

REGULAR MEETING OF THE MUSCONETCONG SEWERAGE AUTHORITY

Chairman Rattner called the meeting to order at 7:31 PM. Following the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, announcement was made that adequate notice of this meeting had been provided for as defined by the "Open Public Meetings Act".

MEMBERS PRESENT: James Benson, Thomas Bruno, Andrew Cangiano, Michael Grogan, Brian McNeilly, Melanie Michetti, Michael Pucilowski, Steven Rattner, Joseph Schwab, John Sylvester

MEMBERS ABSENT: Donald Bates, Richard Schindelar

OTHERS PRESENT: Patrick Dwyer, Esq., John Scheri, PE, Marvin Joss, James Schilling

Chairman Rattner opened and closed the meeting to the public.

Mr. Schwab requested that the minutes of September 22nd be amended to take out the wording "and approve" in Paragraph 1 on Page 7. The meeting minutes of September 22, 2016 were approved, as amended, on a motion offered by Mrs. Michetti, seconded by Mr. McNeilly. Roll Call:

Mr. Bates	Absent	Mrs. Michetti	Yes
Mr. Benson	Yes	Mr. Pucilowski	Yes
Mr. Bruno	Yes	Mr. Rattner	Yes
Mr. Cangiano	Yes	Mr. Schindelar	Absent
Mr. Grogan	Yes	Mr. Schwab	Yes
Mr. McNeilly	Abstain	Mr. Sylvester	Yes

The special meeting minutes of October 13, 2016 were approved on a motion offered by Mr. Schwab, seconded by Mr. McNeilly. Roll Call:

Mr. Bates	Absent	Mrs. Michetti	Abstain
Mr. Benson	Yes	Mr. Pucilowski	Yes
Mr. Bruno	Yes	Mr. Rattner	Yes
Mr. Cangiano	Abstain	Mr. Schindelar	Absent
Mr. Grogan	Yes	Mr. Schwab	Yes
Mr. McNeilly	Yes	Mr. Sylvester	Abstain

The Expenditures/Treasurer's Report for October 1, 2016 was accepted on a motion offered by Mr. Sylvester, seconded by Mr. Pucilowski and the affirmative roll call vote of members present.

TREASURER'S REPORT- OCTOBER 1, 2016
OPERATING ACCOUNT

Balance as of September 1, 2016:		\$ 1,407,924.85
Receipts (September):	Hospitalization	3,111.62
		\$ 1,411,036.47
Total Disbursements for September:		\$ 235,539.81
Balance as of October 1, 2016:		\$ 1,175,496.66

RENEWAL & REPLACEMENT ACCOUNT

Balance as of September 1, 2016:		\$ 536,576.07
Receipts:	3rd Quarter Transfer from Operating	50,000.00
Disbursements:		0.00
Balance as of October 1, 2016:		\$ 586,576.07

ESCROW ACCOUNT

Balance as of September 1, 2016:		\$ 4,453.54
Receipts:		0.00
Disbursements:	Mott MacDonald (Mariners Pointe)	898.20
	Nusbaum Stein (Mariners Pointe)	409.20
Balance as of October 1, 2016:		\$ 3,146.14

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT/RESERVE FOR RETIREMENT ACCOUNT

Balance as of September 1, 2016:		<u>\$ 1,085,678.99</u>
Receipts:	3rd Quarter Transfer from Operating	25,000.00
Disbursements:	Mott MacDonald (headworks project)	<u>1,242.99</u>
Balance as of October 1, 2016:		<u>\$ 1,109,436.00</u>

ANALYSIS OF BALANCES:

