

## Board of Public Works 01/19/2023 – Minutes Conference Room A

DPW Board Members: Thomas A Nephew, Chair; John Patrick Harrington, Vice-Chair; Joe Mercado, Lewis L. Lunn, James T MacDonald

Not in attendance: Joe Mercado, Lewis L. Lunn

DPW Staff: Kenneth Kalinowski, PE, Dir. DPW; Paul Brinkman DPW Business Manager

### Call to Order

Chairman Tom Nephew called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., announcing that it was being broadcast and recorded. The video recording can be seen at: <https://pepperell.vod.castus.tv/vod/?video=28b6709e-3ad1-4440-8efd-124d2cf6b0f2>

### Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

- November 18, 2022 (Regular)
  - Drainlayer License Discussion – Tom Nephew notes that the Drainlayer Licensing responsibility has been delegated to DPW staff and should be reflected in the minutes.
- December 15, 2022 (Regular)
  - Relocate regulation discussion topic to DPW Misc. Updates bullet
  - Tom notes the draft Town Charter proposed changes for board review will be available at the next BPW meeting.

*Pat Harrington motions to accept the Meeting Minutes for the meeting held on November 18, 2022 as written and amended, Tom Nephew seconds the motion. **The motion passes unanimously***

*Pat Harrington motions to accept the Meeting Minutes for the meeting held on December 15, 2022 as written and amended, Jim MacDonald seconds the motion. **The motion passes unanimously***

### • Abatements

#### 1. 21 Tucker Street / Unit 7 (Nguyen)

*Resident Lynn Nguyen, 21 Tucker Street, Unit #7 is in attendance and representing herself in abatement request.*

Paul Brinkman provides an overview of the water usage data profile for 21 Tucker Street, Unit 7 and explains the excess water usage may have been caused by a running toilet or an irrigation system failure. The excess water usage suddenly stopped, indicating that the source of the leak may have been identified and action may have been taken to make necessary repairs. To date, the owner has not acknowledged what the source of the leak was.

Paul had extended abatement adjustments to the bill:

1. To remove excess sewer costs (by assuming the water did not go into the sewer system), and
  2. To adjust the excess water usage billing from the top tier to abate to the lowest billing tier
- These actions resulted in the reduction of what was a \$10,000 bill to approximately \$2,600.

Ms. Nguyen, indicating financial hardships, rejected this abatement offer and requested to go before the board.

Ms. Nguyen explains she had issues with her irrigation system, providing photos on her phone for the board to review. Ms. Nguyen explains that she didn't know there was a leak, and she had a landscaper friend from Fitchburg who helped her shut the water valve off (only because he had to cut the pipe). Due to weather, no repairs have been made to the pipe at this time, and the water will remain shut off until repairs are made in the spring.

Tom Nephew explained the water usage rate tiers and reminded Ms. Nguyen that the Town had extended a significant abatement. Tom also reminded Ms. Nguyen that the water had been used and needs to be paid for. All of the other ratepayers should not have to pick up the cost for one customer's excess usage.

Members discuss the abatement request and payment plan options. Members are in agreement to allow Ms. Nguyen the option to pay the amount due over 24 months. Members are in agreement that no additional reduction will be made to the bill, and no reduction to interest accrued will be made. Ms. Nguyen is notified that no abatements will be granted in the future.

Tom Nephew requests that discussion of billing and interest rates is added to the next meeting agenda.

- **Water / Sewer**

- PFAS (Update)

- We are working with Groton-Dunstable and DEP. There is a meeting with Groton and Dunstable management next week to discuss grants, short-term loans, a temporary PFAS system, and how the situation will be resolved.
- We are working on a Jersey Street proposal with an engineering firm, and are still waiting for EPA to determine the PFAS health advisory limits.
- Paul recently presented PFAS slides to the Select Board, and this was well received. There was discussion about the PFAS Task Force composition and disbanding the PFAS Task Force. No action was taken by the Select Board.
- PFAS updates to consumers are included with the DPW bill mailing.

