

# FINAL MINUTES

## EXETER WATER/SEWER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES May 11, 2011

### 1. Call Meeting to Order

Selectman Representative Don Clement convened the inaugural meeting of the Water & Sewer Advisory Committee at 6:30 pm in the Nowak Room of the Town Office Building. Committee members present were: Mr. Bob Kelly, Mr. Jim Tanis, Ms. Colleen St. Onge, Mr. Boyd Allen and Mr. Paul Scafidi. Mr. Gene Lambert was not in attendance. Ms. Jennifer Perry, DPW Director, Mr. Mike Jeffers, Water/Sewer Managing Engineer and Town Manager Russ Dean were also present. Mr. Clement advised that Water & Sewer Advisory Committee meetings will be televised and minutes will be recorded. He reminded everyone that if at any time subcommittees are created, these subcommittees must post notice of meetings, record minutes and follow the same process as full committees. This is all part of the Right to Know laws.

### 2. Review Committee Charge

The committee charge of the seven member Water & Sewer Advisory Committee as approved by the Board of Selectmen was reviewed and briefly discussed. It has been posted on the Town website. The intent is to keep the committee from becoming an operational committee. It is an extension arm of the Board of Selectmen to provide the Board with guidance and recommendations. Mr. Dean commented that they have established a calendar where water and sewer rates are set each November. It is the expectation as outlined in charge item # 6 that the committee will conduct public hearings and make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen on rate setting.

### 3. Election of Officers

Mr. Clement suggested that the committee have a Chair, a Vice Chair and a Clerk. The primary role of the Vice Chair is to stand in for the Chair when needed. The Clerk would see that any information and reports are managed properly and would not be responsible for taking minutes. Mr. Bob Kelly suggested combining the duties of the Clerk with that of the Vice Chair, thus eliminating the need for a Clerk position. This met with general approval from the rest of the committee members.

#### **Jim Tanis moved that Bob Kelly be Chairman and Gene Lambert be Vice Chair.**

Mr. Kelly said that he would prefer not to be Chair due to extensive time constraints over the next few months. However, he would be willing to be Vice Chair. **There was no second. Motion fails.**

#### **Paul Scafidi moved that Mr. Kelly be Vice Chair. Mr. Boyd Allen seconded. Vote: Unanimous**

The committee decided to hold off on electing a Chairman until the next meeting when Mr. Gene Lambert is also present. Mr. Kelly as Vice Chair took over the running of the meeting for the remainder of the evening.

### 4. Overview of Ongoing Projects

Ms. Jennifer Perry, Public Works Director, provided an overview of projects that have been ongoing over the last couple of years and which are still in process. Ongoing projects discussed were Jady Hill, Groundwater Treatment, Water Street Interceptor, Wastewater Treatment Plant Draft Permit, CSO Administrative Order and the Exeter/Stratham Study.

#### **a. Jady Hill**

Jady Hill has gotten quite a bit of press and is certainly a very important project. They are currently in the design for phase I of the Jady Hill project that would be constructed this year in 2011. There is also intention for a phase II of this project, which was included in town warrant articles this year and which did not pass. That doesn't prevent DPW from moving forward with work that needs to happen

## FINAL MINUTES

this year. The monies that will be paying for the Phase I project work to be done this year came from the 2010 warrant articles for water and sewer line replacement. The project is in preliminary design right now with Wright Pierce Engineers. They are about 40% done with the design. One of the next major steps that needs to take place is another public meeting with the neighborhood and that likely will be taking place sometime in the month of June. They are continuing with field investigation work. There is a lot of poor condition pipe out there that they are trying to gain access to. They don't have all of the information yet, but are actively working on it. The intentions are to have Phase I work constructed and substantially complete by the end of this year.

Ms. Perry will provide the committee members with copies of an overview plan that outlines the general Jady Hill areas for water and sewer line replacement work along with summary information on estimated costs before the next meeting.

Jim Tanis expressed difficulty understanding the cost benefit situation with the monies that they are going to spend stopping infiltration in the Jady Hill area versus other areas such as the filter backwash water going into the wastewater treatment plant from the water treatment plant to the tune of about 90 million gallons a year. He asked how much infiltration will be stopped in the Jady Hill area for 2 million dollars versus 90 million gallons of filter backwash water that they know they could stop by diverting it from the back to the front of the water treatment plant for around \$ 150,000. Ms. Perry said that they have every intention of continuing to pursue recycling the backwash from the water treatment plant, but they do not have adequate funds to do this in 2011 because they are working on a default budget. It is an important project and will be included in the budget planning process for next year. However, she does not view any of these wastewater reductions projects as mutually exclusive. The numbers show that they need to continue to make inflow and infiltration improvements out in the collection system itself. The strategy is to target the high source I/I areas. Ms. Perry has data and information on this that she can provide to the committee members.