Capital Improvement	\$ 1,064,436.00
Reserve for Retirement	\$ 45,000.00

EXPENDITURES REPORT - 2016 BUDGET

10/1/16

	2016	YEAR-TO-DATE		%
	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>EXPENDITURES</u>	<u>BALANCE</u>	<u>REMAINING</u>
Admin - Salaries and Wages	\$160,000.00	\$127,352.43	\$32,647.57	20.40%
Trustee Admin Fees	\$20,000.00	\$18,196.72	\$1,803.28	9.02%
Administrative - Other Expenses	\$35,000.00	\$22,102.21	\$12,897.79	36.85%
Legal	\$25,000.00	\$21,518.40	\$3,481.60	13.93%
Audit	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	100.00%
Engineer	\$20,000.00	\$21,548.88	-\$1,548.88	-7.74%
Pension	\$86,000.00	\$84,371.00	\$1,629.00	1.89%
Social Security	\$65,000.00	\$52,462.51	\$12,537.49	19.29%
Unemployment	\$7,000.00	\$5,434.79	\$1,565.21	22.36%
Hospitalization	\$219,260.00	\$164,207.88	\$55,052.12	25.11%
Disability Insurance	\$10,000.00	\$4,983.65	\$5,016.35	50.16%
Operating - Salaries and Wages	\$666,640.00	\$541,314.35	\$125,325.65	18.80%
Reserve for Future Retirement	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	100.00%
Telephone	\$20,000.00	\$10,448.24	\$9,551.76	47.76%
Electric	\$530,000.00	\$242,946.92	\$287,053.08	54.16%
Propane/Fuel Oil/ Gasoline	\$40,000.00	\$8,032.22	\$31,967.78	79.92%
Supplies/Chemicals	\$160,000.00	\$105,234.80	\$54,765.20	34.23%
Laboratory Supplies	\$10,000.00	\$4,804.72	\$5,195.28	51.95%
Office	\$20,000.00	\$19,139.63	\$860.37	4.30%
External Services	\$70,000.00	\$30,428.82	\$39,571.18	56.53%
Education/Training	\$20,000.00	\$8,001.38	\$11,998.62	59.99%
Laboratory Fees	\$30,000.00	\$9,577.80	\$20,422.20	68.07%
Maintenance/Repairs	\$150,000.00	\$65,150.95	\$84,849.05	56.57%
Insurance	\$110,000.00	\$93,674.95	\$16,325.05	14.84%
NJDEP Fees	\$25,000.00	\$18,812.05	\$6,187.95	24.75%
Permit/Compliance Fees	\$25,000.00	\$3,245.36	\$21,754.64	87.02%
Equipment	\$60,000.00	\$23,011.74	\$36,988.26	61.65%
Sludge Removal	\$700,000.00	\$397,788.00	\$302,212.00	43.17%
Contingency	\$25,000.00	\$0.00	\$25,000.00	100.00%
Capital Improvement	\$200,000.00	\$175,000.00	\$25,000.00	12.50%
Renewal and Replacement	\$200,000.00	\$150,000.00	\$50,000.00	25.00%
TOTAL	\$3,723,900.00	\$2,428,790.40	\$1,295,109.60	34.78%

The pending vouchers for the month of October were approved for payment on a motion offered by Mr. Schwab, seconded by Mr. Benson and the affirmative roll call vote of members present.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT	
Mott MacDonald	\$180.00
Mott MacDonald	\$2,391.15
OPERATING ACCOUNT	
ABB Automation	\$1,412.35
ADP	\$973.15
ATS Environmental Services	\$600.00
Accurate Waste Removal Services	\$2,475.00
AllMax Software	\$880.00
American Wear	\$607.28
AmeriGas Propane	\$380.44
Assoc. of Environmental Authorities	\$2,770.00
Atlantic Tomorrow	\$12.10
Donald Bates (AEA conf)	\$452.00
Patrick Biasi (work boots reimb)	\$149.99
Blue Diamond Disposal	\$567.10
Caesars Atlantic City (AEA conf reservations)	\$1,488.00
Cintas Corp.	\$115.93

