

**1. Call Meeting to Order.**

Chairman Gene Lambert convened The Committee at 6:30 pm in the Nowak Room of the Town Office building. Other members of The Committee present were Jim Tanis, Bob Kelly and Boyd Allen. Absent were Colleen St. Onge, Selectman Frank Ferraro and Paul Scaffidi.

**2. Review and approve draft minutes of December 14, 2011 meeting.****3. Water/Sewer Bill Abatement Requests or discussions with customers.**

In Summary, Mr. Jeffers indicates the owner bought the home, found the water meter attached to the water pump was either damaged or malfunctioning. He did not ignore the problem. The owner called the Town and The Town DPW Technician was appointed to look at the unit. The owner waited almost a year to remove the malfunctioning meter and replace it. The abatement request is for \$112.00. Chairman Lambert reminds the committee that this is not a normal abatement request. Mr. Jeffers indicates this request is specifically for the fees connected to the bill. The complete and total service charges for this bill were \$238.00, the abatement is requested for \$112.00. Mr. Allen advises The Committee that the motion is limited to the service fee only.

**Boyd Allen moves to allow the abatement for the amount of \$112.00. Mr. Tanis seconds. Vote: Unanimous. Motion carries.**

Mr. Jeffers presents the request for the residential address of 70 Main Street. The bill in the request for abatement is from February, 2010. This residence is a four unit apartment home. The owner called DPW concerned about a high water and sewer bill. The DPW Technician visited the home and found leaking toilets in three of the four apartments. One of which had sustained extensive, obvious repair. At the time of the visit, a tenant of the home indicated to the technician that a tenant from the vacant unit in the building had a falling out with the unit owner resulting in an immediate vacancy. This tenant had deliberately left the water running in the apartment when it was vacated. It is presumed the water had been running for three to four days. Mr. Jeffers reminds The Committee that there is no proof of such circumstance, but does indicate the unit owner did give a similar story regarding the vacant unit. Mr. Jeffers feels this loss was preventable and does not recommend this abatement. Mr. Kelly believes the circumstance meets the criteria for a one time abatement. Mr. Lambert reads the specifics of the policy to determine if The Committee feels this would qualify. He believes it seems like a management issue, as opposed to a maintenance issue. Mr. Kelly reviews the meter history for the preceding several quarters. He indicates the previous quarters had been averaging 20,000 - 30,000 gallons per quarter. The quarter in question was over 147,000 gallons. The quarter immediately before the one in the request was around 94,000 gallons. Mr. Kelly feels the bill for 147,000 gallons is negligence. The quarter previous is the quarter the abatement should be asked for, as this was the first high bill.

**Mr. Kelly moves to make a one time abatement for half the difference of the 94,000 gallons to the three year average previous to that. Mr. Allen seconds. Vote: Unanimous. Motion Carries.**

**4. Regular Business****A. Deliberative Town Meeting Session strategy on warrant articles. (Kelly)**

The deliberative town meeting sessions are coming up. Mr. Kelly questions what type of support the staff of DPW might need from the committee to help promote the warrant articles. He feels the Water waste stream reduction and groundwater plant would require a little more explanation to the detail to the users relaying exactly what they mean. He feels some effort to itemize the benefits of each warrant should be made. The idea is, if articulation can be made it may increase the chances of passing as a warrant article. He indicates a strategy needs to be developed. Mr. Kelly refers to Mr. Tanis. He reminds The Committee that Mr. Tanis has a chemical engineering background and has indicated he would be willing to help Mr. Jeffers to get some positive information out to the public. Mr. Kelly suggests The Committee should be seeking out media channels and possibly a separate brain storming session. Mr. Dean advises The Committee that in previous years some explanatory sheets were drawn up to detail all the expenses. He advises The Committee of the idea that a plan to bring a power point slide indicating costs, including the reduced costs after the 20% forgiveness that is anticipated. This might help educate the public. He reminds The Committee that public resources can not be used to advocate for these articles. Someone outside the Town Government can advocate and offer resources. He expresses that there are many media streams available outside of the Town

Government. Mr. Dean reflects again on the explanatory information sheets. With this basis, each article can have a paragraph to express the need, what the warrant will do, what the status quo is and so forth. These would be grouped as informational profiles and could be used to articulate the financial impact down stream for residents.

