

## APPROVED

### Water & Sewer Commission Minutes Wednesday, July 11, 2018- 3:00 PM

**Members Present:** Normand Houle, Chair, John Ireland, Vice-Chair, Walter Liff, Richard White, Clint Springer (Alt), Carl Roediger (Alt), Steve Tabbutt, Public Works Supt., Selectman Damon Frampton, Ex-Officio.

**Also in attendance:** Ben Jankowski, DPW, Christiane McAllister, Town Accountant, Bette Jane Riordan, Recording Secretary, Mundy Tarbell.

Chair Houle opened the meeting and briefly explained the Agenda items and his plan to make some administrative changes with respect to process. He recognized a member of the public, Mundy Tarbell, who asked about the current state of the Town's water quality, given the recent public notification letter sent out by the Town.

Steve Tabbutt addressed the question by beginning with highlighting the upcoming aeration system, which Portsmouth has planned, and noting that more tests of the quality will be conducted in July. The drought may preclude some planned actions, however Steve noted we did pass the last test for the quarter, but, as Chair Houle explained, the Town is still in violation as the reading consists of a rolling average of measurable TTHMS. Because of the previous negative quarters, this recent reading was not able to put the Town in compliance. Both Steve and Chair Houle are optimistic that with recent improvements and with the aeration project coming on line, the Town could soon return to compliance. While the State DES and EPA are not pleased, Steve stated new pipe installed in Portsmouth has helped. (1600 feet of 12 inch main) Typically there are higher readings in the summer months because of the warmer water, but hopefully we'll come out of the violation stage soon. Steve and the Town are working on remediation plans with the EPA and DES. Mundy still expressed some concern about drinking the water. Chair Houle encouraged folks to be optimistic, but there are barriers to be dealt with.

#### **1. Review and Approve Checks.**

Chair Houle explained there are two categories as depicted on the sheets handed out by Christiane: FY 18 and FY 19 for Sewer Fund checking. For FY 18 there is a total of \$5,971.88 in checks payable, including a payment of \$4,800 for a required legal opinion concerning the sewer pump project, 3-year note. The note is being repaid from the sewer fund. Chair Houle stated that it's a ratepayer charge. For FY 19, \$660.40 is payable to Eversource for the electric bill for the pump stations.

Christiane interjected information regarding the usual Portsmouth sewer units bill. This month was the first time Steve and Ben used the new system, and there was a 30% discrepancy between the analogue readings and the SCADA system, so some calibrating needs to be done. Portsmouth had sent one bill, but Christiane also submitted a proposed estimate to Portsmouth based on actual readings from Steve and Ben. She is waiting for a final invoice on the sewer units billing in order to close out the FY year. Ben explained that the scaling in the SCADA system needs adjusting, as the readings were lower on River Road than they should be. Chair Houle questioned the calibration problems, and discussion ensued relative to the plan to repair the

SCADA system to assure correct readings. Christiane noted that Portsmouth is still deciding which of the two submitted invoices/readings to accept for June's bill. There is a \$10,000.00 difference. Chair Houle noted that Portsmouth has a SCADA technician on staff and suggested Ben and Steve check in with this person. Ben stated that they need to continue to work with Northeast Integration engineers to adjust the scaling and fix the problem.

**2. Bank Balances:**

Christiane explained about not having year-end financials for this meeting, and is attempting to get FY 18 done. She is waiting for the final sewer bill for June from Portsmouth. The following are the bank balances which will be changing:

**Water: \$161,938.40.**

**Sewer: \$317,604.41**

**3. Approve meeting minutes of June 13, 2018.**

After review of edits, \_\_\_\_\_ ( No one made a motion to approve as amended ).

**4. Old Business.**

**a. Ordinance Amendment 1 re: 2<sup>nd</sup> meter for irrigation.**

Chair Houle asked the members to review the proposed amendment. Discussion ensued regarding sufficiency of the language to achieve necessary compliance with the provisions regarding owner responsibilities and town responsibilities, specifically dealing with secondary or hose-bibb meters. Steve Tabbutt concurred with the language. After further discussion, Walter Liff made a Motion to Accept the Amendment to the Water Sewer Ordinance as presented. John Ireland seconded. Chair Houle asked for any discussion.

Carl Roediger brought up the matter of whether having a second meter for irrigation flies in the face of water conservation. If we are trying to save water, maybe this second irrigation meter is promoting waste of a resource. We are making it cheaper to irrigate one's lawn when the overall goal is to conserve. Chair Houle noted that approximately 100 people have these meters. After discussion, Chair Houle suggested that Portsmouth be contacted to find out what they charge their customers for the irrigation rate. New Castle could consider a higher rate for irrigation meters. Mr. Roediger suggested that the Town could start separating the two meters and then later introduce a higher rate. Chair Houle asked Christiane to find out how much more Portsmouth charges from house water versus irrigation water. He acknowledged that the Select Board would be the decider on any rate change. John Ireland stated that the Commission could recommend to the BOS that they implement a rate hike for irrigation use. There being no further discussion, Chair Houle asked for a Motion. John Ireland made a Motion to Accept the new language as written for the Amendment to the Water Sewer Ordinance, which was seconded by Clint Springer. Motion carried.