Boyd Allen asked if there is a list of the high I/I target areas. Jennifer Perry said that they have been working with Underwood Engineers over the last two and a half years and have a lot of that information. Jady Hill is at the top of the list.

Mike Jeffers pointed out that as the water treatment plant sits now with new SOP's, training and refurbishment of the two upper lagoons, the water treatment plant during a high rain event no longer contributes to a CSO event unless it rains for perhaps six or seven days. CSO's caused by infiltration inflow really aren't immediately now attributable to the water treatment plant, but rather to the hundreds of sump pumps and leaky pipes that they do not have control over. Backwash water goes to one, two or three lagoons that is pumped in in the middle of the night at the lowest sanitary flow rate. Jim Tanis asked how often the lagoons needed to be cleaned out as solids must accumulate. Paul Roy, who is the DPW's Water Quality Supervisor, said that the last cleaning was in 2007. The lower lagoon is due for cleaning now so it has been 4 years and that is pumping at a raw water intake of a little over 400 million gallons per year.

### **b. Groundwater Treatment**

Ms. Perry said that Exeter has a fairly aged surface water treatment plant on Portsmouth Avenue. They had a final design completed back in 2002 by CDM Engineers which included not only a water treatment plant but also pumping stations and piping improvements. The cost at the time was around 15 to 16 million dollars for a new treatment facility. The large number was not palatable to the voters and it did not pass a couple of town meetings. After that there was some serious discussion about looking at other options. The prior Water & Sewer Advisory Committee was very engaged in the process of looking at ground water and in developing a matrix of potential groundwater supplies. Included in this matrix were two older groundwater sources that the Town had operated as recently as the 1970's. Those are the Gilman well located at Gilman Park and the Stadium well located across

## FINAL MINUTES

the River adjacent to Phillips Exeter Academy. Over the last several years there has been a lot of work conducted to determine what the actual capacity of those wells would be, pumped under several different conditions, whether alone or combined in tandem with each other and under various potential scenarios such as river elevation and wetlands impacts. It has been a very long and arduous process getting review and approval from NHDES which has to play an active role in this. They did finally receive the final hydrogeological report which was approved by NHDES in October 2010.

They did have a warrant article this past March for a ground water treatment plant that included both the design and the construction in the total amount of 6.3 million. The vote had a majority and was very close but did not pass. Bonded articles require a super majority for passage.

Bob Kelly had thought that the State was on board with a groundwater versus surface water approach and asked why the process became long and difficult. Jennifer Perry said that the State never said they had a problem with the groundwater approach by any means. They had advised that they would treat it as a previously existing groundwater withdrawal and would not make Exeter go through all of the rigorous review process necessary for a large groundwater withdrawal. However, by the time everything was done they did have to complete all of the process necessary for what is deemed a large groundwater withdrawal. It is not all that atypical this day and age when you look at what it takes to bring on a new municipal well. There are a lot of potential concerns including impacts to the adjacent wetlands. Bob Kelly commented that wetlands are impacted more by surface water withdrawals than groundwater withdrawals.

Ms. Perry said that the reason they made the decision this year to go to the voters with both a design and construction price and not just a design cost was that this year NHDES had funds available up to 1.1 million dollars that would have been used for this project. It was a fairly significant incentive.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available next year. Bob Kelly stated that he though this approach was sound and cited a previous example when voters approved a design one year and then failed the construction in a subsequent year, essentially wasting the money spent on design. Bob Kelly said they need to figure out what type of facility people will accept because obviously something has to be done.

Jennifer Perry said that there have been concerns about location. They do not have a 100% defined location. They have a couple of site options. One is in Gilman Park, which is a Park setting and the other is to use land adjacent to the Lary Lane well which is up river and more remote. They need to continue to gain information on cost and work with the transfer of Gilman Park from the trustees. Mr. Dean said that the Gilman Park Trustees are a separate entity that has overseen the park for a long time. They want to turn the park over to the Town and it was approved by Town meeting vote to do that. All of the details have been worked out. However the land transfer is an issue due to probate court. It is in the court's hands right now and there will likely be no determination for a few months. He is optimistic that there will be a resolution before the next budget cycle and feels that they can continue the discussions on Lary Lane versus Gilman Park for site location while they are waiting for resolution on this.

