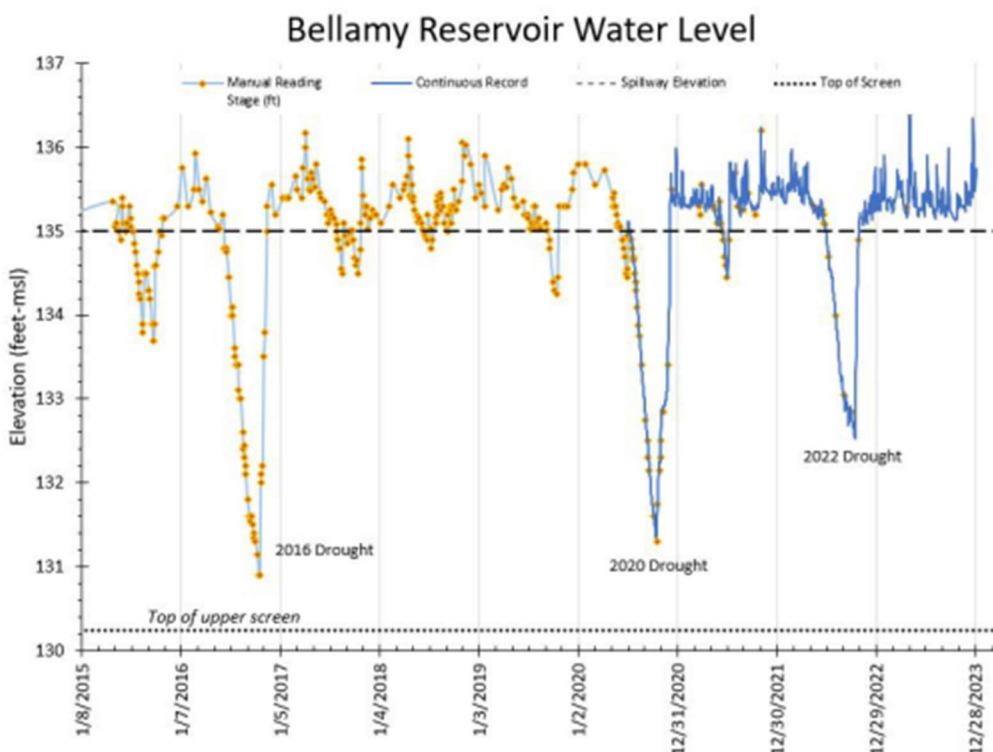
- ii. City is continuing the EPA-required project to inventory all 8400 service lines and components in the Water System by October 16, 2024. Of the 1700 services unidentified, progress is being made with 365 completed in Zone 1 and 305 in Zone 2. Of these, 130 have galvanized lines which EPA requires be replaced within 10 years.
- iii. Full presentation: [Microsoft PowerPoint - Svc Line Inventory and Free Lead Testing Updates March2024 - Read-Only \(cityofportsmouth.com\)](https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/sites/default/files/2024-03/Portsmouth%20and%20Pease%20Water%20Update%20%20March%202021%202024.pdf)

#### 4. Water Supply Update – Brian Goetz

Full presentation: <https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/sites/default/files/2024-03/Portsmouth%20and%20Pease%20Water%20Update%20%20March%202021%202024.pdf>

2023 Year in Review Report posted and distributed: [https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/sites/default/files/2024-01/Portsmouth\\_Drinking\\_Water\\_Update\\_2023\\_Year\\_in\\_Review.pdf](https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/sites/default/files/2024-01/Portsmouth_Drinking_Water_Update_2023_Year_in_Review.pdf)

Groundwater and surface water supplies are in good shape. Best graph of water supply is the 10 year profile of Bellamy Reservoir:



- Customer demand is steady. Portsmouth is still the only system in NH offering rebates for water-efficient toilets and washing machines. Water Division will participate in April 14 Sustainability Fair.
- Little Bay waterline work is in the process of replacing (inserting) the valves on the two waterlines. City will seek bids for adding a third line in the Fall
- Dover emergency interconnect to receive \$3.5 million in Federal grant through Sen. Shaheen. This is half the cost. The balance is split between Dover and Portsmouth.
- Southern portion of water system Master Plan Study – updating 2006 study with hydraulic model of southern part of city and whether development has affected water supplies. Received \$50k NHDES grant towards \$150k cost. Hydraulic model update will include the whole water system.
- PFAS – EPA regulation still under review. City discussing with Air Force covering the potential cost for PFAS treatment on Portsmouth well once there’s a regulatory standard to meet. Estimating cost for Greenland and Collins well treatment. Air Force accepts our reports.
- Al Pratt continues to lead water source protection effort (NHDES Award 2023), in process of securing

45-acre site.

- High water did produce first instance of algae blooms, but did not affect the reservoir intake. The City has also added aeration towers in the reservoir which add dissolved oxygen to avoid water stagnation.

#### **5. Legislative Update:**

Rep. Meuse unable to attend SWAG as the Legislature was in session. But provided a spreadsheet of bills of interest:

<https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/sites/default/files/2024-03/2024%20Environmental%20and%20Water%20Legislation.pdf>

#### **6. Seacoast Private Well Workshop Update**

Completed February 14, 2024. 733 households (1830 residents) participated. Most prominent finding was 39 percent of samples had over 5 ppb of arsenic. 27percent indicated over 2000 pi/L radon. Survey of participants found that most had an increase in their knowledge of private wells and their water.

Presentation slides: <https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/sites/default/files/2024-03/Seacoast%20PWI%20Update%20for%20Feb%202024%20Seacoast%20Commission%20meeting.pdf>

#### **7. SWAG Mission Statement**

Andrea thanked members for their accomplishments in addressing the original 2021 SWAG objectives and asked if the members thought it was time to revise the mission statement. Comments discussed the role of SWAG in learning about and sharing details on the quantity, quality and preservation/conservation of the public water supply. The group agreed that Andrea and Brian should draft an updated mission statement for SWAG review at the next meeting. Katria suggested circulating that draft in advance of that meeting.

#### **8. Public Comment**

Justin Richardson asked about protecting the Bellamy Reservoir from invasives such as milfoil. Mason responded that the Bellamy is policed by NH Fish & Game, allowing passive recreation only (fishing, kayaking, electric motors; no paddleboards.) Mason also noted that the treatment process is able to handle/remove invasives.

**Adjourned at 8:37 pm**