

Town of Dunstable
Joint Meeting of the Selectboard & Water Commission
July 28, 2015
Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827

Convened: 7:00 pm

Present: Kenneth J. Leva, Walter F. Alterisio, members; Tracey Hutton, Town Administrator; Bryan Conant, Mark Cullen, Robert Gamache, Water Commission; Cheryl Mann, Water Commission Secretary; Brian Rich, Fire Chief; Madonna McKenzie, Town Consultant

Water System Project: *Why Now?*

The Board started off the discussion by explaining how this project is about smart planning for the future rather than a band aid. This approach seeks to address some future needs so as to prevent the town from being in a reactive position. This project and its scope will not just fix the problems with the system now, but will, under this project, allow the town to construct affordable senior housing on the Best Triangle and develop the MUD. The Water Commission highlighted other benefits to the town including improved water pressure that can sustain fire suppression at the Swallow Union School and increase effectiveness of the town's fire hydrants. Further, the project will allow for future expansion of the existing water customer base, possibly bringing more customers on to the system. This will mean more revenue for the Water Enterprise Fund which will ultimately make the water system more self-sustained. Mr. Conant noted that we all pay for services in our communities whether we use them or not, and in order to make these services affordable to the community as a whole the town needs to look at long term solutions. From that point the Water Commission explained the existing system, the situation with the water tanks, and the planned improvements including particular details on the proposed tanks and booster pump costs.

Questions

From there, some questions arose, including the percentage of residents within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant. According to Chief Rich this would be about 25 percent. It was then inquired as to what impact the Main Street project would have on the water project and the benefits to the affordable senior housing for the Best Triangle. The Board noted that pipe can be addressed and any improvements made at the same time as work is being done the road itself, this will ultimately save time and money since there will be no need to rip up that section of Main Street to lay new pipe since Main Street will already be under construction there. The question then arose of expandability should the town need it due to something like a contaminated aquifer. The Water Commission explained that this is where expanding the system provides a contingency, but only if the system has the ability to expand. Currently the core system would not be able to handle this kind of situation. Concern was then raised as to expansion of capacity when many taxpayers in the town who will pay for it won't see any benefit and don't want to see expansion. The Water Commission noted that a betterment fee can be put in place by the Board of Selectmen which would mean that water system users would pay for more of the cost than nonusers.

Contingencies & Maintenance

Discussion then revolved around contingencies built into the design and scope of the proposed project. This will include backup generators and expanded capacity. There will be some maintenance costs related to tanks and pumps, estimates put this at between \$10,000 and \$15,000 per year. These costs would be covered by the rate payers i.e. the water system users. The expansion of the system would actually help by bringing in new efficiencies and lowering the risk for system failure.

MGL 40B Compliance & System Expansion

The Board discussed with the Water Commission how this project will help the town meet Chapter 40B requirements for affordable housing as well as bring more rate payers online. The senior affordable housing

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project for the Best Triangle is expected to bring 12-18 units into the town. These units would be put onto the water system. System expansion would also allow for development of the MUD which has the potential for bringing number of units onto the system. There was also discussion of the Dumont property potentially developing, something that could add additional units as well. The total expected possible new users to be brought on to the system as rate payers would be approximately 75.

Tax Rates

The project, if implemented, will cost \$3.5 million with a total cost after debt service of \$5.9 million over a 40 year note. The Board noted that it is possible that the completion costs will be less than \$3.5 million estimate. The town could also shorten the term of the note or pay the debt off early to save interest. The average home value in Dunstable is \$391,062 and it is likely that this average home value will increase as a result of this project. The quarterly increase in the tax bill for such an average home would likely range between \$38 and \$44.

The meeting concluded at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jakob K. Hamm', written in a cursive style.

Jakob K. Hamm
Admin. Assistant to the Selectboard & Town Administrator

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