

# *Town of Exeter (NH) Water & Sewer Advisory Committee*

## Meeting Minutes

# FINAL

September 18, 2019

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order in the Wheelwright Room at the Town Office Building, 10 Front Street, Exeter, NH by Chairman Bob Kelly at 6:30 pm. Other Committee members present included Mr. Dave Michelson (part time), Ms. Kelly Warner, Mr. Carl Wikstrom, Mr. Ben Mosher, and Selectboard representative Ms. Molly Cowan (part time). Committee member Mr. Mark Fabian was unable to attend.

### 2. Water and Sewer Bill Abatement Requests

Seven abatement requests were discussed by the Committee.

- a. 8 Aspen Way. The customer, Mr. Alfred Fournier in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, Mr. Fournier was having his house worked on and the contractor was using the toilet during the day when Mr. Fournier was not always there. A sticking valve was found after Mr. Fournier had the meter and system checked by DPW. Reportedly, this valve has subsequently been repaired.

This request was carried over from the August 14 meeting so that Mr. Fournier could communicate with his contractor.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that, even though this usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy, portions of it might fall under the "accidental usage" due to the fact that the ratepayer was not always in the home to assess whether a leak was present or not. Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Mosher seconded a motion to approve half the excess usage above normal usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$193.15 APPROVED** by a vote of 4-0.

Mr. Mickelson joined the meeting.

- b. 4 Amberwood Drive. The customer, Mr. Greg Devine, in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, Mr. Devine had a large usage increase from March to late May that was unexplained as he indicated that just he and his wife occupied the house.

This request was carried over from the August 14 meeting until research could be conducted by the Committee with DPW regarding the site visit.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that all of the criteria pointed to the usage being the ratepayer's responsibility. However, Mr. Devine indicated that he had done nothing different at this house from the third week of May to the fourth when his consumption dropped by over 80%.

Mr. Kelly moved and Mr. Wikstrom seconded a motion to approve the conditional amount of \$500, the maximum over a 10 year period, as per the Abatement Policy. **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$500.00 APPROVED** by a vote of 5-0.

Ms. Cowan joined the meeting.

- c. 7 Phinney Lane. The customer, Mr. Pierre Durand, in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill from early April to late May. According the DPW records and Mr. Durand, his usage increased almost 25 times in this period.

This request was carried over from the August 14 meeting until research could be conducted by the Committee with DPW regarding the site visit.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that all of the criteria pointed to the usage being the ratepayer's responsibility. However, Mr. Durand indicated that he had done nothing different at this house from the third week of May to the fourth when his consumption dropped by over 95%. Further review of the request indicated the property has an old well on it. DPW notes indicate the well was cross connected and drew water from the town system; Mr. Durand indicated this was not the case.

Mr. Kelly asked if Mr. Durand had contacted his homeowner's insurance about this occurrence as that is a criterion of granting an abatement. He indicated he had not. Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Ms. Warner seconded a motion to approve the conditional amount of \$500, the maximum over a 10 year period, as per the

Abatement Policy. The Committee suggested that Mr. Durand contact his insurance company and that **he not be charged interest during his attempts to resolve this bill. ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$500.00 APPROVED** by a 6-0 vote.

- d. 71 Hayes Park. The customer, Mr. Eric Fontaine, in attendance, had left his house for the weekend for a family function and reportedly, the flapper valve on his toilet stuck open during this time, resulting in an excess amount of water being used. Mr. Fontaine fixed the issue immediately upon return a few days later. The customer was requesting an abatement for a least a portion of his bill as it was acknowledged that the leak was his responsibility but that he attended to it upon discovery.

Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Mosher seconded a motion to approve half the excess usage above normal usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$42.40 APPROVED** by a vote of 6-0.

- e. 4 Windemere Lane. The customer, Mr. John Scott McClure, not in attendance, was notified of a leaky outdoor faucet on a side of his house in February 2019 by DPW (note: prior to updated Selectboard Abatement Policy). Reportedly, he did not check this fixture during the winter months. He indicated in his request that he had no way of knowing that there was a leak at this time of the year. The Committee indicated that all plumbing fixtures in the ratepayer's house were their responsibility regardless of the time of year or historical usage.

Since the usage was accidental, and the water did not run into the Town sewer, Ms. Warner moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded a motion to approve half the excess sewer usage above normal usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$409.84 APPROVED** by a vote of 6-0.

- f. 37 Portsmouth Avenue. The customer, Mr. William Costello, not in attendance, was notified of high usage in March 2019 by DPW. High usage persisted for another month until the owner found a defective hot water heater and sump pump in his basement that was causing the high usage. The Committee determined that the ratepayer was negligent in attending to the DPW notice of high usage and indicated that all plumbing fixtures in the ratepayer's house were their responsibility.

Mr. Kelly moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded a motion to deny the abatement request. **ABATEMENT DENIED** by a vote of 6-0.

g. 6 Hayes Park. The customer, Ms. Lotetta Dufour, not in attendance, became aware of a bad toilet-fill setting and a leak under her mobile home after receiving a high bill. Ms. Dufour is on assistance and reportedly had no way of knowing about the leaks.

Mr. Mosher moved, and Ms. Warner seconded a motion to approve the entire excess usage above normal usage over the past year. **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$102.03 APPROVED** by a vote of 6-0.

### **3. Regular Business**

None at this time.

### **4. New Business**

None at this time.

### **5. Other Business**

None at this time.

### **6. Committee Calendar**

The Committee scheduled their next meeting for Wednesday November 20 at 6:30 pm.

Mr. Kelly adjourned the meeting at 7:50 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Bob Kelly  
Recording Secretary pro tem