- IMA Updates – The IMA draft contract is under review.

- Misc. Updates

- The Mass. Municipal Association (MMA) is our advocate for state legislation. The Sustainable Water Resource Fund is asking to refile a bill to expand and upgrade water infrastructure for public health. Massachusetts is one of 13 states with a PFAS limit or regulations.
- Flushable Wipes – There is a new initiative to protect water and sewer systems through the labeling of flushable wipes by making manufacturers' labeling of "flushable wipes" clearer. Wipes may be flushable, however, they are not biodegradable. The DPW crew spends an inordinate amount of time cleaning them out of the sewer system.
- Dewatering Equipment – We are considering adding a Borrowing Article to the Town Meeting Warrant to replace the dewatering equipment. Costs to process sludge are skyrocketing and our dewatering equipment is 40+ years old.

- **DPW**

- Transfer Station – Rate Adjustments

- Transfer Station revenue is tracking close to breaking even with costs. The current budget is for labor and materials that support core function and does not incorporate long range capital expenditures.
- Money hasn't been put away for capital needs, and we're looking at a 10-year program of approximately \$700,000 total.
- Our recycling contract with Casella is up for renewal. We are planning to eliminate the middle-man and broker our own recyclables to increase revenue by reducing processing costs.
- Paul updates the members with the transfer station expenses and revenue budget. Demo disposal costs have risen, trash disposal revenue pays for itself, and recycling is variable.
- Annual transfer station window permit rates have not increased in a couple of years.
- Members discuss implementing solutions to verify the vehicles utilizing services at the transfer station have valid window permits.
- Paul proposes a modest increases to the annual window permit and demolition disposal fees. A handling fee will partially absorb permit processing costs and eliminate the need for customers to provide a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). Permit renewal be available soon online and payments can be made by credit card.
- Board members are all in agreement to increase demolition fees to 20 cents/per pound effective March 1, 2023 and increase annual Transfer Station Permit fees to \$95 (Regular Permit) and \$75 (Senior Permits).

- Misc. Updates

- Deadline for BPW nominations, warrant articles, etc.
    - 1 March 6<sup>th</sup> is last day to submit nomination papers and March 22<sup>nd</sup> is the last day to withdraw nomination papers.
    - 2 Warrant articles are due March 17<sup>th</sup>.
  - FY24 Budgets – The town is requesting departments submit level services budget proposals with 2% COLAs for non-contractual employees. Paul and Ken note that any requested increases in the DPW budget will be for new initiatives or variable costs that we don't have control over.
  - Conflict of Interest/Ethics Training – The state has transferred to a new tracking database without the ability to transfer names and results from the previous training database, therefore, everyone in Massachusetts will be required to complete the Ethics and Conflict of Interest training soon.
  - The new highway trucks will be delivered next week!
  - Tom Nephew received an email notification from the Town Planner regarding an upcoming Planning Board Subdivision Regulations meeting which will be held on February 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6pm, and will feature NMCOG's subdivision regulations overview presentation. A follow-up email was sent announcing there would be a BPW/Board of Health joint meeting. Tom disagrees that there should be a joint board meeting. Tom will forward the initial email to other BPW members who are welcome to attend if interested.
  - 2022 Annual Town Report Submissions have been requested.
- **Review, Approve And Sign Any Documents Requiring Board Signatures**
    - December Commitments  
*December Commitments were signed by the Board.*
  - **Commissioners Comments**
    - Pat Harrington will be taking a tour of the wastewater system.
    - Paul notes there are several delinquent accounts in billing, and details plans to recover funds owed.
  - **Next Meeting Dates**
    - February 16, 2023
  - **Any Other Matters That May Arise Which The Chair Could Not Reasonably Anticipate**
    - None
  - **Adjournment**  
*Pat Harrington motions to adjourn the meeting of the Board of Public Works, James MacDonald seconds the motion. **The motion passes unanimously***

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna Lane-McPartlan  
DPW Program Administrator, Highway Division