

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

For Meeting of September 15, 2021

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Kelly on Wednesday September 15, 2021 at 6:30 pm. Other Committee members present included Mr. Carl Wikstrom and Selectboard representative Ms. Molly Cowan.

Representatives of the public were also in attendance via Zoom call to discuss applicable abatement requests.

2. Water and Sewer Bill Abatement Requests

Six abatement requests were discussed by the Committee.

- a. 17 Wentworth Street. The customer, Ms. Kimberley Meyer, who was not in attendance, was seeking an abatement on her water and sewer bill for increased usage from a leaking sump pump in a remote area of her basement which has now been repaired.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that some type of accidental usage had occurred, and the user should receive an 80% Water and Sewer bill abatement for usage in excess of their average annual quarterly usage. Mr. Kelly moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT REQUEST** of \$196.00 based on DPW's calculations. The motion passed 3-0.

- b. 1 Hampton Road. The customer, Ms. Sally Leary of whom in attendance for the office building's property manager, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill related to leaks in tenant spaces. Reportedly, they have

repaired a few toilets and some leaky pipes. They have one more lab area to assess to bring the usage done to historical levels.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that the user should receive an 50% Water and Sewer bill abatement for usage in excess of their average annual quarterly usage. If their repair efforts go into another billing cycle, the Committee agreed to keep this file open until the end of the year if it could be shown the leaks were part of the same problem. Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Kelly seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT REQUEST** of \$3,538.92 for two quarters based on DPW's calculations. The motion passed 3-0.

- c. 137 Portsmouth Avenue. The customer, Roger Tyler, the property manager for Retail Business Services at the Hannaford's plaza was in Zoom attendance. They are seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill for work a contractor did during the transition from closing one tenant space and re-fitting it up for a Due to the dental van orientation, the broken pipe and leak were not immediately discovered. However, it was repaired immediately.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that the user should receive an 50% Water and Sewer bill abatement for usage in excess of their average annual quarterly usage. Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Kelly seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT REQUEST** of \$1,717.92 for two quarters of usage based on DPW's calculations. The motion passed 3-0.

- d. 1 Rockingham Road. The customer, Jackie Phillips for the property owner, Exeter Station Properties was in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill related to leaks in seldom used toilets in remote tenant areas. The customer has repaired the toilets in question.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that this excess usage falls under the criteria of an abatement. However the user indicated they wanted to wait another month or so to see if the repairs they made result in a solution. Therefore, the customer requested that the Committee **TABLE the ABATEMENT REQUEST** until the end of 2021.

- e. 55 High Street. The customer, Mr. Michael Voulgarelis of whom was in video attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill related to a reported leaky and malfunctioning irrigation system. The abatement request noted that a plumber had assessed a potential leak or conducted a repair to the system in question.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that this excess usage is currently the ratepayer's responsibility as they are not on a deduct meter for the irrigation system. However, due to the size of the leak and the customer attempts to mitigate the situation, Mr. Kelly moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT REQUEST** for a full abatement of the excess Sewer use of \$4,910.85 and 50% of the excess Water use of \$1,401.07 for a total abatement of \$6,311.92 based on DPW's calculations. The motion passed 3-0.

- f. 4 Phinney Lane. The customer, who was not in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill related to an upstairs toilet which was repaired in March.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that this excess usage was probably an accident, though still somewhat the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy. The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that the user should receive an 50% Water and Sewer bill abatement for usage in excess of their average annual quarterly usage. Mr. Kelly moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT REQUEST** of \$807.24 based on DPW's calculations. The motion passed 3-0.

3. Regular Business

- a. Utility Operations

The Town has received an approximately \$600,000 grant through the efforts of Chris Pappas' office to mitigate the additional costs of repairing and replacing the Squamscott River siphons. With the delay in the project due to weather and this grant, DPW reports we may be able to complete all of the work within the budget approved at Town Meeting in 2020.

Mr. Kelly also reported that general WWTP operational expenses are continuing to be fine tuned as we are in our second year of operations. In general, costs are lower than the original Engineer's estimates.

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 2021. 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. Other Business

a. Follow up on July rate increases.

Mr. Kelly indicated that as a result of the July 1 Water and Sewer rate increases approved at a May 10 Rate Hearing, cash flow has been stabilized and recent deficits have been eliminated.

Some calls about the increases had been received by the Billing Department, however, it appears the overwhelming majority of users understood the reason for the increase articulated at the Committee's May meeting.

b. Preparation of upcoming Town Budget Review.

Mr. Kelly noted there were no large bond issues proposed by the DPW for the upcoming fiscal year (2022). However, ongoing Surface and Groundwater search efforts, analysis for a new DPW Garage, and beginning of the Westside Drive project are being proposed as Capital Outlay projects.

5. Committee Calendar

The Committee tentatively scheduled their next meeting for late Fall at some point. The actual date will depend on abatement request volume and some members' time constraints.

Mr. Kelly adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:45 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Bob Kelly
Chair and Recording Secretary
September 17, 2021