## **B. Project updates (Jeffers)**

### **- WW permit, Jady Hill Phase 1, Dam Status, WTP upgrades.**

Mr. Jeffers offers an update on the Jady Hill phase ii project. There seems to be come conflict in using Water and Sewer funds for relief drains. Mr. Dean indicates \$200,000 is committed to funding drainage. With a capital project such as this, if the drains have a public sewer related benefit, the project can be presented to the DES. Mr. Kelly feels as though the general fund will end up paying for the drainage. Mr. Jeffers suggests rewriting the ordinance draft to reflect a defined difference. The current ordinance talks about a sewer as a general term for storm or sewer water. The change would be to clarify the language to differentiate between the two types of sewer: water and storm. Paul Vlasich, Town Engineer seeks The Committee's opinion on this topic. He also requests assistance in how to present the option to rewrite the ordinance to The Board of Selectman. Chairman Lambert agrees to meet with Mr. Vlasich to determine what needs to be done.

Mr. Jeffers offers and update on the Waste Water Permit. A meeting with EPA and DES was held on 1/04/2012, Mr. Dean was in attendance. The language of the permit was discussed. Another meeting has been planned to change the language. Mr. Dean indicates that this is a draft permit. He indicates the verbiage will be changed prior to the permit becoming final. The coalition of Dover, Exeter, Portsmouth, New Market and Durham has proposed an adaptive plan to get the measurements to 8mg per liter. Going into the facilities plan warrant article for public meeting, the committee should express to the public that there is a need to build something. The current language for the draft permit is for 3mg per liter of nitrogen. Mr. Tanis indicates that there has been talk of surrounding towns considering charging fees for using the Town Facilities to fund projects such as this. He wonders if The Town of Exeter should be considering the same approach. Mr. Dean feels cost sharing is important. A joint Exeter and Stratham venture on sewer and water could be to have both towns assisting in removing nitrogen from the bay. Mr. Tanis asks if not including Stratham, the number of 3,300 users is accurate. Mr. Dean indicates it is accurate and notes it would triple the sewer rates without question. The process of negotiating the permit is ongoing. Until the Town of Exeter gets into the wastewater phase of actually designing, it will be difficult to determine the scale of what the actual cost will be. Mr. Kelly feels this financial burden would be a substantial problem.

Mr. Jeffers presents an update on Jady Hill Phase 1. There are 584 feet of new sewer at a cost of \$107,253.00. It is on schedule and proceeding as planned. These improvements were made on Haven Lane and the project will begin again in the spring.

Mr. Jeffers presents an update on the Great Dam Status. He indicates removal of the dam will impact water. Weston Sampson has reported they want to change the structure. The river has been uncomfortably low when the dam was previously intentionally dropped. A vortex was actually visible in previous times. The demand for water at that time was much higher. The project is state funded and DES and DHB are involved. Mr. Dean indicates DES and a Gulf Of Maine Grant, paired with State Funding is paying the primary expense for this project, the local share will be approximately \$40,000. This project is still in study mode, no conclusion can be drawn and no recommendation is available at this time. As for the dam itself, Mr. Jeffers describes the upgrades and repairs needed. The lower winter flows and two up flow clarifiers, of which one will be cleaned chemically. There is an uneven aeration and it needs to be repaired. By the latter part of next week, the clarifier will be floated and stored to look at the diffuser. Bids are currently being solicited to rebuild the filter on pump three and changing the media. The first bid has come in at just under \$25,000. These items are listed on the 2012 budget. In December 2011, the USEPA issued an administrative order. Several reports are due to the EPA. The EPA is concerned about SSO's. The EPA wishes to have the area near the athletics field investigated for impediments. There have been sanitary sewer overflows (SSO's) in that area in the past several years. EPA expects the investigative work to be completed in one year. The repairs, if any will be anticipated for the budget for 2013. A short explanation of the difference between CSO's and SSO's is provided. Combined sewer overflows (CSO's) have been almost eliminated. Storm grates at Phillips Exeter Academy will be complete by September. The Post Office has yet to commit to the their storm drainage and sump pump. SSO is the sewer in the street, CSO is caused by rain water. Non human sewage goes through the structure that diverts, takes the excess and puts it into the river without treatment.

