

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

For Meeting of May 25, 2022

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Kelly on Wednesday May 25, 2022 at approximately 6:35 pm. Other Committee members present included Carl Wikstrom, Mark Fabian, and Selectboard representative Ms. Molly Cowan. Member Ben Mosher was not in attendance.

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

2. Water and Sewer Bill Abatement Requests

Six abatement requests were discussed by the Committee, as follows:

- a. 2 Kathleen Drive. The customer, Jane Sullivan, was in attendance. She was seeking an abatement on their water and sewer bill for increased usage from a leaking toilet in a seldom used part of the house.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that unforeseeable, accidental usage had occurred but had been repaired. Mr. Kelly moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT for 50% excess Water and Sewer usage** of the average annual amount. Based on DPW calculations, this amounts to **\$92.35**. The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

Based on the relatively small amount of the abatement request, and the fact that the current Water and Sewer Abatement Policy only allows for one abatement per 10-year period, the WSAC allowed the customer to consider deferring this request if they so choose.

- b. 21 Charter Street. The customer, Mr. Dave Gulick, who was in attendance via Zoom video conference, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill related an accidental toilet flapper leak during their tenant's absence.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that unforeseeable, accidental usage had occurred but had been repaired. Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Kelly seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT for 80% excess Water and Sewer usage** of the average annual amount. Based on DPW calculations, this amounts to **\$2,014.21**. The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

- c. 40 Hampton Road, unit C10. The customer, Ruth Halpin, was not in attendance. She was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill for an unreported leaking toilet during an extended absence from the house. The leak has been repaired.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that unforeseeable, accidental usage had occurred but had been repaired. Mr. Kelly moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT for 80% excess Water and Sewer usage** of the average annual amount. Based on DPW calculations, this amounts to **\$91.74**. The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

Based on the relatively small amount of the abatement request, and the fact that the current Water and Sewer Abatement Policy only allows for one abatement per 10-year period, the WSAC allowed the customer to consider deferring this request if they so choose.

- d. 26 Crawford Avenue. The customer, Michael Blais, who was not in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill related to an outside spigot leaking during the winter at which time it subsequently burst. Reportedly, there were no sewer receptors for the excess water usage during the period in question. The owner was in the hospital during the period in question, so the water ran for a few days until discovered and repaired.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that an excessive usage had occurred; the homeowner was primarily responsible, but the leak appeared accidental and had been repaired. However, due to the extenuating circumstances of the customer's

hospitalization, Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Ms. Cowan seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT for 100% excess Water and Sewer usage** of their average annual amount. Based on DPW calculations, this amounts to **\$1,070.15**. The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

- e. 20 Hayes Park. The customer, Ms. Paula Gati, who was not in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill related to a reported leaky pipe under a mobile home. The abatement request noted that a plumber had assessed a potential leak and conducted a repair to the system in question.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that unforeseeable, accidental usage had occurred but had been repaired. Mr. Kelly moved, and Mr. Wikstrom seconded, a motion to **recommend an ABATEMENT for 80% excess Water and Sewer usage** of the average annual amount. Based on DPW calculations, this amounts to **\$49.63**. The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

Based on the relatively small amount of the abatement request, and the fact that the current Water and Sewer Abatement Policy only allows for one abatement per 10-year period, the WSAC allowed the customer to consider deferring this request if they so choose.

- f. 3 Tamarind Lane. The customer, Mr. Robert Lietz, was not in attendance. He was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill for a malfunctioning, seldom used, toilet in his home. The malfunction was reportedly due to a toilet flapper valve.

The Committee discussed the aspects of the request outlined in the application and assessed that no abatement should be granted at this time, as the leak/faulty equipment has not been documented to have been repaired. The Committee recommended **deferral of the ABATEMENT REQUEST** until the leak/faulty flapper valve is repaired.

