

FINAL APROVED

**Water & Sewer Commission Minutes
Wednesday, February 13, 2019 - 3:00 PM**

Members Present: Normand Houle, Chair, John Ireland Vice Chair, Walter Liff, Richard White, Selectman Damon Frampton, Ex-Officio.

Also in attendance: Christiane McAllister, Accountant, Bette Jane Riordan, Recording Secretary, Darcy Horgan, Dave McGuckin.

Chair Houle opened the meeting at 3:00, noting the presence of a quorum. He acknowledged the recent passing of Clint Springer who had been a member of the Commission for the last year and a half, and asked for a moment of silence.

1. Public Questions: None

2. Individual Applications/Petitions:

Resident Darcy Horgan came before the Commission to request an abatement of her \$962.50 sewer bill. She began by describing what transpired in her home when she was notified by the Portsmouth Water Department of a running toilet in her home. A representative from the Water Department came to her home on September 12 to alert her that the water usage was unusually high indicating a problem. They found a running toilet in an unused guest bedroom. The second incident occurred in November and is documented by an invoice from East Coast Heating and Air Conditioning. In this case it was discovered that a line connecting to an outdoor sink had disconnected and water was running continuously into her yard. This probably had gone on for more than one day. The consequence was that it drained all the hot water from the system so she called her heating company complaining of no hot water. Darcy supplied documentation to the Commission, and Chair Houle and Christiane McAllister, Accountant, researched the issues. Her usage showed the following:

9/2017 bill- 26 units
1/2018 bill- 24 units
5/2018 bill- 19 units
8/2018 bill- 21 units
1/2019 bill-55 units.

Chair Houle used the 1/2018 sewer bill of 24 units as a reasonable average, and recalculated the 1/2019 bill to be 24 (ave. units) + 13.4 excess units = 37.4 units rather than the 55 charged. He offered the following rebate as being reasonable: $55 - 37.4 = 17.6$ units @ \$17.50/unit = \$308.00.

After brief discussion and explanations, Darcy accepted this as reasonable, as she was still going to pay for the costs of the September leaky toilet. Walter Liff made a Motion to Approve the reduction of the subject bill by \$308. Dick White seconded, and the Motion carried.

3. Approve Minutes of January 9, 2019.

After edits were discussed and the minutes reviewed, Dick White made a Motion to Approve the minutes of January 9, 2019 meeting as amended. John Ireland seconded, and the Motion carried. Chair Houle asked for comments from those members present for the February 14, 2018 meeting, and then proceeded to request a Motion to Approve those minutes. There being no changes to the minutes, John Ireland made a Motion to Approve the Water and Sewer Commission minutes of February 14 2018. Damon Frampton seconded, and the Motion carried.

4. Financials:

a. Review, approve and sign checks.

After review, John Ireland made a Motion to Accept checks as written and presented. Dick White seconded, and the Motion carried.

Resident Dave McGuckin questioned if there had been a maintenance check at Quarterdeck Lane for grease, which is supposed to be at least annually. The Commission will check with Steve Tabbutt for a report back about this issue and also about any “no notice” inspections.

b. Review and approve January Sewer Commitment.

After review with Christiane of the billing commitment with Authority 2 & 3, the Commission approved the commitment as per the auditor’s recommendations.

c. Accountant’s Report.

Christiane reported on the following account balances:

Water Account: Checking account Balance is \$182,671.17
Trust Account: for Dec.: \$143,594.83

Sewer Account: \$170,991.42
Trust Account: \$39,543.90

5. Selectmen’s Report.

Selectman Frampton reported that the 60 % Plans meeting was held yesterday with Underwood Engineering. Chair Houle expressed his displeasure with not being notified via the Email system set up with Underwood. Damon apologized and assured Chair Houle he would follow up to assure his inclusion on the Email list. It was noted that the meeting was posted and advertised. Damon reported that both the subsurface and archaeological items were completed. The 60 % plans are at Town Hall and include rough budget numbers. Chair Houle stressed that the public needs access to the copy.

Damon reported that at the meeting there were concerns expressed about the budget and that the project may have to be downsized with respect to the bridge. He stressed the need to read the

report before the March 13 th meeting. Chair Houle expressed his concern about his being unable to view the 30% design plans discussion minutes, which are still not available on Underwood’s website. Chair Houle questioned the status of the replacement of the Sawtelle Bridge line. Damon reported that the bids are coming in higher than originally anticipated. Dick White stated there would be a problem with Underwood Engineering Sewer Force Main ESR #13 if the water line is not done.

Chair Houle asked about the status of his article for the Town Report, in terms of approval and was advised there was no response at this time.

Chair Houle modified the order of Agenda Items in order to discuss New Business, Item No. 7:

7. New Business:

a. Review of ESR Authorization to Bid

The Commission reviewed and discussed the Engineering Services Request, Authorization to Proceed from Underwood, dated December 3, 2018 regarding Sewer Force Main Improvements, a four-page document. Chair Houle asked for comments from the members. Both Chair Houle and member Dick White made suggestions for corrections and questioned some of the items.

Both Chair Houle and Dick White raised several questions, concerning exactly what is included in the scope of services for the \$8400, ranging from the type of pipe to be used; whether NHDES has to review the plans and what effect this would have; inconsistent descriptions of the Force Main Design; incomplete information under the Building documents description on page 2; questions and concerns on structural support; jacket design and insulation. Dick White had several other questions which he will email to Chair Houle for further discussion and review. He expressed concern that a double wall pipe is needed. These questions will be reviewed at the next meeting. It should be noted that this ESR has not yet been executed, according to Christiane. Chair Houle has not heard back from Selectman Stewart, but will forward the Commission’s comments to him. Chair Houle expressed concern about how to fund this \$8400 expense, and whether it could come from the sewer trust fund.

6. Continuing Business

a. Budget Build.

Christiane provided detailed explanations for her three-page document regarding the Commission’s upcoming budget.(Two work sheets and one analysis page.) Some of the topics covered included an explanation of expected interruptions in metering during the construction phase of the water project. Dick White expressed disagreement with some of her estimations and requested anticipated rate increases built into the budget. Both Chair Houle and Damon Frampton agreed with Dick White. The amount in question is \$463,370. There was

considerable discussion and debate between Christiane, Chair Houle and Dick White, concerning 4% being added to the budget to cover any expected Portsmouth sewer rate increase. Christiane pointed out the need to look at the revenue side of the budget to understand why she has put forth the final figure. She provided a description of how the unit rate is arrived at in order to meet expenses. Chair Houle stated he hopes the Select Board does not change any of the capital reserve lines. He understands that all he could do was object, as they are clearly empowered to do so

Christiane discussed with the Commission the likelihood of a 4% Portsmouth Sewer Rate increase, and explained that she would like to discuss changing the billing cycle for water and sewer bills to better coincide with the fiscal years. This matter will be taken up at the next Commission meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, John Ireland made a Motion to Adjourn, which was seconded by Walter Liff. Meeting adjourned at 5:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

BJ Riordan