

Town of Exeter (NH) Water & Sewer Advisory Committee

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

August 14, 2019

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order in the Nowak 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. Dave Michelson, Ms. Kelly Warner, Mr. Carl Wikstrom, Mr. Mark Fabian, and Selectboard representative Ms. Molly Cowan. Committee member Mr. Ben Mosher was unable to attend.

Mr. Fabian was introduced as a new member of the committee attending his first meeting.

2. Water and Sewer Bill Abatement Requests

Five abatement requests were discussed by the Committee.

- a. 3 River Bend Circle. The customer, Mr. Nicholas Roundy, was seeking a sewer bill abatement of \$67.08 for filling his swimming pool this summer.

The Committee discussed the request details with the user and agreed with the request noted above. Bob Kelly moved, and Carl Wikstrom seconded, a motion to approve the sewer abatement request for \$67.08. All present voted aye, motion carried. **ABATEMENT REQUEST of \$67.08 APPROVED.**

- b. 8 Aspen Way. The customer, Mr. Alfred Fournier, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, Mr. Fournier was having his house worked on and the contractor was using the toilet during the day when Mr. Fournier was not always there. A sticking valve was found after Mr. Fournier had the meter and system checked by DPW. Reportedly, this valve has subsequently been 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" due to the fact that the ratepayer was not always in the home to assess whether a leak was present or not. The

Committee suggested that Mr. Fournier discuss this usage with the contractor who should have reported it to him and **tabled the request** until further discussions with the requestor could be undertaken. In addition, a copy of the valve repair receipt was requested.

- c. 4 Amberwood Drive. The customer, Mr. Greg Devine, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill. Reportedly, Mr. Devine had a large usage increase from March to late May that was unexplained as he indicated that just he and his wife occupied the house.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that all of the criteria pointed to the usage being the ratepayer's responsibility. However, Mr. Devine indicated that he had done nothing different at this house from the third week of May to the fourth when his consumption dropped by over 80%. The Committee **tabled the request** until research could be conducted with DPW regarding the site visit.

- d. 7 Phinney Lane. The customer, Mr. Pierre Durand, was seeking an abatement for an excessive water and sewer bill from early April to late May. According the DPW records and Mr. Durand, his usage increased almost 25 times in this period.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and felt that all of the criteria pointed to the usage being the ratepayer's responsibility. However, Mr. Devine indicated that he had done nothing different at this house from the third week of May to the fourth when his consumption dropped by over 95%. Further review of the request indicated the property has an old well on it. DPW notes indicate the well was cross connected and drew water from the town system; Mr. Durand indicated this was not the case. The Committee **tabled the request** until research could be conducted with DPW regarding the site visit and their findings.

- e. 40 Hampton Road, B-1. This request had been tabled in June for lack of information. The property hot water heater leaked and was not discovered for some time. The customer was requesting an abatement for the \$59.29 sewer charge portion of their bill as it was acknowledged that the leak was their responsibility.

The Committee discussed the occurrence details and agreed with the DPW assessment that the leak was the homeowner's error, but that they should not be charged for the sewer portion as the water leaked onto ground and did not discharge to the sewer.

Mr. Wikstrom moved, and Mr. Michelson seconded, a motion to approve the abatement request of \$59.29 for the sewer portion of their bill. All present voted aye, motion carried. **ABATEMENT REQUEST of \$59.29 APPROVED.**

3. Regular Business

a. Utility Operations Report.

i. TTHMs. The new facility component located at the Portsmouth Avenue surface water treatment plant began operations in April 2019. DPW has indicated that the current water quality has greatly improved, however, it may take several months for an impact to be made to our testing results due to NHDES requirements regarding test locations.

ii. WWTP. The new facility located on Newfields Road began start-up operations in late June, which is ahead of the schedule dictated by US EPA. DPW has indicated that the entire startup process may take several months and will generally continue for the rest of the year.

b. Utility Financial Reports

The reports of June 30, 2019 developed by the Town Finance Department were previously distributed via email to Committee members for review. The reports show unaudited fund balances of \$1,423,997 for Water and \$3,112,589 for Sewer. Mr. Kelly reminded Committee members that the Sewer account has been "artificially" bolstered by a rate increase in November 2017 to provide a buffer against our approximately \$2M first WWTP bond payment in January 2020 and a subsequent \$4M payment in early 2021.

Mr. Kelly also updated the Committee that the rate revisions discussed at the April meeting and recommended to the Selectboard (SB) were approved at a public hearing on July 15. The Board agreed with the Committee's recommendation to implement the new rates beginning with the October 2019 billing cycle.

4. New Business

None at this time.

5. Other Business

Mr. Kelly noted that the town Budget Recommendations Committee (BRC) begins deliberations on the FY2020 town general and water/sewer budgets in September. When the W&S budget is released, it will be distributed to the Committee for comment prior to the BRC reviewing it in October. Mr. Kelly also noted that he is the chair of the Water and Sewer Budget Subcommittee so there will be some continuity between any discussions between the Committee and the BRC.

6. Committee Calendar

The Committee tentatively scheduled their next meeting for Wednesday November 20 at 6:30 pm. The schedule of the town Budget Recommendations Committee and general meeting agenda will be considered before a meeting date is selected.

Mr. Kelly adjourned the meeting at 7:30 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Bob Kelly
Recording Secretary pro tem