Cintas First Aid	\$66.26
Cleary Giacobbe	\$875.00
Coburn Chemicals	\$1,636.25
Constellation New Energy	\$14,626.08
Coyne Chemical	\$9,066.82
Daily Record	\$92.00
Deli Delicious	\$495.00
Divita Balance Service	\$290.00
Endress + Hauser	\$1,750.78
Eurofins QC Labs	\$270.00
Fisher Scientific	\$324.71
GP Jager	\$1,337.60
Grainger	\$399.63
Susan Grebe (mileage reimbursement & petty cash)	\$181.26
Michael Grogan (AEA conf)	\$452.00
Hach Co.	\$1,410.66
Hayes Pump	\$1,510.00
Humane Society	\$100.00
Independence Constructors	\$4,200.00
JCP&L	\$10,399.77
Kenvil Power	\$2,269.39
Lowes	\$231.36
MSA Payroll 10/7/16	\$30,769.06
MSA Payroll 10/21/16	\$31,028.75
Maryland Biochemical	\$1,444.89
Mott MacDonald	\$890.00
NJSHBP	\$17,784.61
NJ American Water	\$629.33
NJ State League of Municipalities	\$220.00
The New Jersey Herald	\$21.90
Nusbaum Stein	\$3,826.40
One Call	\$40.00
Pan Metro	\$600.00
Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission	\$51,975.00
Michael Pucilowski (AEA conf)	\$452.00
R-D Trucking	\$26,180.00
Steven Rattner (AEA conf)	\$452.00
James Schilling (AEA conf & mileage reimbursement)	\$764.45
Rich Schindelar (AEA conf)	\$700.00
Joseph Schwab (AEA conf)	\$328.00
Shell Fleet	\$312.72
Staples	\$218.79
State Chemical Solutions	\$1,486.23
David Stracco (dental reimb)	\$360.00
Treasurer, State of NJ	\$1,640.00
USA Bluebook	\$1,990.40
Unum Life Insurance Company	\$1,452.15
Verizon	\$632.95
Verizon Wireless	\$225.18
West Chester Machinery	\$4,080.00

The following correspondence for the month of October was received and filed on a motion offered by Mr. Pucilowski, seconded by Mr. McNeilly and the affirmative roll call vote of members present.

- A. 10/6/16 Sussex County MUA - Proposed 2017 Rate Schedule
- B. 10/10/16 NJSEM - Membership Growth of Energy Procurement Program & Membership Refund
- C. 10/11/16 Chester Ploussas, PE - Water Quality Management Plan Amendment for R.D. Management, Mount Olive
- D. 10/14/16 James Schilling To Kerry Pflugh, NJDEP - Lake Hopatcong Water Level Management Plan & MSA Resolution
- E. 10/20/16 NJDEP - TWA Approval for Mariner's Pointe, Hopatcong Borough

Mr. Schilling asked if the commissioners had reviewed his monthly report and if anyone had any questions or comments. Mr. Pucilowski asked about the truck purchase and what the time frame for delivery was. Mr. Schilling said about 6 to 8 weeks. The commissioners discussed using the State Contract vs the Morris County Coop. Mr. Schilling also discussed budget funding for the truck. He noted that the funds could come out of operating budget for equipment or the capital budget. Mr. Joss indicated that it would be okay for the funds to come from the capital budget.

Chairman Rattner asked about the anonymous call made to hazmat. Mr. Schilling explained that there was a minor diesel fuel spill and it was remediated by the hauler. The hazmat enforcement agent inspected the cleanup. The enforcement agent was completely satisfied and no further action was needed.

Mr. Schilling reported that he was nearing completion of the energy audit application. He had 24 months of energy data compiled. He is putting the application together and will have it completed soon for the commissioners' consideration. Chairman Rattner asked about the funding and reimbursement for the energy audit. Mr. Schilling explained about the funding and costs for the audit. Funding up to \$100,000.00 for the audit is free and anything over \$100,000.00 would be the Authority's responsibility. He did not anticipate the audit being over \$100,000.00 and it should not cost the MSA anything, but he did allocate some funding for the audit. This energy audit will help the Engineering Committee understand the direction for the prioritization of the future capital plan projects for consideration. Mr. Scheri further explained that the audit is a reimbursement program. An energy auditor or firm will come to the MSA and they will generate a report that reviews the energy use of the facilities. They will conduct an analysis of the lighting systems, building and mechanical systems, aerations systems, etc. The report will explain the energy uses of the facilities. It will examine paybacks for 5 years, 10 years and 25 years. He advised that the MSA should do this energy audit because if the Authority decides to move forward with energy improvements, grant funds will be available for investments in capital projects. Mr. Schilling noted that he had copies of most of the member municipalities' energy audits. Chairman Rattner asked if the money still had to be appropriated even though the MSA is expecting a reimbursement. Mr. McNeilly explained that funds need to be appropriated because they will be spent and then reimbursed. Mr. Schilling said that the funding was budgeted for \$50,000.00 in the 2017 Budget.

