

MINUTES OF THE WATER&SEWER COMMISSION
Wednesday, September 10, 2014 3:00 PM

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1. Present: Chairman Walter Liff, Ex-Officio Selectman David McGuckin, Supr. of Public Works, Steve Tabbutt and Secretary Bette Jane Riordan.

Members present: John Ireland, Walter Glidden, Normand Houle.

Alternates Present: Chet Fessenden.

Absent: Alternate Reg Whitehouse

In attendance: Deb Knowles, Town Accountant, Fire Chief Blanding, and Mundy Tarbell.

2. Chairman Liff called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. He stated the Agenda for this meeting would be changed in order to hear from Chief Blanding, but the first item would be to approve and sign checks.

3. Chairman Liff reviewed and read the accounts payable checks to the Commission. Deb Knowles clarified any questions from the Commission regarding the water bills. She indicated the bills have not yet come in. John Ireland made a motion to accept the checks as read. Walter Glidden seconded, and the motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS.

4. Chairman Liff explained that at the last meeting Clint Springer had expressed concerns about the water systems in the town and the possible need for a hydraulic gradient. His concerns included having an adequate water supply that would be required for a sprinkler at the school. He also was concerned about some of Chief Blanding's comments in the local paper and about the water pressure being down because of the Sagamore bridge repairs. Because of these safety concerns, Selectman McGuckin suggested that Fire Chief Blanding come to this meeting to address the stated concerns. Chairman Liff recognized Chief Blanding and asked for his response.

Chief Blanding stated he would address two issues: The school and sprinkler system, and water pressure. He stated the Town's water pressure is adequate. With respect to the school, Chief Blanding stated that the last test of the hydrant located by the school was tested by the City of Portsmouth on October 4, 2006, which yielded the result of 710 gallons per minute with a good residual of 19 PSI. Normand Houle questioned the Chief about the hydrants at Cranfield and Colonial Lane. Chief Blanding reported that 2,250 gallons per minute would be needed if there were a fire, and believed the 8" water line in place near the school was sufficient.

Chief Blanding reported the volume in front of Town Hall on Main Street was 750 gallons per minute. He noted the Church has no sprinkler system, while the Public Safety Building

does have a sprinkler system. Discussion ensued over the possible renovation of Town Hall and what would be required. Mr. Houle had several questions concerning the fire pump.

Chief Blanding stated the new Town Hall would have sufficient pressure for the sprinkler system.

The Commission discussed generator needs, and concerns about their adequacy were expressed. Chief Blanding noted there is 30-35 kW capacity in the Public Safety Building. Selectman McGuckin questioned the need for extra power with a newly renovated Town Hall.

Chief Blanding concluded his presentation by asking if he had provided enough information about the sprinkler system. Walter Glidden stated it seemed to be responsive to the Clint Springer's questions. He stated the situation did not appear to be critical based on what the Chief presented.

Steve Tabbutt stated that when the Town Hall is renovated there would be a need to increase the water line capacity. Selectman McGuckin questioned that when the school is done would a larger feeder line be needed? Steve Tabbutt replied no; that two inches is sufficient and believes Chief Blanding agreed with that assumption. He noted the Public Safety Building has a six-inch line.

Mr. Ireland asked Chief Blanding if the Fire Department could do flow tests on each of the hydrants, or if this was better done by the City of Portsmouth? The Chief responded that Portsmouth had to do the testing, because of their equipment, but the Town's Fire Department does have minimal capability to do this testing. Portsmouth, however, does have a more accurate capability to do the hydrant flow testing. Mr. Ireland stated he wants to have a complete picture of all of the lines.

Mr. Houle questioned the status of the line in Wild Rose Lane. Chief Blanding stated there is less than 200 gallons per minute capability. He stated that the Wentworth area has 580 gallons per minute, and 530 gallons at the juncture of Wentworth and Morgan Way. The Commission and the Chief discussed Portsmouth's plan to replace 8" with 12" which is part of the project on Wentworth. This would result in a 34.7% increase for pressure for the entire Town. If there were a fixed bridge put in place when the Wentworth Bridge project is completed lines could be brought in in that fashion.

Steve Tabbutt stated that part of the present problem is the Town missing the line 12" line on Sagamore during bridge renovations.

With regard to Mr. Springer's concerns, Mr. Houle felt there is no need for special testing. Selectman McGuckin stated it was premature.

5. Chairman Liff recognized Mundy Tarbell and asked him to present his issue to the Commission. Mr. Tarbell stated he is concerned about the pricing system of water bills. He

used 5 units and was charged \$300.00. He stated Portsmouth has no “minimums” and why couldn’t New Castle adopt this method?

John Ireland stated that the Commission is looking into revision of the pricing system, but noted that if they were to drop the minimums the per unit cost would have to rise. Mr. Houle stated the Town is not yet a retail customer of Portsmouth for water, but only for sewer. Both members stated that the Commission is actively working on this issue.

Selectman McGuckin stated that this matter was also a legal issue right now. He explained that originally, it was believed it would take only a year for the transition to take place; however there is process of valuing and conversion of assets which has to take place prior to the conveyance to Portsmouth. Mr. Ireland stated the Commission had held off going forward with the two tier pricing system because they believed the conveyance would take place more expeditiously. Selectman McGuckin stated the Town is trying to mirror Portsmouth’s tiered system, so when a conversion occurs, it will assure a smooth transition.

Mr. Tarbell encouraged the Commission to act and did not want to have come back again to complain.

6. Chairman Liff moved to the next item on the Agenda: Minutes of July 9, 2014. Mr. Houle asked that all references in the minutes to “Board” be changed to “Commission”, and pointed out other corrections. He made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, which was seconded by John Ireland. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS.

7 a. 62 Portsmouth Avenue re: water/sewer bill.

There was a freeze up of the line at this property and the resulting bill was \$3,000.00. The Town rectified the billing, charging the owners for actual water usage and a minimum for sewer. Mr. Houle suggested that a notice be placed in the Islander Magazine suggesting to homeowners who intend to be away during the cold season that they install sensors and/or alarms which would alert others to a heat problem, thereby averting a burst pipe situation.

8. Any other business to come before the Commission.

a. Normand Houle asked to re-open discussion of the issues raised by Mr. Tarbell. He stated he found hard to believe that arriving at a new pricing structure could be so complicated. He stated that the Commission already has all the information needed, and believed it shouldn’t take six months or a year to accomplish. Selectman McGuckin cautioned to not jump too quickly due to one complaint. Steve Tabbutt stated that other people have complained. Mr. Houle stated he was willing to sit down with the Town Accountant and John Ireland or perhaps bring in a specialist to resolve the matter.

b. Chairman Liff reported on hangers on the Sawtelle bridge over the causeway, stating he counted 72 of them. Only 70 are actually used, not 100 as had been reported.

Normand Houle made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Walter Glidden. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 PM.