## **C. Year End 2011 Finance Report (Lambert/Dean)**

Mr. Dean provides a short descriptive hand out to the committee to highlight the budget for fiscal year 2011. The books for 2011 stay open until January 13, 2012. The Water Fund Budget was \$2,018,276. The Actual was \$2,480,537. There was a surplus in terms of revenue. Actual expenses were \$2,067,950 which included \$40,000 for emergency reserve spending to

repair the boilers at Water and Sewer. The chemical budget was exceeded. Of the surplus, the receivable at the end of December is \$315,026. It is considered not yet collected and represents about a month worth of billing. \$97,561.00 is what's available. Cash reconciliations need to be more frequently accounted for. Mr. Tanis wonders if funds appropriated specifically for water and sewer can be spent out of the general fund for other things. Mr. Dean indicates the fund collects all revenue and posts to the account. The Fund is housed and administrated by the general fund, but the funds are specific to water and sewer budget, and are appropriated. A short discussion regarding the co-mingling of funds in the general fund ensues. Mr. Tanis expresses his concern that funds appropriated in the general fund have been used for things other than appropriation in other towns, as he has seen in the news recently. Mr. Dean reminds them there is a treasurer who reconciles from the General Ledger every month. The ledger is attached to the accounting system for reconciliation. The rolling receivable will always exist. A short discussion about moving the fund to an interest earning account and the Committee members concerns are expressed. Mr. Tanis indicates he would like to know what the actual standing in regards to available funds are, more frequently. He feels these numbers are pertinent to making decisions on future projects. Mr. Tanis would like to meet with Mr. Dean to explore avenues to improve the reporting standards. Mr. Kelly feels this should be a committee discussion and Mr. Tanis agrees to add the topic to the agenda for a future meeting.

#### **D. Sewer Flat Rate Discussion (Jeffers/Dean)**

A discussion for education ensues regarding the Sewer Flat rate. Mr. Jeffers advises the Committee of a resident who used to receive a sewer bill from a well on their property. The resident presented the idea that a flat rate should be established. The idea is to charge \$4.44 per 1,000 gallons for tier 1 sewer. The rate of 120 gallons per day, per bedroom is presumed for Exeter according to DES. Utilizing a flat rate versus the existing rate is introduced. There are approximately 32 accounts in Exeter, of which around half pay a service charge. Mr. Jeffers is seeking the commendation of the flat rate to present to the Board of Selectman. He seeks substantiation and justification for changing the flat rate. The service chares is \$28 per quarter. The proposed rate for one bedroom is \$47.95, this is at 120 gallons of water a day for 90 days at \$4.44, adding in a \$28 service fee. There are for two areas, Finney Lane across the town line and 29 units in Hampton, but sewer is in Exeter. This would increase the Hampton addresses by approximately \$8,000 per year. A short discussion ensues. The new homes built in Exeter have their own water but not sewer. A water meter on their well should be required to get away from flat rates or an option of having a meter installed can be proposed. Mr. Kelly feels a meter installation should be at the cost of the resident, as there is no certainty it will benefit either The Town or the resident. Ideally, if a resident feels the flat rate is too high, they can install a meter to avoid the fees.

**Mr. Kelly moves to accept the calculations with a \$28.00 service charge added on. To accept the approach with the usage number to be verified. He modifies the motion to base the flat sewer rate on the DES bedroom criteria plus the flat rate fee of the current service charge. Mr. Allen seconds. Vote: Unanimous.5. Old Business**

**5. Old Business - None**

#### **6. Committee Calendar -**

Next Meeting- February 3 8, 2012 at 6:30 pm

#### **7. Adjourn**

**Mr. Allen moves to adjourn. Mr. Kelly seconds. Vote: Unanimous. The Committee stands adjourned at 8:30pm.**