

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
SELECT BOARD MEETING
TOWN HALL
MINUTES May 2, 2016**

PRESENT:

SELECT BOARD

SEAN STANTON
STEPHEN C. BANNON
DANIEL BAILLY
ED ABRAHAMS
WILLIAM COOKE

TOWN MANAGER JENNIFER TABAKIN

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Stanton called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. Mr. Bannon moved to adjourn to executive session to discuss strategic matters involving the Housatonic Water Works Department of Public Utilities (DPU) and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Mr. Abrahams seconded and by roll call all members agreed. Joining the board were Fire Chief Charles Burger, Health Agent Jane Smith and Town Engineer Joe Sokol, with Town Counsel David Doneski participating by conference telephone call.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Doneski said the DEP has not finalized a consent order regarding actions Housatonic Water need to take to comply with regulatory and permitting requirements. DPU is working on a settlement in a request for a rate increase. DEP will advise Housatonic Water what repairs or improvements need to be made to the water system and respond to a lapse in data for a chlorine measurement in December.

Mr. Doneski said the town has intervener status and he needs direction as to a position to take with the DPU Settlement Intervention staff. A deadline for resolution has been shifted to July 28. DEP resolution figures in the DPU decision.

Ms. Tabakin said issues for the town are:

- (1) maintenance of low water rates with reasonable incremental increases;
- (2) meet fire department needs regarding hydrant flow.

After discussion, another item was added:

- (3) replacement of a mile or so of pipe from Long Pond with a 16-inch main.

The issue for the fire department, Chief Burger said, is the town pays for hydrant use, \$575 a year (\$767 is asked) for those with 250 gallons per minute or better flow, \$460 (\$617 asked) for those with less flow (five hydrants). The total increase is about \$12,500 a year. Ideally, the chief said later, flow would be good at 1,000 gpm, best at 3,000 gpm. The best hydrant now is 500 gpm.

Chief Burger said DEP doesn't give fire suppression a priority. He said there is adequate pressure in the lines, but to increase flow would mean upwards of \$1 million in capital investment. To press for that could mean an even higher rate increase for customers. He said the bottleneck is in the Housatonic Water line that zigzags from Long Pond to North Plain Road near Berkshire Meadows. He said lines there and elsewhere are 12 inch at best, some 8 and 10 inch. He said a tank installed near Long Pond has improved pressure. To abandon the hydrants, the chief said, would mean the department would have to acquire more apparatus, specifically tankers, as most neighboring towns have.

TOWN CLERK
GREAT BARRINGTON
OCT 3 2016 AMB:01

DEP is prioritizing "smart meters," the chief said, to help identify a leak that shows when comparing outflow through a meter at Long Pond and the sum of residential and other metered inflows. There is a large gap, and the gap does not show at night, he said.

In further discussion, Mr. Stanton said it is not clear that Housatonic residents are paying more for water than those in the Great Barrington Fire District, as the latter has a second income stream: it taxes for capital costs, and charges water fees for maintenance. Privately owned Housatonic Water relies on water use fees only. The Fire District is looking for a second below-ground water source. Chief Burger said it is not mandated that a water source be below-ground.

There was brief discussion of issues surrounding the Fire District possibly acquiring Housatonic Water and assuming the new capital costs and at the same time linking with Long Pond as a secondary water source.

Chief Burger said Great Barrington pays \$60,000 to the Fire District annually for about 320 hydrants, \$35,000 to Housatonic Water for 66 hydrants. Flows in Great Barrington are easily 4,000 gpm, he said. Mr. Bannon said the town can't continue to pay for hydrants that are of no value to the fire department. Mr. Doneski said when the DEP order is issued, the town can weigh in with value judgments. Ms. Tabakin asked if DPU would look at the increased efficiency of having a single water purveyor in town. Mr. Doneski said that issue would not be part of this proceeding, and might require legislative approval, depending on what is proposed. Mr. Stanton said that conversation is important.

Mr. Stanton said smart meters should be a priority, as locations of lost water could be remedied and potentially increase revenue for the water company. Chief Burger urged that some flexibility be built into a DPU agreement to allow for increased capital spending. He said Housatonic Water's Jim Mercer is negotiating with DEP to phase in requirements, and perhaps eliminate some (such as replacing some lines that appear to unnecessarily follow crooked lines).

3. ADJOURNMENT:

The board on a motion by Mr. Bannon, seconded by Mr. Bailly and approved by all members, returned to open session at 7:22 p.m.

Bernard A. Drew

Bernard A. Drew
Recording Secretary