

WATER & SEWER ADVISORY COMMITTEE – November 14, 2012

FINAL MINUTES

1. Call to order

Chairman Bob Kelly called the Water and Sewer Advisory Committee to order at 6:30 pm in the Nowak Room of the Town Offices. Members of the Committee present were Chair Bob Kelly, Selectman Representative Frank Ferraro, Boyd Allen and Gene Lambert. Also present were Town Manager Russell Dean, Selectman Don Clement and Water & Sewer Engineer Mike Jeffers.

2. Review and Approve Draft Minutes of September 12, 2012 and October 10, 2012

September 12, 2012 – Mr. Allen moved to accept the minutes as corrected by Mr. Allen and Mr. Ferraro, seconded by Mr. Lambert. Motion carried.

October 10, 2012 - Review of the minutes tabled until the next meeting because not enough members were present to accept motion to approve (Gene Lambert abstaining).

3. Water/Sewer Bill Abatement requests and/or discussions with customers

- Mr. Jeffers reviewed his memo to Mr. Dean concerning an abatement request concerning a leak from a malfunctioning toilet valve. It was agreed that the leakage was more an issue of proper maintenance and not a reason for abatement as per Selectmen's Policy 08-30. Mr. Ferraro moved to deny the abatement request, Mr. Lambert seconded, motion carried to deny abatement.
- Don Woodward, a resident of the Exeter River Manufactured Homes Park, appeared to request a sewer rate reduction from the Tier 3 rate to Tier 1. The Tier 3 rate is for commercial properties so is not appropriate for this community. The community maintains its own infrastructure and the Tier 3 rate is prohibitive to the budgets for those improvement projects (repaving roads, replacing sewer lift stations). Mr. Woodward provided data on the quarterly sewer bills at the Tier 3 rate, estimated gallons used per quarter and per unit.

Mr. Kelly said that the current arrangement of a well with two meters puts the community in the commercial category. However, Mr. Kelly recommended to Mr. Woodward to prepare a spreadsheet for the last 2 or 3 years that would show all the factors involved such as usage/gallons, what amount was paid, the impact on that amount if rate was at Tier 1 and to provide this data for both water and sewer. Mr. Kelly also suggested that Mr. Woodward have Mr. Jeffers review the data before submitting it to the Committee. A summary of all the aspects of the situation will be helpful to determine what might be done to help remedy the rate issue. Once Mr. Jeffers has reviewed the summary, it will go to Mr. Kelly and the other members of the Water & Sewer Advisory Committee.

4. Regular Business

a. Projects Update – Mike Jeffers

Mr. Jeffers reviewed his October/November 2012 report. Topics reviewed were the EPA Administrative Order for the sewer collection system, EPA Administrative Order for grease interceptors, design of the GWTP and the SWTP, the water meter project and the award to the Town of Exeter for Surface Water Treatment Optimization Recognition. Paul Roy was recognized for his work which resulted in this award.

In connection the design for the two treatment plants, members of the committee requested that they also receive copies of the minutes for those meetings discussing the proposed designs and the bids.

b. Preliminary discussion of 2013 goals

Mr. Kelly asked the members to consider what they think would be appropriate goals for the coming year. Mr. Kelly made the following two suggestions: 1) Rate structure and working with reserves management and 2) start to review CIP projects in the spring rather than waiting until the fall; early review would enhance deciding which ones to pursue and can be funded.

5. Old Business

a. Fund reserves usage strategy and policy

Mr. Dean provided the figures for the funds: water - \$727,543.00, sewer - \$1,417,454.00. An initial proposal was to set aside \$500K from each fund for emergencies and special projects. Mr. Kelly noted that this would be more of a guideline rather than a policy. Mr. Ferraro noted that the amount may vary from year to year. Mr. Dean said some of the variables year to year could be changes in water consumption, water and/or sewer emergency expenditures can be very costly and how the budget process impacts the rate structure. Mr. Lambert asked if there was a trend in the reduction of water usage and therefore a reduction of rate revenue. Mr. Dean said he would look into this data concerning this possible pattern.

b. Discussion of Water & Sewer budget items and issues

The committee reviewed line items of the Preliminary Budget for FY2013 for the Water & Sewer Funds.

There was lengthy discussion on the proposed new utility clerk requested by the DPW. Mr. Jeffers explained the need for this position: management is doing many of the tasks a clerk would handle, the billing work gets behind and there is work space for only one person. However, the Committee preferred that Mr. Jeffers consider having 2 part-time positions instead. Mr. Ferraro pointed out that billing is still done quarterly and the 30-day billing proposal has not yet gone before the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Kelly suggested, since the new meter technology will be rolled out next year, to hire a part-time person and see how things proceed. Mr. Ferraro agreed with this idea and further suggested to split the various duties between the two part-time workers. Mr. Kelly will be working with the Budget Committee and relay Mr. Jeffers' proposal and concerns to that committee.

Mr. Jeffers mentioned the need for a new truck with equipment which would enhance much of the work performed by Water & Sewer staff. Mr. Kelly noted that CIP items such as the truck will be discussed at the CIP meeting on November 20th.

6. Other business to be brought before the Committee

Mr. Kelly attended a meeting on the proposed municipal sharing project between Exeter and Stratham. There is a follow-up meeting scheduled for November 28th and the engineer's report is available online. This report offers a number of options on how to tie the two towns together. The tax structure was mentioned only as a future topic of discussion because there have been no decisions made concerning this proposed project. Mr. Kelly said he was able to locate a report from 5 or 6 years ago on similarly proposed project.

Mr. Dean mentioned the Henderson Law addresses the scenario of joint development between towns and shared tax revenue. However, this law has never been tested as yet.

7. Committee Calendar

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 12, 2012 at 6:30 pm. Mr. Kelly recommends for discussion: a review of the Budget Committee results, and the two primary CIPs the water line on Linden Street and the sewer line projects on Portsmouth Ave.

8. Adjourn

The Committee Chairman adjourned the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol J. Brickett
Recording Secretary