

## **DRAFT Meeting Minutes**

August 19, 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. Ben Mosher, Mr. Mark Fabian and Selectboard representative Ms. Molly Cowan.

### **2. Water and Sewer Bill Abatement Requests**

Five abatement requests were discussed by the Committee.

- a. Nick Roundy, 3 Riverbend Circle. The customer, Mr. Roundy, who was in video attendance, was seeking an abatement on his water and sewer bill for increased usage from filling his pool this summer. The customer had received an abatement in 2019.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request and reminded Mr. Roundy of the Water & Sewer Abatement Policy that notes abatements, if given, are once in 10 years. Mr. Kelly moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded, a motion to **deny the ABATEMENT REQUEST** based on the duplicative nature of the request. The motion passed 6-0.

The Committee also recommended to Mr. Roundy that he consider installing a Deduct Meter for filling his pool in the future so he doesn't get charged for Sewer usage.

- b. Siram Todd, 21 Little Pine Lane. The customer was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill related to a leaking toilet. Reportedly, the ratepayer and his family were away for much of the winter and returned home after several months and found a leaking toilet. There was a delay in hiring a

plumber to repair the leak due to COVID-19. Also, it was noted that the homeowner fills a pool in the summer.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that this excess usage, while accidental, was partially the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy. Mr. Mosher moved, and Ms. Warner seconded, a motion to **partially approve the ABATEMENT REQUEST** with an 80% excess water and sewer use abatement. The motion passed 6-0.

- c. Raja Noori, 25 Acadia Lane. The customer, who was not in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill of an unspecified nature. No details of the request and occurrence were provided except to note that to pay the bill would be a financial hardship. An account balance of approximately \$190 and current charges of approximately \$337 were noted.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that the reported account was not inordinately excessive. However, due to the fact that there might be other circumstances, tabling the request was recommended until more data could be obtained. Ms. Warner moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded, a motion to **table the ABATEMENT REQUEST** with a request to DPW and the ratepayer for more information. The motion passed 6-0.

- d. Sara and Chris Roseberry, 55 High St. The customer, of whom Sara was in video attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill related to a sublease of their home. Reportedly, high usage was reported this spring after a tenant left prematurely, the owners were away, and a toilet began leaking from unknown causes. The resident did not know about the leak until May but were unable to secure the services of the Town's personnel or a plumber due partially to COVID-19 separation protocols, until late May. The residence was reportedly unoccupied 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 or tenant did not immediately repair the leak upon discovery. Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Kelly seconded, a motion to **approve an 80% ABATEMENT REQUEST** on the excess water and sewer usage. The motion passed 6-0.

- e. John Wilson, 316 Water St. The customer, who was not in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill from this past winter.

Reportedly, the ratepayer received high usage notices in January and February, but due to COVID-19 protocols at that time, DPW was not able to do a leak test until April. Three leaks were found and subsequently repaired. 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 the nature of the leak effects. Analysis of quarterly bills showed a stable amount compared to 2019. In addition, for such a high reported usage, the proposed abatement amount did not appear excessive. It does not appear that there was an appreciable excess usage during the timeframe considered. Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Kelly seconded, a motion to **table the Abatement Request** until more ratepayer explanation can be reviewed regarding their request versus recent usage amounts. The motion passed 6-0.

### **3. Regular Business**

#### a. Utility Operations

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

#### b. Utility Financial Reports

Mr. Kelly discussed reports that had been previously distributed to the Committee by the Town Finance Department. Continued note was made of a large Sewer bond payment at the end of 2020. Town Manager 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**

Follow-up on Impact Fee Analysis. At the request of Mr. Dean earlier this year, the Committee, and Mr. Wikstrom in particular, had undergone a detailed analysis of

the genesis of our Impact Fee Structure, the general history of modifications, and what the Fees are based on.

Mr. Wikstrom reported that the last time the Fees had undergone a major overhaul was in the late 1980s when extensive work on the Wastewater Treatment Plant was being conducted. He noted that in those times, rates were relatively low and the Fees were developed as a way to recover debt service from new Town residents who had not been paying in from the beginning of various large projects but had received instant benefits.

We have veered away from paying debt via Impact Fees and pay more from direct usage rates. At this point, our Fees are very low comparatively, but serve a purpose in that they indicate to developers and new users that they are benefitting from facilities that have largely been paid for by others. While there was a general consensus that the Fees may be superfluous at this point, it was also felt that given the uncertainty of regulatory and environmental requirements in the future, they should be kept, at their current low levels, as 1. A reminder noted above, and 2. As a placeholder in case we need to reinstitute them at a later time. It was felt that it might be difficult to reinstate them from scratch rather than modify existing ones in that case.

The Committee voted 6-0 to accept Mr. Wikstrom's report and keep the Water and Sewer Impact Fees at their current levels.

## **6. Committee Calendar**

The Committee tentatively scheduled their next meeting for the middle of October 2020. The actual date will depend on abatement request volume and some members' time constraints due to town budget review activities in the Fall. 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  
Chair and Recording Secretary