

April 25, 2019
Conference Room A
Town Hall

Present: DPW Board Members Tom Nephew, George Clark; Lewis Lunn, Water & Sewer Supt. Joe Jordan, DPW Director Ken Kalinowski

4/25/2019 - Minutes

1. Call To Order

Chairman Tom Nephew called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m. and announced that it was being broadcast and recorded.

2. Acceptance Of Minutes

2.a. March 21, 2019

George Clark made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Tom Nephew seconded the motion out of necessity. The motion passed unanimously with Lewis Lunn abstaining.

3. Abatements

3.a. 6 Tucker Avenue (Huntington)

The owner of the property submitted a letter noting that they had an outdoor skating rink this past winter and while they had no problem in paying for the water used for the rink, none of it was discharged to the sewer. Joe Jordan presented calculations for relief based on the average sewer use for this account over the past 4 winters. George Clark made a motion to abate the account of 6 Tucker Avenue, account #3737, in the amount of \$699.55 in sewer. Lewis Lunn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Water & Sewer

4.a. Groton IMA (Update)

Paul Brinkman was not present to present an update. Tom noted he would email Paul Brinkman and ask for an advanced copy to review.

4.b. Lowell/Tarbell Sewer Extension

Ken noted that the DPW had been approached by a local developer about extending sewer along Lowell and Tarbell Street. This was a 'donut hole' of 5 homes that were not serviced when the sewer was originally installed, and closing it up would be in line with the Board's desire for greater market penetration. Ken also noted that a contract for survey and design was underway. Joe Jordan estimated the cost would be approximately \$140k with design, construction and contingency. The developer is interested in sharing in the cost and the other homes would likely be obligated to connect should their septic systems fail in the future. Tom expressed his support for the project and the Board indicated that they would like to proceed.

4.c. Water And Sewer Connection Fees

Tom Nephew gave Lewis Lunn a brief update on the genesis of this discussion, ie, how to make the option of tying into town water and sewer more enticing. Joe explained the rationale and formulas that he used to arrive at his proposed connection fees. Joe also noted that the fees had been in place for many years, but should be revisited every 2-3 years. Joe explained that while there is no 'out of pocket' cost to the town for a connection, but there is a 'demand' cost or 'value' for being able to tie into an existing utility main. Joe walked the Board thru his table of water tie-in data including flow

characteristics, current connection rates and his proposed rates, including all the assumptions. Tom argued that the connection fees were still in excess of the cost of installing private wells. Joe replied that municipal water is a 'guarantee' of quality and quantity. Lewis noted that we were similar to power connections in that we charge a fee to tie in that is over and above the developer's cost to install the new infrastructure. Joe replied that there is a cost that was incurred to extend and maintain the system. There is also the value of having a guaranteed potable source of water as well as fire protection, something that a well cannot provide. Tom felt that the proposed connection fees were still too high to meet the Board's current desire to grow the system. George Clark noted that extending the system thru growth, the operational cost (wear & tear, added maintenance, ...) to supply the 'extra' water should be considered and accounted for in the connection fees. He also noted that the town can and should be willing to negotiate these fees if a development created a more intrinsic value to the town (aside from simply adding customers). Lewis Lunn added that he felt our rates were a bargain, that we do not charge enough for water and sewer in town, and the rates should be high enough to cover all the ancillary costs that were being discussed. Tom did not feel we should be negotiating the fees, unless the developer present a truly compelling rationale. Ken noted that we do not have an unlimited amount of water to 'sell', and Joe said our water consumption is close to our permitted withdrawal limits in the summer months. Joe estimated that we are approximately 80% connected based on population vs customers. Ken then noted that the Planning Board (and their regs) also play an important role in determining when and where water connections can and should be made/mandated. Joe reiterated that the proposed fees were not etched in stone and the Board was free to set the rate at whatever level they deemed reasonable. Tom would like to see the connection rates set low enough that developers would be willing to help defray the cost to extend water mains to their development. The overall Board's consensus appeared to be that the cost should be comparable to other communities and low enough that waivers for connection to the water main from the Planning Board could be eliminated or at least require a DPW sign-off. Tom offered to approach the Planning Chairman to discuss this further. Joe then reviewed the sewer connection fee calculations which mimicked the water calculations. The biggest change in the approach was to have a 'per structure' fee rather than charge by the bedroom as is the current practice. A flat fee of \$6,500/structure was proposed. This would eliminate the current benefit fee. The Board decided to take the proposed water and sewer connection fees under advisement and will discuss them further at a future meeting.

5. DPW

5.a. FY20 Budget

Ken informed the Board that the Town was looking into presenting a \$1.46M override. There is also a 'balanced' budget as well and it would restore the police, fire, library and senior center cuts. The override would have to pass the annual town meeting as well as a special election to be enacted.

5.b. Street Opening Moratorium

Ken reviewed the street opening permit process and the associated 3-year moratorium in place on recently paved streets. Without the benefit of a robust pavement management system, a simplified approach was being proposed, and it was centered on a sliding fee schedule (1-5 years) coupled with much more extensive patching requirements. Tom was concerned that the fee schedule was a deterrent to accessing utilities. Ken suggested that implementing better advance public notice of the planned road repairs should allow any planned connections to occur and avoid the issue entirely. The proposed fees would be put into a revolving fund to be used to bring in an infrared crew to do repairs to the trench patches in the out years. Ken reminded the Board that the schedule could also be shorted back to a 3 year plan vs. the 5 years as proposed. Lewis noted that they his company is required to post a bond for any road cuts in the towns where his company works.

5.c. ATM Warrant Article Assignments

Ken informed the Board that they are responsible to present the eight DPW-sponsored articles at town meeting. There were three typical place holder articles for supplemental transfers from retained earnings into the respective enterprise fund budgets. A formal borrowing authorization for the Bemis Well project and the four enterprise budgets rounded out the list. Lewis was tasked with the first three placeholder articles (Arts 4, 5 & 6), Tom took the Bemis Well borrowing (Art. 9), and the enterprise fund budgets were assigned to George (Arts. 12 & 13) and Pat (Arts. 14 & 15).

6. Review, Approve And Sign Any Documents Requiring Board Signatures

6.a. March Commitments

The March 2019 water and sewer commitments were signed by the Board.

6.b. As Requested

None.

7. Commissioners Comments

Ken informed the Board that the Town Accountant had resigned, effective after Town Meeting.

8. Next Meeting Date/Dates

8.a. May 6, 2019 (ATM)

The Annual Town Meeting will be May 6th and the next Board meeting date is May 23, 2019.

8.b. May 24, 2019

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

None.

10. Adjournment

Lewis Lunn made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. George Clark seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00p.m.