Colleen St. Onge said that abutting neighbors to Gilman Park will want opportunity to interact with the Board of Selectmen, Water and Sewer Department and Water & Sewer Advisory Committee. The Lary Lane location would not have as much impact as it is more remote. Mr. Clement would like to see greater specifics and cost details, as well as a better conceptual design for what the plant would look like out at Lary Lane. Bob Kelly said that the Stadium well was bigger and asked if the fact that it was on Academy land pushed it off the matrix for consideration. Jennifer Perry said that the Academy has requested minimal site impact and would prefer just a well head there. The site would also be challenging from several aspects such as access and negotiations since it is private property. It was felt that the Lary Lane site would be more beneficial and it is Town owned property.

## FINAL MINUTES

### **c. Water Street Interceptor**

Jennifer Perry explained that the Water Street Interceptor is the sewer line under the Water Street housing authority. Design is complete and it will be out to bid very shortly. They anticipate construction start this July and expect substantial completion by the end of the year. This is the ARRA funded project. The reason this is taking so long is that there were more monies available to the Town than originally promised if they were willing to wait. So they waited and are now able to access up to 50% of the project cost or \$350,000 in federal funding. It is a \$700,000 project.

### **d. Wastewater Treatment Plant Draft Permit**

Jennifer Perry said that the new Wastewater Treatment Plant Draft Permit which the Town received in March 2011 included a new limit for any discharge including total nitrogen at an extremely low level of 3 mg / L. This is a level that would be considered a limit of technology. It will mean a completely new wastewater treatment plant for Exeter. Currently Exeter's average is approximately 14 mg / L. An intermediate limit that the EPA might issue to other locations other than Great Bay might be as high as 8 to 10 mg / L, so Exeter would be faced with having to address this regardless. Realizing that Exeter's discharge does go into Great Bay and since there are concerns with nutrient issues in the Great Bay, Exeter has a more stringent permit.

There is a public hearing scheduled for Thursday, June 9<sup>th</sup> in the evening at the Town Hall. It starts off as a public hearing which will encourage EPA open conversation with people and answering questions. It will then go into a formal public hearing when EPA can only take comment and cannot actually participate. The 120 day comment period ends in July when final comments will be due. Bob Kelly stated that this is essentially an unfunded mandate. The EPA issued Exeter a draft permit with limits that they cannot meet with their current technology. They also probably do not have the money to do what they are being asked to do. Ms. Perry said that the EPA will respond to the comments. The comment period will take several months and could even go into next year. When the EPA issues the final permit and Exeter is not in compliance from Day 1, there will be a negotiated administrative order which includes schedules for compliance. This will allow time for the Town to design and construct a new treatment facility. Essentially the cards are already in the deck as far as what has to be done. The question is how long the Town has to get there.

Jennifer Perry said that they have been working hard and diligently on different avenues. They are working with legislators and the governor to try to work with the EPA early on rather than just going through the standard permit process. They think there are a lot of opportunities for taking a holistic watershed approach. The Southeast Watershed Alliance, which represents a combination of entities that contribute to nutrient loads in the Bay, is involved in discussions and work on this issue. The EPA has expressed some willingness to take a long term approach to solving this issue to some degree. They recognize that constructing a new wastewater treatment plant cannot be done overnight. The 3 mg / L level has been implemented in some other locations but is new to this area. Cold weather is a concern and there are real challenges in winter. The first thing that needs to happen is a facilities plan and that will be part of the CIP budget process this year. Jim Tanis asked if they had much data on influent. Ms. Perry replied that they have some limited information on influent but not a lot. They are starting to collect more. Historically, all of the monitoring really occurs on the effluent side.

### **e. CSO Administrative Order**

Jennifer Perry said that they received an Administrative Order from EPA back in October addressing concerns with their continued combined sewer overflow discharges. They do have a permit for it and it is legal but they exceed what the industry or EPA considers normal which is a maximum of 4 events per year. If there is more than a one or two inch rainstorm, they do see enough flows into the

## FINAL MINUTES

sewer systems that they can't handle the capacity at the main pumping station. There is a siphon that goes underneath the River across to Clemson Pond which is the containment for combined sewer overflow.

