

## **EXETER WATER & SEWER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES February 13, 2013**

### **Convene Meeting:**

Chairman Bob Kelly, Vice-Chair Gene Lambert, Frank Ferraro – Selectmen’s Rep., Boyd Allen, Jim Tanis, Paul Scafidi, Mike Jeffers – Water/Sewer Managing Engineer, were all in attendance. Bob Kelly convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

### **Minutes of 2/11/13:**

**Motion:** Paul Scafidi moved to accept the minutes of February 11, 2013, seconded by Boyd Allen. Unanimous.

### **Water / Sewer Bill Abatement Requests – Mike Jeffers:**

Mike Jeffers announced he had no abatement requests.

### **Regular Business – Projects Update – Mike Jeffers:**

Mike Jeffers talked about the water meter project. He informed the committee that roughly 32% of the new meters are installed and 75% of residents have complied with access requests. He said this project would be done around September of 2014.

Gene Lambert complimented Mike on the project, saying he had spoken to a couple folks and they say the workers installing the meters have been very professional and polite.

Bob Kelly asked if Mike had developed a spreadsheet for the water meter replacement project that compares previous usage versus post-replacement usage. Mike answered he does not have a spreadsheet yet but he is trying to find time to do one. Bob said he wants to make sure the project is as cost effective as initially presented, and it would be nice to have data to back it up.

Mike talked about the water recycling vaults. He gave reasons for the vaults being so expensive.

### **Regular Business – Financial Reports Review:**

Frank Ferraro started a discussion about stabilizing sewer rates. He asked if the Committee needs to make any recommendations to the Board of Selectmen, even if there were no changes in the rates.

Bob Kelly said that, based on earlier discussions with the Town Manager and the BOS, when the utility needs money, Russ has the Selectman’s blessing to take money out of the reserves. Bob also advised the Committee that they need to monitor the sewer fund as we have dipped into it to cover shortfalls in the past several months.

### **Old Business: Recap of Town Voting Results and Project/Budget Impacts:**

The Committee stated that the Portsmouth Ave. Project approved by the voters was the primary project. They explained that this project was created to replace 2,800 linear feet of piping. They also

said that the current design work was done in 2005 and it may need to be updated. They discussed moving forward on the bidding this summer.

Mike Jeffers said he went to look at the pipes and said they are in rough shape. He said the situation was a “time bomb”. There was a discussion about the corroded water sewer taps and how they need to be replaced. Mike also stated this is “a worthwhile project” as it will reduce infiltration. He informed the Committee that 20% of the sewer main damage is a large contributor to infiltration.

Mike also mentioned approval for a new sewer Vactor truck to replace the current aged and damaged vehicle. He noted there is not much trade in value on the current truck.

### **Exeter-Stratham Utility Sharing discussion**

Bob Kelly advised the Committee that the Selectmen approved both a Technical subcommittee and a Financial subcommittee to the BOS to review the potential of the town sharing utilities with Stratham. Paul Scafidi and Bob Kelly were chosen to serve on the Financial Committee and John Gilbert for the Tech Committee. Frank Ferraro mentioned some more members he believes would be good for the Committees. There was no schedule discussed.

There was discussion about the tasks for the Committees. Jim Tanis recommended using Portsmouth’s formula for assessing costs and rates for a utility sharing project.

Bob Kelly mentioned there are local folks who have expertise in the economic analysis required to value our utilities who would be willing to help on this project. Frank Ferraro suggested using all the resources that they can for this. There was discussion about the capacity of the systems and methodology for valuing the facilities. Paul Roy entered the discussion.

Paul Roy gave an explanation about the capacity of the facility and what would happen if more water was there. Frank Ferraro said he got information from the Kleinfelder report indicating that 75% of the water was from the ground and 25% was surface water.

Brian Griset spoke on the topic. He told the Committee there are things not calculated in the report. He stated you cannot see all agreements on the report. He gave the Committee examples of which ones were not there. He said he was going to do more research on the matter.

### **Update on Aged Accounts Receivable and Payment Schedule**

The Committee said that the accounts receivable have been going up over the last 3-4 months and that 70% of that increase is due to one customer in the amount of about \$125,000 for a bill incurred when this customer’s own water system was down. Bob Kelly mentioned that Russ wasn’t present to discuss the matter but that he was not aware of a payment plan being in place. Mike Jeffers confirmed this. There was discussion about the money owed by this one customer and making a recommendation to the Selectmen to take action to push this along so payment can be made.

The Committee discussed what would happen in present day if a customer’s water bill got that high. The water would get shut off. However, in this case, the customer has their own water source, and it would be difficult to plug their sewer discharge, so the town does not have a lot of leverage to get them to pay the bill. The Committee talked about taking legal action.

**Motion:** Paul Scafidi moved to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that the town take legal action to collect this debt, seconded by Frank Ferraro. Unanimous vote.

**Amendment:** Gene Lambert added language that they recommend to the Board of Selectmen to pursue legal action against the large accounts receivable fees for the water bill and the town not finance the bill or give the option for a payment plan, and that they pursue legal fees. Agree to by Paul Scafidi and by Frank Ferraro. Unanimous vote.

### **Review of USEPA I/I Response and Scope of Sewer Ordinance Enforcement Procedures**

Mike Jeffers gave a handout to the Committee giving five options as to Sewer Ordinance Enforcement.

There was a discussion about the different options. Mike said 20-25% of the town does have sump pumps. Approximately 80% of the residents took advantage of the Jady Hill Project drain connection plan and less than 15% are non-compliant.

Mike Jeffers stated he prefers option #4. Other members agreed and said that ordinances are in place so they should take action without giving a grace period. Frank Ferraro commented that the town can, by ordinance, issue fines, but this should be as a last resort.

Mike Jeffers said his crews have been developed a database such that by the end of the year, they should be aware of all the residents who have sump pumps in their homes.

Bob Kelly said they should come up with text for bills, Consumer Confidence Reports, or cable TV telling people they have a certain amount of time to remove their sump pumps, then enforce the ordinance.

There was a discussion about whether the town should provide coverage of construction costs over \$1000 similar to the Jady Hill offer. Frank Ferraro thinks it should be a case by case basis and not for all town projects. The Committee decided option #4 was best. They revised it to give people one year instead of two years to remove their sump pumps. They gave a recommendation to Mike Jeffers saying not to shut off the water but to enforce a fine which is currently part of the ordinance. There was a discussion about negotiating with residents who don't have the money to replace their sump pumps.

Gene Lambert expressed concern with what will happen a year from now when people have not disconnected their sump pumps. Mike Jeffers said that every time they put in a new water meter they would check for sump pumps. Mike Jeffers told Gene Lambert he could also send out legal documents to residents and have them sign and return confirming they have complied. He said this is a common method.

The Committee said they would notify the residents now about this. They will send out letters to those who they are aware of now and send out letters as sump pumps are discovered.

### **Update on SB 11 Bill to Create Water Districts**

John Gilbert did the research on this, but was not at the meeting to discuss. The Committee agreed to wait until the next meeting so he can discuss it.

### **Other Business to be brought before the Committee**

Mike Jeffers said there was no other business from the Department.

### **Committee Calendar:**

The next regular meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday, April 10, 2013 at 6:30 p.m. in the Nowak Room of the Town Office.

### **Adjourn the Meeting:**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Nicole McCormack, recording secretary