

Town of Exeter (NH) Water & Sewer Advisory Committee

DRAFT Minutes for Meeting of

March 13, 2024

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order in the Wheelwright Room at the Town Office Building, 10 Front Street, Exeter, NH by Chairman Bob Kelly at 6:30 pm. Other Committee members present included Mr. Carl Wikstrom and Mr. Ben Mosher. Mr. Alan Mangan and Selectboard Representative Molly Cowan were unable to attend.

Multiple members of the public were in attendance in person and via Zoom call.

Mr. Kelly indicated that the draft minutes to the December 20, 2023 meeting were posted on the Town's website. Changes to those minutes should be forwarded to Mr. Kelly via email.

2. Introduction of Town Staff

Mr. Kelly introduced Mr. Steve Cronin, the new town Department of Public Works Director as of the beginning of the year. Mr. Cronin described his background and some of the upcoming projects he is working on, including new groundwater source development, surface water treatment options, and completion of river siphons project. On the latter point, Mr. Cronin indicated that the second tube is about halfway through and is expected to be functional by early to mid summer.

Mr. Cronin also indicated that the Department has seven staff positions currently open that he hopes to fill this year.

3. Water and Sewer Bill Abatement Requests

Twelve abatement requests were discussed by the Committee.

- a. 5 Shady Lane. The customer, Mr. Michael Weand, who was in attendance, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, during a period when the customer was out of town, persons watching their house used

the toilet and it remained running until the customer returned home several days later.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that, even though this usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy, portions of it might fall under the "accidental usage" clause due to the fact that the customer was not at home to manage the leak. Mr. Wikstrom moved and Mr. Mosher seconded a motion to approve 50% of the excess water and 50% of the excess sewer usage above normal customer usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. An **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$359.87 (139.27 + 220.60)** **APPROVED** by a vote of 3-0.

- b. 2 Marilyn Avenue. The customer, Anthony Vellotti, was in attendance and seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Mr. Vellotti indicated he had two leaking toilets in a remote area of his house and did not hear them running.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and determined that, even though the usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy, it might fall under the "accidental usage" clause. Mr. Kelly indicated that Mr. Vellotti would probably be eligible for a 50% abatement for both excess water and sewer usage, but that the total abatement would only be approximately \$65.39 due to the small amount of the leak. Mr. Kelly also highlighted the Policy condition that allows for only one abatement every 10 years, and that Mr. Vellotti may want to hold this request in case he has a larger leak in the future, perhaps generating a several hundred dollar impact as with most abatement requests.

Mr. Vellotti agreed and withdrew his application for an abatement at this time.

- c. 39 Crawford Avenue. The customer, Ms. Claudette St. Onge, had Ms. Coleen St. Onge, her daughter, in attendance and seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, during a period when the customer was out of town, persons watching their house used the toilet and it remained running until the customer returned home several days later.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that, even though this usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy, portions of it might fall under the "accidental usage" clause due to the fact that the leak occurred while the customer was away. Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Kelly seconded a motion to approve 80% of the excess water and sewer usage above

normal customer usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. An **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$1,386.11 (536.37 + 849.74) was APPROVED** by a vote of 3-0.

- d. 26 Crawford Avenue. The customers, Marc and Jamie Ouellette, were in attendance, and seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, an underground pipe in a remote garage had burst; the leaking water soaked into the ground and not the property sewer.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that, even though this usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy, portions of it might fall under the "accidental usage" clause due to the fact that the leak occurred underground and was undetectable. Mr. Wikstrom moved and Mr. Mosher seconded a motion to approve 80% of the excess water and 100% of the excess sewer usage above normal customer usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. An **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$568.36 (178.20 + 390.16) was APPROVED** by a vote of 3-0.

- e. 203 High Street. The customers, Mike and Lindsay Mantell, were in attendance and seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, the customer's elderly and infirmed mother was living with them and did not report a leaking sink faucet to them.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that, even though this usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy, portions of it might fall under the "accidental usage" clause. Mr. Kelly moved and Mr. Mosher seconded a motion to approve 80% of the excess water and sewer usage above the normal customer usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. An **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$1,148.98 (418.51 + 730.47) was APPROVED** by a vote of 3-0.

- f. 12 Phinney Lane. The customer, Mr. Dennis Moran, was in attendance via Zoom and seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, an outdoor spigot was damaged by ice during a January storm and leaked undetected for a short period of time. Leaked water did not enter the town's sewer system.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that, even though this usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy, portions of it might fall under the "accidental usage" clause due to the fact that the leak

occurred in a remote location. Mr. Wikstrom moved and Mr. Mosher seconded a motion to approve 80% of the excess water and 100% sewer usage above normal customer usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. An **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$92.91 (31.17 + 61.74) was APPROVED** by a vote of 3-0.