Mr. Schilling also updated the commissioners on the magnesium hydroxide trial. He had some very exciting data from the trials. He explained about the trials that were being conducted and the results were great. He had the data available if any of the commissioners would like to review it.

Chairman Rattner asked if there were any Engineering Committee comments. Mr. Pucilowski reported that the Engineering Committee met and discussed the demolition of the old service building. Presently, they are looking to secure the building, so if and when the headworks project is conducted, the building demolition could be performed at the same time. The Committee was also looking at the GIS information and the hazardous assessment for the old service building. The Committee is planning on asking the MSA alternate engineer for a quote to do the hazardous assessment study. The Committee also needs to do the final details on the headworks analysis.

The Directors Report, and Repairs and Maintenance Report, for the month of October were accepted on a motion offered by Mr. McNeilly, seconded by Mr. Schwab and the affirmative vote of members present.

Mr. Scheri reported that Mott MacDonald met with the Engineering Committee and reviewed the headworks project status. They also assisted in developing some of the budgets that were previously discussed, including the hazardous material assessment for the old service building. Mott MacDonald also reviewed the budget numbers for some of the capital improvements including paving, clarifiers, thickeners, and conducting an aeration study, which are all projects that are several years away per the 5 year capital plan.

Mr. Scheri also reported that Mott MacDonald continues to follow up with some of the member municipalities to obtain some records. Netcong is sending copies of the trunk line that Mott MacDonald has been looking for. He spoke to the new DPW Director in Byram regarding one of the force mains and he also spoke to the Borough of Stanhope, so they will be providing that information when it is located.

Mr. Scheri also reported that he provided a draft scope of work and budget numbers for conducting the headworks design, along with permitting and financing with a trust next year.

Mr. Scheri also reported regarding permitting assistance for the Lake Hopatcong Water Level Management Plan. Mott MacDonald met with the Permitting Committee regarding the pilot program for Lake Hopatcong. In addition, Mott MacDonald is monitoring some of the new permit requirements that are being imposed throughout the State, specifically for arsenic. The Hackettstown MUA has been given draft permit with a proposed limit for arsenic, which is an extremely low limit.

Mr. Scheri also reiterated that demolition of the old service building will be coupled with the headworks project if it proceeds as discussed with the Engineering Committee. They also discussed conducting the hazardous materials inventory next year.

The Engineer's Report for the month of October was accepted on a motion offered by Mr. Sylvester, seconded by Mr. Cangiano and the affirmative vote of members present.

The commissioners discussed funding for the truck purchase. Mr. Joss advised that the resolution should give Mr. Schilling direction on the authorized funds for the truck. Mr. Cangiano asked about the difference between the funding from the operating account and the capital account. Chairman Rattner explained how excess operating funds are returned to the towns each year. The commissioners decided funds should be used from the operating account and the resolution should be amended. A motion was made by Mr. Pucilowski, seconded by Mr. Schwab to amend the resolution to include, "funds for the truck purchase are to be paid from the MSA's operating account".

Resolution No. 16-29 Awarding a Contract for the Purchase of a New Vehicle, as amended, was moved by Mr. McNeilly, seconded by Mr. Bruno and the affirmative roll call vote of members present.

RESOLUTION NO. 16-29
Resolution of the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority
Awarding a Contract for the Purchase of a New Vehicle

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-6.1(a) provides as follows: "for all contracts that in the aggregate are less than the bid threshold but fifteen (15%) percent or more of that amount... the contracting agent shall award the contract after soliciting at least two (2) competitive quotations, if practicable;" and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:11-3 the bid threshold for contracting units having a Qualified Purchasing Agent is presently Forty Thousand (\$40,000.00) Dollars and the minimum is Six Thousand (\$6,000.00) Dollars; and

WHEREAS, the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority (hereinafter "MSA") has retained a Qualified Purchasing Agent; and

