

Town of Exeter (NH) Water & Sewer Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

DRAFT

May 13, 2020

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order via Zoom video conference by Chairman Bob Kelly at 6:30 pm. Other Committee members present on the video conference included Mr. Carl Wikstrom, Ms. Kelly Warner, Mr. Dave Michelsen, Mr. Mark Fabian and Selectboard representative Ms. Molly Cowan. Member Ben Mosher was unable to be present for the video conference.

2. Water and Sewer Bill Abatement Requests

Six abatement requests were discussed by the Committee.

- a. James and Denise Landis, 19 Gill St. The customer, Ms. Landis of whom was in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, ice had fallen from their roof and damaged an outdoor spigot that subsequently leaked. The residence was reportedly unoccupied at the time of the reported leak.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that this excess usage, while accidental, was partially the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy. However, due to the fact that the water did not get into the sewer, a full abatement on that portion was recommended. Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Michelson seconded, a motion to **partially approve the ABATEMENT REQUEST** with an 80% excess water use abatement and a 100% sewer use abatement. The motion passed 6-0.

- b. Cathy Stickney, 10 Arbor St. The customer, who called in during the meeting, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, a tenant had not reported a leak in the basement to Ms. Stickney; she hired a plumber and

the repair was fixed as soon as she knew about the excess usage. Reportedly, the leaked water went on a dirt floor basement and did not reach the sewer.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that this excess usage, while accidental, was partially the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy. However, due to the fact that the water did not get into the sewer, a full abatement on that portion was recommended. Mr. Kelly moved, and Ms. Warner seconded, a motion to **partially approve the ABATEMENT REQUEST** with an 80% excess water use abatement and a 100% sewer use abatement. The motion passed 6-0.

- c. Kelly Hughes Keravich, 15 Arbor St., #2. The customer, who was not in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, ice had fallen from their roof and damaged an outdoor spigot that subsequently leaked. The owner has a small business which has closed due to COVID-19 and there is currently a financial hardship by the ratepayer.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that this excess usage, while accidental, was partially the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy. However, due to the fact that the water did not get into the sewer, a full abatement on that portion was recommended. Mr. Kelly moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded, a motion to **partially approve the ABATEMENT REQUEST** with an 80% excess water use abatement and a 100% sewer use abatement. The motion passed 6-0.

- d. Joanne Petito, 7 Marilyn St. The customer, who was in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, high usage was reported from the end of December through March. The resident did not know about the leak until February but were unable to secure the services of a plumber due partially to COVID-19 separation protocols, until April. The residence was reportedly occupied at the time of the reported leak.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that this excess usage, was primarily the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy. However, there appeared to be extenuating circumstances as to why the resident did not immediately repair the leak upon discovery. Mr. Michelsen moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded, a motion to **approve an 80% ABATEMENT REQUEST** on the excess water and sewer usage. The motion passed 6-0.

- e. Robin Jones, 27 Brentwood Rd. The customer, who was not in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, Ms. Jones is the tenant of a residence owned by Raul Casado Rosa. Letters of high usage had gone to the landlord/owner (Mr. Rosa) in both February and March. Reportedly, the tenant was given the responsibility of fixing a leaking toilet, and due to COVID-19 unemployment, Ms. Jones faces financial hardship. The residence was reportedly occupied at the time of the reported leak.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that it was unclear as to who is responsible for the financial aspects of this excess usage. The owner's name is on the bill, yet the tenant is filing for the abatement and claiming financial hardship. Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Kelly seconded, a motion to **table the Abatement Request** until the issue of who is financially responsible is cleared up. The motion passed 6-0.

- f. Exeter River Landing MHP, 317 Exeter River Landing. An Abatement Request Form was submitted however, there was no direct request made. Partial background information from January 2019 through January 2020 was provided, however, no usage data or historical details for comparison were provided.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that this usage was the full ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy due primarily to the fact that the usage exceedance was from early 2019 and exceeded the 90-day abatement request window. Mr. Kelly moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded, a motion to **DENY the ABATEMENT REQUEST** based on the age of the usage and the lack of abatement request information. The motion passed 6-0.

3. Regular Business

- a. Utility Operations

- i. General. Mr. Kelly discussed both the Water Treatment Plant and Wastewater Treatment Plant updates. According to DPW personnel, both facilities were meeting their federally and state mandated treatment limits. An official tour and ribbon cutting of the WWTP on Newfields Rd. has been indefinitely postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Mr. Kelly also passed along kudos from Ms. Jennifer Perry on behalf of the Public Works Department indicating the spectacular job all of the

employees have been doing under the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic.

b. Utility Financial Reports

Mr. Kelly discussed reports that had been previously distributed to the Committee by the Town Finance Department. Note was made of a large Sewer bond payment at the end of 2019 and a pending one at the end of 2020. Russ Dean and Mr. Kelly are monitoring cash flow in the Sewer account to assess impacts on rates as the year progresses.

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, July 8, 2020 at 6:30 pm, in the Nowak Room at the Exeter Town Offices. If the Town Office has not reopened due to continued protocols associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, then the meeting will be conducted as a Zoom video conference. The agenda will reflect how the meeting will be conducted.

Mr. Kelly adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:30 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Bob Kelly

Recording Secretary pro tem