- g. 5 Westside Drive. The customer, Mr. Glenn Steele, was in attendance via Zoom and seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, a hose carriage was inadvertently not disconnected and was damaged this winter and therefore leaked undetected for a short period of time. Leaked water did not enter the town's sewer system.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that, even though this usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy, portions of it might fall under the "accidental usage" clause due to the fact that the leak occurred in a remote location. Mr. Wikstrom moved and Mr. Mosher seconded a motion to approve 80% of the excess water and 100% sewer usage above normal customer usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. An **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$408.14 (102.89 + 305.25) was APPROVED** by a vote of 3-0.

- h. 29A Court Street. The customer, Mr. Robert Leatherbee, was in attendance via Zoom and seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, during a period of duplex unit reconstruction, a toilet was inadvertently left running by a contractor. The occurrence happened in late 2022 and the paperwork was misplaced during the remainder of the work until found recently. The Committee felt that, under the circumstances, it was reasonable to consider Mr. Leatherbee's request.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that, even though this usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy, portions of it might fall under the "accidental usage" clause due to the fact that the customer was not at home to manage the leak. Mr. Wikstrom moved and Mr. Mosher seconded a motion to approve 50% of the excess water and 50% of the excess sewer usage above normal customer usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. An **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$265.92 (96.60 + 169.32) APPROVED** by a vote of 3-0.

- i. 26 Haven Lane. The customer, Mr. Fred Haniffy, was in attendance via Zoom and seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, a hose fitting on his hose caddy failed in early winter and leaked undetected for a few days. Leaked water did not enter the town's sewer system.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that, even though this usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy, portions of it might fall under the "accidental usage" clause due to the fact that the customer was not at home to manage the leak. Mr. Kelly moved and Mr. Wikstrom seconded a motion to approve 50% of the excess water and 100% of the excess sewer usage above normal customer usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. An **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$770.46 (196.46 + 574.00) was APPROVED** by a vote of 3-0.

- j. 128 Epping Road. The customer, Mr. David Baker, was not in attendance and seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, a pipe under his mobile home burst undetected and leaked for a few days before found and repaired.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that, even though this usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy, portions of it might fall under the "accidental usage" clause due to the fact that the leak was effectively undetectable. Mr. Kelly moved and Mr. Wikstrom seconded a motion to approve 50% of the excess water and 100% of the excess sewer usage above normal customer usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. An **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$782.64 (199.67 + 582.97) was APPROVED** by a vote of 3-0.

- k. 78 Epping Road. The customer, Mr. Rabih Abounaja, was not in attendance and seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, a leak occurred at this business, Herb and Rob's Auto Repair shop. Neither his nor the town's review of the property found any leaks. The data download shows very little usage for the prior two months, then a huge spike from 12/19/23 to 1/2/2024, then back to very little usage.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that, in the absence of a definitive leak and the short term occurrence surrounding the holidays, this usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy. Mr. Kelly

moved and Mr. Wikstrom seconded a motion to deny the request under the Abatement Policy which was approved by a vote of 3-0.

- I. 4 Minuteman Lane. The customer, Carisa Opland, was not in attendance and seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, a hose spigot in a rear area of the home leaked undetected for a few days. The spigot is not visible from the house. No water entered the town sewer from this leak.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that, even though this usage was the ratepayer's responsibility under the Abatement Policy, portions of it might fall under the "accidental usage" clause due to the fact that the customer could not see the leak. Mr. Wikstrom moved and Mr. Mosher seconded a motion to approve 50% of the excess water and 100% of the excess sewer usage above normal customer usage over the past year as per the Abatement Policy. An **ABATEMENT AMOUNT of \$276.50 (61.67 + 214.83) was APPROVED** by a vote of 3-0.

4. Regular Business

- a. Utility Operations Report

Mr. Kelly alerted the Committee to a few utility operations items that have occurred over the past three months.

All town initiatives regarding Water and Sewer issues passed at the March 12 voting. Both budgets, the Salem St. utility project, Webster Ave. pumping station upgrades, and SWTP planning funding passed. Work will proceed in 2024 accordingly.

Bids were received on the new Septage Receiving Facility at the Newfields Road WWTP and were lower than expected. Money to pay for this work was taken out of the Sewer Reserve account and will be paid back by user fees recommended by the Committee and accepted by the Selectboard in 2023 at \$.12/gallon.

- b. Utility Financial Report

The quarterly financial reports were previously distributed by the Finance Department under a separate email. Mr. Kelly reviewed fund balances and anticipated revenues in 2024.

5. New Business

None at this time.

6. Other Business

None at this time.

7. Committee Calendar

The Committee schedule of the first Wednesday of one month per quarter will be based on the exact dates of availability of the Committee members. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, June 12, 2024.

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

Respectively submitted,

Bob Kelly

Recording Secretary pro tem

March 15, 2024