

Village of Aurora Board of Trustees April 10, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes

The meeting was held at 5:30 p.m. in the Aurora Firehouse meeting room.

Present: Mayor Jim Orman, Trustees JD Balloni, Matt Bianconi, and John Miller

Absent: Janet Murphy

Others

Village Officials: Clerk Ann Balloni, ZBA Chairperson Karen Hindenlang, Historian Dr. Linda Schwab, Planning Board member Pam Sheradin, Account Clerk Christine Tanner, and Engineer Ken Teter

Aurora Free Library: Sandy Groth

The Citizen: Robert Harding and Kevin Rivoli

Inns of Aurora: Jodi Bennett

Wells Golf Club: Kevin Fitzgerald and Julie Spinelli

Members of the Public: Marie Dentes, Mike Groth, Lili MacCormick, Laurie Roberts, and Louise Rossmann

Call to Order: Mayor Orman called the special meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2025/2026 Budgets Public Hearing

On motion by Trustee Balloni, second by Trustee Miller, the Village Board voted to open the Public Hearing for the 2025/2026 Budgets at 5:31 p.m.

AYES: Balloni, Bianconi, Miller, and Orman

ABSENT: Murphy

NAYS: None

Motion carried.

Mayor Orman explained the public hearing procedures.

Mr. Teter gave a synopsis of the Village and Wells College signing a temporary, lease agreement for the Village to operate the water plant due to Wells College informing the Village that they were ceasing operation of the plant on October 1. Despite numerous requests from the Village for figures on the cost to operate the plant, Wells representatives indicated that campus costs were not itemized by department, and they could not give an accurate accounting of operation and maintenance for the water plant.

With assistance from the water plant operator, and studies done by Mr. Teter and Barton & Loguidice Engineering Firm, the annual cost to operate and maintain the water plant is determined to be approximately \$318,000.00, three times the current water fund budget of \$118,000.00. Mr. Teter continues to work with the budget to determine the increase in user fees and noted that sewer fees will also increase due to the loss of revenue from Wells College. Mr. Teter added that any formula results in significant increases to property owners.

Public Comment

Karen Hindenlang: Ms. Hindenlang thanked the village officials and staff for their diligence in dealing with a difficult situation. Ms. Hindenlang encouraged those present to read the letters submitted by the Village to various State & Federal representatives, posted on the village website. Ms. Hindenlang

referenced the village twice securing funding in the past to take over operation of the water plant only to be rebuked by Wells College at the 11th hour.

Lili MacCormick: Ms. MacCormick questioned the number of residents in the village. (Approximately 300)

Sandy Groth: Ms. Groth, requested that the trustees reconsider cuts to local village organizations.

Kevin Fitzgerald: Mr. Fitzgerald commended the Board and understands that the water rate increase will be painful but encourages purchase of the plant and voiced respect for the Board and confidence in their decisions.

Marie Dentes: Ms. Dentes questioned the number of outside users, other than the Inns of Aurora Spa. (There are 6).

On motion by Trustee Miller, second by Trustee Balloni, the Village Board voted to close the 2025/2026 Budgets Public Hearing at 5:50 p.m.

AYES: Balloni, Bianconi, Miller, and Orman

ABSENT: Murphy

NAYS: None

Motion carried.

Water Plant Purchase & Sale Agreement Resolution:

VILLAGE OF AURORA BOARD OF TRUSTEES RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PURCHASE OF WATER PLANT FROM WELLS COLLEGE

Introduced by: Trustee Miller

Seconded by: Trustee Balloni

Dated: April 10, 2025

WHEREAS, Wells College currently owns a water tower, pumps, intake pipe, equipment, treatment plant and certain transmission and distribution infrastructure (collectively, the “Water Plant”) that provides the Village of Aurora (the “Village”) with water pursuant to a Water Agreement by and between Wells College and the Village dated April 1, 1999; and

WHEREAS, Wells College is in the process of winding down its operations, will eventually cease to exist and, the Village has been operating the Water Plant pursuant to a Water Plan Management Agreement between Wells College and the Village dated September 19, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the Village and Wells College have been negotiating an agreement for the Village to acquire ownership of the Water Plant, its equipment, replacements, materials and improvements (the “Conveyance”); and

WHEREAS, At a regular meeting held on March 19, 2025, after which the Village Board of Trustees voted to proceed with the Conveyance; and

WHEREAS, to protect the health, safety and welfare of Village residents, the Village Board of Trustees believes it to be in the best interest of the Village to enter into a Purchase and Sale Agreement, in the form attached hereto as **Exhibit A** to accomplish the Conveyance.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, as follows:

1. The foregoing recitals are hereby incorporated as if set forth herein at length.
2. The Village Board of Trustees hereby authorizes the Mayor to execute and enter into the Purchase and Sale Agreement attached hereto with Wells College to move forward with the Conveyance.
3. The Village Board of Trustees further authorizes the Mayor to execute and enter into such other ancillary agreements as he may deem necessary or advisable to effectuate the transfer of ownership of the Water Plant to the Village.

Upon Roll Call Vote:

Trustee Matt Bianconi AYE
Trustee John Miller AYE
Trustee Janet Murphy ABSENT
Trustee JD Balloni AYE
Mayor James Orman AYE

Mayor Orman reiterated that there is no grant funding for operation & maintenance costs to run the water plant.

Mr. Teter explained the two grants for water plant upgrades awarded to Wells College, before their closure, that have been turned over to the Village. A grant from Northern Borders Regional Council (NBRC) for new filters and from the Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) for new pumps. Additionally, the Village was awarded a Water Infrastructure & Improvement Act (WIIA) grant to extend the plant intake pipe.

2025/2026 Budgets: Mayor Orman explained that the Board will not adopt the budgets tonight and have until May 1 for final adoption.

Mayor Orman explained that the Water Fund and Sewer Fund Budgets must be self-sustaining, meaning that the revenue brought in from fees must cover the costs of operating and maintaining the water and sewer plants.

Trustee Bianconi confirmed that the reductions in the General Fund Budgets are in case the Water/Sewer Funds must “borrow” from the General Fund. Mayor Orman added that any funds transferred from General to Water or Sewer must be paid back within that fiscal year.

Trustee Miller supports a flat rate and increasing the access fee for water and sewer. A concern is if only the rates are increased, users will conserve water which is counterproductive to funding operation of the plant.

Trustee Miller suggested partnering with local businesses, researching grant funding to extend village water lines for additional customers, and increasing water hauler fees.

Mr. Teter noted that he will continue to revise the Water and Sewer Budgets for presentation at the April 16 Village Board meeting.

Adjournment: On motion by Trustee Balloni, second by Trustee Miller, the Village Board voted to adjourn the special meeting at 6:30 p.m.

AYES: Balloni, Bianconi, Miller, and Orman

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Murphy

Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Balloni
Village Clerk