1	Water and Sewer Commission Meeting Minutes
2	Wednesday, August 10, 2016 at 3 PM
3	Present Chair Multon Liff, Ex Officia Descid McCordin, Communa (Dublic Munder Clauber, Tabler)
4 5	Present : Chair Walter Liff, Ex Officio David McGuckin, Super. of Public Works Stephen Tabbutt Members : Vice Chair John Ireland, Normand Houle
6	Alternate Members (not Present): Chet Fessenden, Reg Whitehouse
7	Guests: Select Board Member Tom Maher, Richard White
8	Clerk recording minutes: Gary Dozier
9	
10	Chairman Liff called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. and noted the lack of an agenda, the need
11	to review the minutes provided at the meeting and that there were no checks to review because
12	of Debra Knowles' medical absence since Friday, August 5. Chairman Liff said that he will sign
13	the checks when Accountant Debra Knowles calls him, and will follow-up with calls to the W&S
14	Commission members to confirm his actions if necessary.
15	
16	John Ireland moved that the corrected minutes be accepted. Normand Houle seconded the
17 18	motion and the motion passed unanimously.
18 19	Account Deborah Knowles checking for water and sewer balances for 8/31/2016
20	Water - \$125,840.70
21	Sewer - \$364,031.06
22	
23	A discussion ensued on filling the vacant seat on the Water & Sewer Commission. Richard
24	White has shown interest in becoming a member. It was mentioned that Reg Whitehouse, by
25	phone, recommended Richard White. All present Commission members voted in favor of
26	Richard White. The term is for the one year remaining on Walter
27	
28	Select Board Chair David McGuckin explained that the <i>sewer rate</i> in New Castle will increase on
29	July 1, 2016, by 4%, and the <i>water rate</i> will increase on January 1, 2017, by 300%. The August bill
30	will reflect the <i>new sewer rate</i> and the <i>old water rate</i> . Discussion ensued on the way to implement
31 32	public awareness of the radical water rate change.
32 33	The billing software requires that every individual account be uniquely setup. Tables would not
34	change, but rate change can be implemented (yearly). The New Castle software for water and
35	sewer billing is not sophisticated.
36	
37	Walter Liff suggested that every household have a service charge for each utility, then
38	supplement that with a usage charge. John Ireland mentioned that he would like to see an
39	overhead billing system with no minimum. He felt it would not be fair to drop the minimum
40	charge in households with little usage without an overhead charge. The question was asked if
41	the minimum usage would be for both water and sewer. It was noted that the Wentworth by
42	the Sea has four accounts with a sewer base charge.
43	

addressed. Specifically, he referred to water used in knocking down fires, in flushing the 45 hydrants and any other usage attributable to town operating expense. That Portsmouth charge 46 should be part of the budget. Maybe that should be considered next year. 47 48 49 Select Board Chair David McGuckin commented that Lorn's understanding of finance was way 50 above others. David McGuckin asked that the Water and Sewer Board develop a plan to go to 51 the Select Board. He emphasized that the billing plan must be fair to customers, but that the 52 town cannot lose money. 53 54 In addressing synchronizing the billing cycle and charges from Portsmouth with the billing cycle from New Castle, it will be challenging to adjust water loss and sewer profit for this 55 56 current fiscal year. 57 58 A discussion arose about Debra Knowles' replacement when she retires in March 2017. That 59 would be happening just as this billing rate transition was getting under way. It was suggested 60 that overlapping Debra Knowles' work schedule with her replacement might provide for a smoother transition. New Castle's fiscal year runs from July to June but ideally would be from 61 62 June to May. This would result in one odd billing cycle, making the adjustment synchronized. 63 The change, however, may confuse the customer base. 64 Select Board Chair David McGuckin asked if one month over budget OK with the state but 65 66 DRA (Department of Revenue Administration) may not be happy with that. 67 68 SB Chair McGuckin said that, going forward, we need to make the New Castle water and sewer 69 billing charges more equitable, more like Portsmouth's billing system. He then added that 20 70 units minimum charge will go away. Finally, he said that this issue won't be resolved today, but 71 at least the effort has been started to do so. He asked the Water and Sewer Board members if 72 "we" are in agreement: stick with the water charge as it has been proposed and address the new 73 sewer rates as they evolve. 74 75 Normand Houle asked when we would transition to "zero-based billing?" Select Board Chair 76 David McGuckin suggested that to lessen the shock to transitioning to the higher rated, he 77 proposed the use of a step-up plan. Normand Houle suggested billing in August using the old 78 rates and system and moving to zero based billing in December 2016. It was suggested that an 79 explanation for this new billing be provided to all customers. SB Chair McGuckin said the next 80 billing cycle (August) should be like the past 20 years. Charge at the old rates. 81 82

Normand Houle asked how would the town's usage (that is, water NOT used by customers) be

- It was noted that the December billing would reflect Portsmouth's \$.81 per unit of water usage
- 83 with \$12.24 per unit as the new sewer rate. In April the water rate would increase to \$3.35 per
- 84 unit of water and remain at the \$12.24 per unit of sewage.
- 85

44

- 86 Normand Houle asked that firefighting and fire hydrant flushing line items be added to the
- 87 budget for fiscal year 2018. The terms need to be defined accurately when introduced to the
- 88 budget.
- 89
- 90 The meeting was adjourned at 3:48 p.m.
- 91
- 92 The next meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission is scheduled for September 14, 2016 at 3
- 93 p.m. in the New Castle Town Hall meeting room.
- 94
- 95