They started work over two years ago with Underwood Engineers to identify inflow and infiltration knowing that it is the cause of Exeter's CSO's and in order to develop a plan for alleviating I/I. The ultimate goal is to eliminate CSO's. EPA did not realize that the Town had been working on this aggressive plan when they issued the Administrative Order. When DPW went down to meet with the EPA after they received the Administrative Order, the EPA was very pleased to hear what the Town had been doing to address CSO's. However, the EPA still asks that they report on everything as requested in the Administrative Order which is a lot of work for Mr. Jeffers. Reporting is required to be done on a quarterly basis for 5 years. Bob Kelly asked if there is any kind of updated CSO report. Ms. Perry said that they have a report that was done in response to a 2009 formal request received from EPA which is fairly detailed.

### **f. Exeter/Stratham Study**

This was work that was proposed to be conducted on water and wastewater by both the Town of Exeter and Stratham with a grant from the Coastal Program. Mr. Dean advised that he had just yesterday received notice that the grant was not successful, so this is on hold for now. They will perhaps submit another grant application at another date. Stratham has no infrastructure at all for water or wastewater and they are looking at several alternatives.

Bob Kelly asked if there was a fall back plan on metering since the warrant article for funding to replace meters failed. Mike Jeffers said that they will try again next year. The focus of their water metering line item is the industrial and commercial users. These are the 2, 3 and 4 inch compound meters. They have replaced several and are doing more of these. Mr. Jeffers said that on average 60 residential meters die every year. These are being replaced with the newer Neptune models which are radio reads.

## **5. Discussion / Action Items**

### **a. New Business**

Boyd Allen suggested setting up facilities tours of the water treatment plant and wastewater treatment plant so that the committee members can see the working parts and hear the concerns. Touring the pumping stations would be secondary. They can then start to address issues in chunks. The committee members discussed their schedule availability. Ms. Perry and Mr. Jeffers were asked to come back with tentative dates and times for the facility tours.

Vice Chair Kelly invited Ms. Perry and Mr. Jeffers to let the committee know how it can help them. He feels that the committee members possess a wide breadth of knowledge and experience. They are ready to roll up their sleeves and assist in whatever manner may be required.

### **b. Old Business - None**

## **6. Regular Business**

### **a. Water / Sewer Abatements – None**

### **b. Financial Report**

Mr. Dean presented a brief summary financial report on the Water and Sewer Fund status as of May 11, 2011. The Water Fund and Sewer Fund revenues and expenditures are good to date in terms of a positive variance. Revenues in the Water Fund are close to \$ 900,000 which is the amount that has been billed. Sewer Fund billed revenues are \$ 867,794 and expenses are \$ 488,079. The revenues include the corrective billings number which is around \$ 450,000. This figure can be equally split

## FINAL MINUTES

between the two funds. Year to date there have been 4 billing cycles out of 12 so they have essentially billed 33% of their year. The expenses in Water and Sewer Funds vary month to month based on capital needs and debt payments. For example, they make a large payment out of the Water Fund every September for a debt payment for the water tank. Revenues vary month to month based upon the district billed. Bills reflect the last 90 days of usage prior to the reading. One important statistic is that as of April 30, 2011, total water and sewer receivables is \$ 947,519 inclusive of corrective billings.

Bob Kelly pointed out that the receivables number was much higher a few years ago. Mr. Dean said that the Finance and Collection department has become more aggressive at collecting money and doing shutoffs. Billing has been moved to Public Works.

Bob Kelly requested information on the fund balance for each side and said in the past there had been an unwritten desire to have around \$ 500,000 in each. Mr. Dean has unaudited numbers which he can bring to the next meeting. Mr. Dean confirmed that they do have at least \$ 500,000 in each fund so they are meeting that target. A brief discussion ensued about ideal overall fund balance for the water and sewer funds.

Jim Tanis asked if the \$ 947,000 receivables were all current. Mr. Dean said that \$ 551,000 is current, \$ 185,000 is 31-60 days, \$ 30,000 is 61-90 days and \$ 180,099 is over 90 days.

### **7. Review Committee Calendar**

Action items are scheduling facilities tours and getting copies of the Jady Hill summary Ms. Perry referred to earlier on this evening. The next Water and Sewer Advisory Committee meeting will be Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm.

### **8. Adjournment**

**Mr. Boyd Allen moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Paul Scafidi. Vote: Unanimous**

The meeting stood adjourned at 8:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Mancinelli  
Recording Secretary