WHEREAS pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:11-12(a) the contracting unit may also, without advertising for bids, purchase goods or services under a contract entered into on behalf of the State by the Division of Purchase and Property in the Department of the Treasury; and

WHEREAS the MSA is desirous of purchasing a new vehicle, namely, a 2017 Ford F-250 SRW XL 4WD Supercab 164" pickup truck with Utility Body for use in its operations pursuant to NJ State Contract A88727; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Commissioners of the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority that the Director is hereby authorized to enter into a contract for the purchase of a 2017 Ford F-250 SRW XL 4WD Supercab 164" pickup truck with Utility Body for a total purchase price of not more than Thirty-Four Thousand Four Hundred Eighty-Two (\$34,482) Dollars by way of the State of New Jersey, said funds to be paid from the MSA's operating account, and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the amount of the Contract shall not exceed \$34,482 without further approval from the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that James Schilling, as Director, is hereby authorized to execute the contract and take such other actions as are necessary to complete said purchase on behalf of the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority.

Resolution No. 16-30 Approving the 2017 Budget of the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority, was moved by Mr. Benson, seconded by Mr. Sylvester and the affirmative roll call vote of members present.

RESOLUTION NO. 16-30
Authority Budget Resolution
Musconetcong 2017 Sewerage Authority
Fiscal Year: January 1, 2017 To December 31, 2017

WHEREAS, the Annual Budget and Capital Budget for the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority for the fiscal year beginning, January 1, 2017 and ending, December 31, 2017 has been presented before the governing body of the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority at its open public meeting of October 27, 2016; and

WHEREAS, the Annual Budget as introduced reflects Total Revenues of \$4,387,219.00, Total Appropriations, including any Accumulated Deficit if any, of \$4,494,219.00 and Total Unrestricted Net Position utilized of \$107,000.00; and

WHEREAS, the Capital Budget as introduced reflects Total Capital Appropriations of \$558,550.00 and Total Unrestricted Net Position planned to be utilized as funding thereof, of \$0.00; and

WHEREAS, the schedule of rates, fees and other charges in effect will produce sufficient revenues, together with all other anticipated revenues to satisfy all obligations to the holders of bonds of the Authority, to meet operating expenses, capital outlays, debt service requirements, and to provide for such reserves, all as may be required by law, regulation or terms of contracts and agreements; and

WHEREAS, the Capital Budget/Program, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 5:31-2, does not confer any authorization to raise or expend funds; rather it is a document to be used as part of the said Authority's planning and management objectives. Specific authorization to expend funds for the purposes described in this section of the budget, must be granted elsewhere; by bond resolution, by a project financing agreement, by resolution appropriating funds from the Renewal and Replacement Reserve or other means provided by law.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the governing body of the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority, at an open public meeting held on October 27, 2016 that the Annual Budget, including all related schedules, and the Capital Budget/Program of the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority for the fiscal year beginning, January 1, 2017 and ending, December 31, 2017 is hereby approved; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the anticipated revenues as reflected in the Annual Budget are of sufficient amount to meet all proposed expenditures/expenses and all covenants, terms and provisions as stipulated in the said Authority's outstanding debt obligations, capital lease arrangements, service contracts, and other pledged agreements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the governing body of the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority will consider the Annual Budget and Capital Budget/Program for adoption on December 15, 2016.

A copy of the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority's Introduced and Approved 2017 Budget will be permanently kept on file at the office of the water pollution control plant at 110 Continental Drive, Budd Lake, New Jersey. A copy may be obtained by calling the office at 973-347-1525. Upon approval by the State, and the MSA's adoption, a copy of the MSA Adopted 2017 Budget will be posted on the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority's official website at msa-nj.org. A copy of the adopted budget will also be permanently kept on file at the MSA office.