**b. Sewer line failures at Sawtelle Bridge.**

Chair Houle asked for an update and recap of the two recent sewer line breaks at the Sawtelle Bridge. Christiane and Steve reported that the cost to repair the first break on the Portsmouth

side was \$10,000.00. The second break on the New Castle side of the bridge is approximately \$1600.00. According to Steve, one of the possible reasons is the movement of the bridge and also excessive pump pressure. Chair Houle referred to his Email regarding planned DOT bridges work. Discussion took place regarding available funds for design and engineering of the needed sewer work, which might be able to take place alongside the planned water work. Chair Houle asked Christiane if there may be an open ended contract which the Town could add on to, that would include the sewer design and engineering costs. Mention was made of the SRF application for sewer funding for 2.5 million dollars as a placeholder, which the Select Board has made application for. John Ireland indicated in prior meetings regarding water, the engineers were willing to consider both but would need to get more money in order to add on the sewer work. Chair Houle asked Christiane if there was available money in the sewer fund to pay for the design and engineering. She said that would depend on when the money would be needed. She will research this matter and report back, but probably its best to wait for news on the SRF application.

**c. Sewer pump upgrade report.**

Chair Houle stated there was a problem with the alarm system and that payment had been withheld. He asked for clarification. Christiane reported that we have not been invoiced for final payment. We have paid the first payment. Payments two, three and four have been written but are being held up pending final inspection. Ben reported that the date for inspection by Underwood of Northeast Integration’s work is supposed to be very soon. Ben reported that the alarm system has become much more reliable. The phone line is almost complete. The line has been installed, and all that remains to be done is hang a wire which will be done tomorrow. Steve reported that he does have the Smartphone which was needed. Chair Houle asked about status of the properties surrounding the three pump stations. Steve reported that they (Northeast Integrationa0 are finishing up.

**d. Riser elevation at sewer pump stations.**

Steve reported that the River Road riser will need elevating, but more importantly the bulkhead is low, and needs to be replaced because of its poor condition. He believes Quarterdeck and Bosen’s Hill stations are fine. Chair Houle suggested that Steve get a contractor estimate for this work.

**5. New Business**

**a. Water Quality Report. ( See Report—Attachment )**

Chair pointed out that the DPB study referred to in the printed report does not appear to exist. He will check with Al Pratt of Portsmouth DPW.

**b. Insert for August/September bills.**

Chair Houle distributed his draft of an insert entitled “FY 19 Water and Sewer Rates Virtually Unchanged...but.....”, and asked for comments. This would be inserted into the next Water Sewer bill. Chair Houle had met with Tom Maher and they agreed to joint discussions with the BOS and the Commission in the fall on how we make up the shortfall resulting from keeping the rates at a certain level and how the capital reserve amounts were arrived at. After review, Walter Liff made a Motion to Include the proposed insert as presented. After discussion, which included

expressed reservations on disclosing the rate process as written, as well as perhaps disclosing the two sets of rate numbers (Select Board's and Commission's), Walter withdrew his Motion. Carl Roediger feels it is important to focus on the capital reserve process. John Ireland also expressed the importance of showing how the two different rates were arrived at. Chair Houle strongly believes in transparency, which is why he proposed the insert. Clint Springer thinks it more appropriate to include this information in Island Items as opposed to a bill insert. Chair Houle will rewrite the language and ask for comments from the Commission.

There was a tangential discussion regarding Budget Committee recommendations and Select Board recommendations. Christiane reported on DRA requirements for budget submission. Carl Roediger offered suggestions on how to talk about the need to have adequate capital reserves, and include this in the rewrite.

**c. Water main improvement project status.**

The SRF application has been submitted, and ESR (Engineering Services Request) for \$36,000 has been received. This will allow the design process to get going, and the design process will get started in earnest in September.

**d. Water Sewer Commission/Select Board Relationship.**

Chair Houle met with Chair Maher to begin discussions on how to achieve a good working relationship with better communication, and the WSC be involved in matters when appropriate. He asked Tom to be aware of the talent and expertise of the members of the Commission. Selectman Frampton will report on Select Board activities having to do with the Commission at the Commission's monthly meetings. WSC has authority over the budget and the checkbook.

Norm asked members to sign up for the RSS service on the Town's website in order to receive meeting agendas and minutes.

**e. Capital Reserves Policy.**

Chair Houle asked members to think about the options for setting the capital reserve line in the budget.

**f. WSC Processes.**

Chair Houle will meet with Pam and BJ regarding administrative processes and requirements, and the Right to Know law.

**g. Letter to Commissioner DOT**

As a point of information only, Chair Houle said there was a meeting regarding the Wentworth Bridge with a group of locals from the South side of the Island to discuss getting the project moving forward. Historic issues are holding it up. Representative Kate Murray had met with the Governor who agreed the project should proceed, and at a recent Select Board Meeting, encouraged folks to write letters to the DOT. Chair Maher has asked for draft letters supporting this. This could be an issue with regard to replacement of the water line under Wentworth Road as Portsmouth is unwilling to go forward with water line improvements until the bridge project gets underway. Carl Roediger expressed his concern over ability to get appropriate fire

equipment onto the island should something happen with the causeway, and the Wentworth Bridge is not yet done.

**h. Sewer Application for 22 Walton Road. (Clark and Jones, owners).**

Steve Tabbutt presented the application for review by the Commission. Clint Springer made a Motion to Approve the application as presented. John Ireland seconded, and the Motion carried.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Clint Springer made a Motion to Adjourn, which was seconded by John Ireland.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:15.

Attachments: Water Quality Report