While not an abatement request, additional Committee discussions were conducted with a representative of Sterling Hill Condominium Association concerning their classification as a Tier 3 customer. Mr. John Grueter explained that they have 128, two-bedroom residential units at a 55 and over community located at 11 Court Street. The property is served by a single service/meter. Internal calculations by

property management indicates that each living unit uses approximately 1,200 gallons per quarter, typically a residential level usage.

Due to the single service used by 128 units at 1,200 gallons/unit/quarter, the property usage falls into the Tier 3 billing classification despite being a residential operation. Mr. Grueter was questioning the Water and Sewer Policy that invoices these types of residential/single service operations at a heavy commercial/industrial rate. The Committee had a brief discussion of Mr. Grueter's concerns and agreed to review its policy with DPW and town management over the next few months (of note: the Tier 3 application for multiple residential units on a single service has been previously reviewed for other customers).

3. Regular Business

a. Utility Operations

Mr. Kelly reported that Mr. Jennifer Perry, the long time Director of Public Works, had announced her retirement, effective at the end of 2022. The town was currently looking at options on how to replace Ms. Perry.

b. Utility Financial Reports

Mr. Kelly discussed reports that had been previously distributed to the Committee by the Town Finance Department. A note was made of the higher-than-normal utility fund balances due to higher-than-expected water consumption over the past year. This was potentially due to COVID work-from-home directives and a generally home-based population since last fall.

4. New Business

Mr. Paul Vlasich, the Town Engineer, provided a presentation on the Salem Street Utility Project, approved by the Town last year. A handout was distributed that outlined an initiative to conduct a replacement program of private sewer service and sump pump laterals into the town sewer system.

Mr. Vlasich explained that a similar program was designed for the Jady Hill drainage separation project approximately 10 years ago. For that project, the town was attempting to remove Infiltration and Inflow (I/I) from drainage sources into the sanitary sewer system. The Salem St. project, due to its elevation and soils, does not have nearly as significant an I/I problem as in Jady Hill, however, many of the laterals

are aged and there are some documented sump pump connections to the adjacent sewer lines. The town had a concern that if action was not taken on the deficient laterals during current construction activities, there may be future excavations of rights of way and pavement to repair periodic failures.

Mr. Vlasich presented three basic options whereby the town would subsidize replacement of substandard sewer laterals and sump pump connections to encourage homeowners to upgrade their tie-ins to the town system during the time of construction in the Salem St. area. After consideration of the options, Mr. Kelly moved and Ms. Cowan seconded a motion to have the homeowners provide a maximum of \$1000 toward construction of the new laterals. This level results in a roughly 50/50 sharing of the replacements between the town and the users in this area. The homeowner contribution would be amortized over 10 years.

The motion was approved by a 4-0 roll call vote.

5. Other Business

Utility Rates Review

Mr. Kelly continued the Committee's recent discussion at their March meeting regarding current water and sewer rates. According to estimated calculations in March (i.e. in the middle of the billing cycle) by the Finance Department, the Water Fund is anticipated to experience a year-end deficit of approximately \$120,507 and the Sewer Fund is anticipated to experience a year-end deficit of approximately \$244,116 based on an assumption of water consumption during that timeframe. Updated numbers for the quarter indicated that the Water Fund is anticipated to experience a year-end deficit of approximately \$90,973 and the Sewer Fund is anticipated to experience a year-end surplus of approximately \$1,235,547 based on an assumption of water consumption during that timeframe.

Due to continued healthy fund balances for each utility as a hedge against small monthly deficits, it was agreed that continued monitoring of consumption and associated revenues, as well as expenses and associated deficits, would be conducted into the summer, and reassessments made as required.

6. Committee Calendar

The Committee tentatively scheduled their next meeting for mid-Summer at some point, potentially in mid-July, due to members schedules over the next few months.

The actual date will depend on abatement request volume and some members' time constraints.

Mr. Kelly adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:15 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Bob Kelly
Chair and Recording Secretary
May 31, 2022