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Colchester Sewer and Water Commission

Minutes of the 11 February 2010 Budget Public Hearing Municipal Office Complex Colchester, Connecticut

Members Present: R. LeMay, R. Jones, T. Tripodi
Members Absent: D. Ferrigno, S. Boyden, T. Tyler, A. Pelletier
Others Present: R. Tarlov (BOF Liaison), M. Decker (Public Works Director)
Citizens Present: D. Bouchard, R. Froehlich, Carol D., B. LeMay

1. **Call to Order** – Chairman LeMay opened the public hearing at 7:00 p.m.
2. **Presentation of the 2010/2011 Fiscal Year Operating Budgets, Rates, and Fees of the Colchester Sewer and Water Commission** Chairman LeMay and Public Works Director M. Decker presented the sewer and water operating budgets, rates, and fees explaining the differences between the current year expenses and the proposed expenses for fiscal year 2010/2011. M. Decker noted the small increases in the budgets even with many line items being reduced. On the water operating side, the largest expense was associated with upgrading a part time staff person to a full time staff and the associated health insurance increase. Significant decreases are expected in the chemical purchases and electricity as well as bond principal and interest (however this is primarily due to the fact that two installments were paid in 2009 due to the bond closing that occurred in July). On the sewer operating side, the largest increase is associated with Joint Facilities. This accounts for approximately \$21,000 increase while the overall budget only increased approximately \$13,000 therefore, most other line items decreased. M. Decker indicated, even though the increases are small, a rate increase is necessary because usage has continued to decrease resulting in decreased revenue. An explanation was provided of the actual dollar difference for several typical usage quantities. It was further pointed out that records indicate 25% of the accounts use 5,000 gallons or less per quarter; 50% of the accounts use 9,000 gallons or less, and 75% of the accounts use 16,000 gallons or less per quarter. Based on this, the rate increase will result in 75% of the users paying a maximum of approximately \$41 more per year for the same quantity of water.

3. **Public Comment Period** – Ms. Bouchard posed questions on the need for the part-time person to be increased to a full time position – M. Decker responded there is a significant amount of preventative maintenance and routine distribution system maintenance that is not being done and the desire is to have this operator-in-training person fulfill much of that work. They would also assist in plant operation. Currently, there is a supervisor and two operators performing all the work on a plant that is required to operate 24/7/365 and as a result, the routine maintenance is suffering.

Ms. Bouchard questioned about the professional services and couldn't the work have been budgeted and spread out over time – M. Decker responded the water supply plan is expected to cost \$10,000 but, because the regulations were changing and the legislation was not approved until this last session, Colchester did not know what it was going to have to do or when the report was going to be due. Regarding the \$3,600 for interior inspection of the water tanks, M. Decker indicated the department has pushed off that work for a year in one case and two years for the other tank because so much expense and effort has been expended in the past two years on the treatment plant project. Now, with the bond payments decreasing so much this year, now is the time to complete the work.

Ms. Bouchard indicated she represents the tenants of Country place and many of them will have difficulty absorbing any rate increase, what is the department doing about trying to increase the customer base so the costs can be distributed over a larger population. M. Decker identified the status of a STEAP grant and Federal FY11 Appropriation application intended to plan for, design, and (hopefully) fund extension of the sewer and water systems to the commercially zoned properties.

There was additional discussion on payment options, conservation opportunities, and educational efforts staff can provide to help the tenants avoid getting behind in their payments. Carol D. commented, as the on-site manager at Country Place, the Department has been very cooperative and helpful.

There was additional general discussion about the water and sewer systems, infrastructure replacement, true cost of water, capital expenses and connection fees.

4. **Adjourn** – Hearing no further public comment or questions, Chairman LeMay closed the public hearing at 8:04 p.m.