

## **DRAFT Meeting Minutes**

December 16, 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**

Six abatement requests were discussed by the Committee.

- a. Richard Jenkins, 19 Exeter Farms Road. The customer, who was in video attendance with his wife, Isabelle, was seeking an abatement on his water and sewer bill for increased usage from an undetermined source. Mr. Jenkins indicated his family was away most of the summer during the time of the over-usage. Exeter DPW did a leak check and determined that the system was leaking somewhere, but the location was not determined.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that this excess usage was accidental but was partially the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy. Therefore, an 80% Water and Sewer bill abatement for usage in excess of their average annual quarterly usage was determined. Mr. Kelly moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT REQUEST** of \$976.91 based on DPW's calculations. The motion passed 6-0.

- b. Bridge Bros. Movers, 29 Garfield Street. The customer, for whom Jeremy Forest was in video attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill related to a leaky toilet in a seldom used area of their storage warehouse. Reportedly, the toilet had a malfunctioning handle but that it was

not used on a regular basis. In addition, it was an older model that used an excessive amount of water per flush.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that this excess usage was accidental but was partially the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy. Therefore, an 80% Water and Sewer bill abatement for usage in excess of their average annual quarterly usage was determined. Mr. Kelly moved, and Ms. Warner seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT REQUEST** of \$300.71 based on DPW's calculations. The motion passed 6-0.

- c. Powder House Co-op, 56 Deep Meadows Lane. The customer, for whom Mr. Tom Bryant was in video attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill relating to two leaking meter pit connections at the Powder House Mobile Home Park. The leak was discovered in March, but it took several months to assess the extent of the leak and consider a repair. The MHP system is set up such that in order to repair this, the entire park's water has to be shut off.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that this excess usage was accidental but was partially the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy as it should be a maintenance item for the Park. Therefore, an 50% Water and Sewer bill abatement for usage in excess of their average annual quarterly usage was determined. Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Mosher seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT REQUEST** of \$9,137.05 based on DPW's calculations. The motion passed 6-0.

- d. Slattery Family Trust, 53 Hayes Park. The customer, for whom Robert Slattery was in video attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill related to a leaking toilet. The leak was very small and short term, resulting in a potential abatement of less than \$80.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that this excess usage, was an accident though somewhat the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy. The Committee noted to Mr. Slattery that he only gets one abatement every 10 years, and that, for this small amount, he might want to defer the request in case something more significant occurs in the future. Mr.

Slattery agreed with the Committee and agreed to withdraw his request for an abatement for this occurrence.

- e. Exeter Recreation Department. The customer, for whom Mr. Greg Bisson was in video attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill related to COVID-related issues associated with the town's rec pool on Hampton Road. Due to COVID shutdowns this summer, the town did not open the rec pool for public use. However, the pool had to be maintained which included drawing down the water level to reduce the expense of treating the water. The pool then had to be refilled for the winter to eliminate potential structural damage due to frost heaving. This second filling was an added expense for the town and department.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that this excess usage of water was not necessarily the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy. Mr. Wikstrom indicated that, although he was in favor of the sentiment of the request, he thought the final decision should be a Selectboard issue. Mr. Mosher moved, and Mr. Fabian seconded, a motion to **approve an ABATEMENT REQUEST** of the excess water usage of \$1,591.03. The motion passed 5-1 with Mr. Wikstrom voting Nay.

- f. Harmon Waters, 47 Portsmouth Avenue. The customer, who was not video attendance, was seeking an abatement as a landlord for apartments on the subject property on their water and sewer bill for increased usage from a leak in one of the apartments. Due to COVID-related access limitations and ability to get plumber, there was a several month delay in assessing and repairing the leak. DPW reported that there was a leak and it had been repaired.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that this excess usage was accidental and unavoidable due to COVID limitations, but that it was partially the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy. The Committee determined that the user should receive a 50% Water and Sewer bill abatement for usage in excess of their average annual quarterly usage. Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Fabian seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT REQUEST** of \$1,277.61 based on DPW's calculations for Q2 usage (\$814.32) and Q3 usage (\$463.29). 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 and into next year.

### **4. New Business**

None at this time.

### **5. Other Business**

Water and Sewer Departments 2021 budgets. Mr. Kelly summarized the Budget Recommendations Committee (BRC)'s deliberations on the 2021 budget this fall. In general, the Departments reduced and level funded requests, and no vehicle purchases were recommended this year until a Town-side vehicle purchasing audit can be conducted next year.

The BRC recommending adding funds to the Capital Overlay accounts of both utilities so overdue or regulatory induced upgrades and renovations could be conducted on facilities. The Water Budget increased about 13% due to this addition, while the Sewer Budget reduced by about 8% from 2020 levels.

### **6. Committee Calendar**

The Committee tentatively scheduled their next meeting for the middle of February 2021. The actual date will depend on abatement request volume and members' time constraints. 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 8:15 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Bob Kelly

Chair and Recording Secretary