

**Board of Public Works**  
**4/16/2020 – Minutes**  
**“GoTo Meeting”**

**Present via remote login:**

DPW Board Members Tom Nephew, George Clark, Paul Brinkman, Pat Harrington, Lewis Lunn; DPW Director Ken Kalinowski, DPW Superintendent Joe Jordan; others Martin Cadek, Susan Tocci

**1. Call to Order at 5:00 p.m.**

Chairman Tom Nephew called the meeting to order at 5:09 p.m. and announced that it was being broadcast and recorded.

The following roll call was taken:

Paul Brinkman Aye

Tom Nephew Aye

George Clark Aye

Pat Harrington Aye

Lewis Lunn (Joined call after the roll call was taken)

**2. Acceptance of Minutes**

**2.a. February 20, 2020 Regular Session**

Paul Brinkman made a motion to accept the minutes from February 20, 2020 as amended. The motion was seconded by Pat Harrington and the motion passed unanimously.

Paul Brinkman made a motion to nominate Tom Nephew to be able to sign all abatements and commitments in lieu of having the entire board sign as requested by Ken Kalinowski. George Clark seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**3. Abatements**

**3.a. - 102A Townsend St, - Kelley**

A request for an abatement was made for a leaking toilet. The toilet has been fixed.

Paul Brinkman made a motion for an abatement of \$658.58 for water and George Clark seconded the motion. Pat Harrington voted aye with reservations. The motion passed.

**3.b. - 6 Fairchild Ct. – Fonkou**

This is a first time homeowner that had a water conditioning unit. The system was broken and has been fixed. Tom Nephew disclosed that he sold this homeowner the house and can verify that he is a first time homeowner. Paul Brinkman made a motion for an abatement of \$417.37 for water and Pat Harrington seconded the motion. Tom Nephew recused himself from the vote. The motion passed.

**3.c.- 44 Townsend St. – Tracanna**

This is a multi-family rental property. The owner received the high bill and immediately spoke with Alicia to try to figure out the problem. They realized it was a continuously leaking toilet. The toilet has been fixed and the owner has spoken to the tenant regarding this. Paul Brinkman made a

motion for an abatement of \$1,610.90 for water and \$913.23 for sewer. Pat Harrington seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### 3.d.- 16 Hillside St. – DeMartin

The daughter, Michelle, spoke for her 81 year old father. A relative left the water hose outside running. Cameras have since been put up on the property. Paul Brinkman made a motion for an abatement of \$309.54 for water. George Clark seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Pat Harrington raised a concern about the abatement process during these abatement discussions. It was agreed to put this concern on the agenda for the next meeting.

### **4. Water & Sewer**

#### 4.a. Misc. updates

The Bemis Road treatment facility external walls are up and the project is moving along. In the Sewer Department there is a little bit of difficulty with the contractor completing the punch list, however money will be withheld until it is completed correctly.

The office is being staffed remotely. Both water and sewer crews are working split shifts to make sure that we don't have the entire staff out sick.

#### 4.b. W/S Rate Discussion

Four water rate increase options were discussed. Joe Jordan led the discussion. Ken emphasized that this is, in fact, just an informal discussion to see where we are and where we need to be, and that the Board will need to hold a public hearing to vote any changes.

Option 1 proposes a 15% increase this year, 10% next year and 3% increases following indefinitely. This would maintain our expenses and keep a healthy retained earnings balance through FY26.

Option 2 is a 10% increase for each of the next 3 years. The rates at the end of this would be slightly higher than in Option 1, but it would still have essentially the same net result.

Option 3 is an 8% increase for the next 5 years. The rates are a bit higher here, however, in FY23 we would be below our targeted retained earnings balance.

Option 4 is to do nothing and hope for the best. With this option, we would be in deep financial trouble by FY22 and things would likely only get worse.

Joe Jordan recommends Option 1, but emphasizes that it is really up to the board to decide. He also noted that in FY22 the full debt will hit the budget in the amount of \$522,888 per year.

Lewis Lunn suggested the board should take a strong position.

Tom Nephew was concerned about the rate increase in Option 1. It is a rate hike of 59%. Joe explained that the 50% increase is necessary to get us to be able to cover the debt; however, there are also the other regular costs such as salaries, insurances and other expenses that will go up.

Ken said these options are based on our assessment of the current financial status of the project and other operational considerations, and this could change.

Paul would like to look at actuals rather than budgeted numbers and to not look too far out as we get closer to the rate hearing.

Tom would like to make sure that we have enough in retained earnings for whatever comes up. His next priority would be to be able to provide relief for the rate payers. If we spread this rate increase out over a longer period of time it would be easier for the rate payer to absorb. Tom suggested that we do the 10% increase, and carry it out to 2024 to make sure we still maintain a balance of \$400,000.00 in our retained earnings. We had a 22% increase this year and if we have 10% for the next few years, then a 5 or 6% in 2024 should allow us to maintain that balance.

Joe stated that Option 1 and 2 are very similar, but Option 2 flattens out increase.

The comparison chart was brought up to look at. The staff stated that it is very difficult to directly compare rates from these towns as all the communities use slightly different billing parameters, but we tried to normalize it as much as possible. The chart shows that we are in the middle of the road for water rates. For this comparison, Joe stated that he used the same communities that Andrew MacLean used for the tax comps. In addition he used neighboring communities.

Ken asked for this comparison to be done. We are very competitive on our water rates, as well as taxes.

Pat likes Tom's idea of spreading out the rates. Ken and Pat agree as well. Paul has some concerns. Ken stated that although 10% sounds high, even if you raise this to 11% or 12%, the impact is only pennies on the unit rate which bill usage per 100 cubic feet.

Ken asked the board if they would like to have the rate hearing on May 28<sup>th</sup>. Tom said he wasn't sure that was possible given the current COVID-19 situation.

Joe said if the rate increase were to go into effect in August, to be aware that the 10/10/10 might be a bit different. Paul said that we could vote in July and have the change occur before the read and still have it apply.

A discussion was held as to the possibility of having the rate hearing via a zoom-type conference call. Ken will speak to town counsel.

Tom would like to have May 28<sup>th</sup> as the rate hearing if town counsel allows it.

Ken wanted to give thanks to all town employees who have worked so hard during this time.

## **5. DPW**

### **5.a. Misc. updates**

Highway and Transfer Station crews are being staggered to make sure that the whole department is not out sick at once. The transfer station is open and there is an uptick on sticker purchases.

## **6. Review, Approve and Sign any documents requiring board signatures**

6.a February Commitments – to be signed on 4/17/20 at town hall

6.b As Requested – none.

**7. Commissioner's Comments**

None

**8. Next Meeting Date / Dates**

8.a. May 28, 2020 – 6 p.m.

**9. Any Other Matters That May Arise Which The Chair Could Not Reasonably Anticipate**

None

**10. Adjournment**

Lewis Lunn made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by George Clark. The meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Susan Tocci  
Administrative Assistant  
Wastewater and Stormwater Divisions