Chairman Rattner briefly explained about the preliminary sewer allocation reservation agreement between Byram and Stanhope. He indicated that there are proper procedures to be followed by the MSA. Mr. McNeilly explained about the allocation agreement from Stanhope to Byram. Byram needed 1,450 gallons for a developer project. He further explained about a past similar circumstance with Byram that did not go through. Stanhope's and Byram's attorneys are reviewing the agreement and corresponding back and forth. The MSA's attorney will also have to review the agreement and Mr. McNeilly will send a copy of the most recent draft to Mr. Dwyer for his review. Mr. Sylvester asked if the procedure would be for Stanhope to also get approval from Netcong. Mr. Dwyer explained about language in the municipal service agreements concerning how much flow can be discharged by each town into the system. The language in Byram's service agreement is different than in the other member municipalities' agreements. Mr. Dwyer reviewed the municipal service agreements carefully and did not see any other agreements that allocated flow from one town to the other. He also followed up with Mr. Purcell, and as far as Mr. Purcell knew, this type of agreement has never been made in the past. Chairman Rattner noted, from his recollection, any municipality with excess gallonage had to first offer it back to the MSA. Mr. Dwyer indicated the agreements say that gallonage can only be transferred from one participant to another participant and any agreements should have sign-offs by all member municipalities and the MSA. Chairman Rattner reiterated that proper procedures have to be followed. Mr. Dwyer reported that he also discussed the agreement with Mr. Beinfeld, the MSA's Bond Counsel, since the initial agreements were from his firm. Chairman Rattner and the commissioners discussed the past re-rating of the Authority when Byram became a member municipality.

Mr. McNeilly explained that Byram charges by EDU's and their EDU's are fully committed. Mr. Schilling expressed that he had concerns about promised allocations by the member towns and has discussed these concerns in the past. Since the MSA has no knowledge of that information, his concern was to know if the towns were tracking those allocations effectively. He suggested that the municipal representatives should have reference to the allocations made for future developments for each of their towns.

The commissioners further discussed the proper procedures for the MSA to follow regarding the agreement. An escrow agreement with Byram should be in place. Mr. Dwyer indicated that Stanhope would be secondarily liable. Mr. McNeilly questioned the liability since Stanhope had no bond money left. Mr. Dwyer would follow-up on the matter. Chairman Rattner also suggest that Stanhope contact Sussex County to find out if the Borough would need to have their chapter in Sussex County's Wastewater Management Plan adjusted. The escrow agreement with Byram was discussed further. A motion was made by Mr. Schwab to request a \$3,000.00 escrow from Byram Township for the review and research of the transfer of allocation between the Borough of Stanhope and the Township of Byram, seconded by Mr. McNeilly and the affirmative roll call vote of members present.

Mr. Joss left the meeting at 8:21 PM.

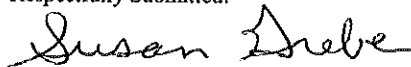
Chairman Rattner asked Mr. Schilling to give a brief summary about arsenic limits that may be required by the NJDEP. Mr. Schilling explained that the MSA received a letter from the AEA pointing out that Hackettstown MUA is reviewing a draft permit that now has an arsenic limit 0.017. He reviewed the matter since MSA is downstream from Hackettstown MUA. He had concerns about the 0.017 limit for discharging into surface water when the drinking water limit regulation is presently 5.0. He noted that Mott MacDonald is representing Hackettstown MUA. He has already looked into additional costs for the treatment. The MSA does sampling for arsenic on an annual basis and is compliant with the current RQL.

Mr. Scheri further explained the testing procedures and regulations for arsenic to the commissioners along with the circumstances for the Hackettstown MUA's draft permit for arsenic. He explained some of his concerns for the MSA. He indicated that arsenic should not affect the MSA at this time, however based on the logic applied to the Hackettstown MUA's case, Mercury and PCB's may be future concerns due to their inclusion on the 303(d) list for the reach of the Musconetcong near MSA. Mr. Scheri also summarized some of the circumstances for other Authorities he was familiar with in New Jersey in comparison to the MUA.

Chairman Rattner discussed some of the arsenic regulations and situations in Mount Olive Township. He suggested that the Engineering Committee should stay aware of the new regulations that may be enforced.

Motion made by Mr. Benson, seconded by Mr. Sylvester and the affirmative vote of members present, Chairman Rattner adjourned the meeting at 8:33 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Susan Grebe,
Administrative Assistant