

Board of Public Works 05/18/2023 – Minutes Conference Room A

DPW Board Members: Thomas A Nephew, Chair (TN); John Patrick Harrington, Vice-Chair (PH); Joe Mercado (JM), Lewis L. Lunn (LL), James T MacDonald (JTM)

Not in attendance: Derek Flanders, Cemetery

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

Also in attendance:

Call to Order

Chair, Tom Nephew, called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m., announcing that it was being recorded and will be broadcast at a future date. The video recording can be seen at <https://pepperell.vod.castus.tv/vod/?video=9a744713-d35f-4d93-82dd-f6a27561420a>

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

- April 20, 2023 (Regular)

Pat Harrington motions to accept the Meeting Minutes for the meeting held on April 20, 2023 as written, Lewis Lunn seconds the motion. **The motion passes unanimously (TN, PH, LL, and JTM 4-0).**

At this time, Joe Mercado joins the meeting.

Abatements

None – Paul Brinkman provides an update on abatement requests that have been handled directly in the DPW office, the current process of handling abatement requests in-house has been effective. Paul reminds everyone that Wi-Fi enabled devices are available for purchase at multiple locations. These devices have the ability to provide customers with water usage data, alert customers of potential water leaks, and have the ability to shut off the water remotely.

Water / Sewer

- Groton IMA Update

Paul provides the latest IMA revision updates. Paul accepted almost all of Groton's comments.

- Groton is looking for the facility upgrade value. TN notes that it's important that methodology will carry forward at any time. The methodology must survive future upgrades.
ACTION: TN commits to working with Paul on future upgrade methodology.
- TN is agreeable to maintaining language where Groton will adopt our DPW regulations and remove the 'punitive' language.
- Strength of wastewater is discussed. Stronger wastewater could be identified as a potential revenue source. It may be appropriate to assess a surcharge to treat stronger wastewater as it is more expensive for us to treat.
- Language delineating "excess flow" has been simplified. Paul will include language regarding renegotiating penalties for chronic, long term, excess flow exceeding a percentage of what is owned.
- Members discuss imposing surcharges for services provided to Groton. The surcharge is intended to cover overhead costs (travel, police details, etc.).
- The IMA agreement is written with all variables predominantly located within the document appendices. The contract was written granting the BPW and the Groton Sewer Commission the authority to review and update contract appendices annually, which eliminates the need to bring to a new full contract to the Select Boards for approval every time changes are made.

- Water & Sewer Rates – Discussion

Members participate in a preliminary discussion in preparation for the upcoming Public Rate Hearing. The public rate hearing will be advertised, and will be held during the June 2023 BPW meeting. Topics of discussion include:

- DPW budgets for FY24

- Water use charges – the latest water rate adjustment seems to be working as intended, a *significant* rate increase may not be warranted for the coming fiscal year.
 - TN would like to see historical water and sewer rates from the past 5 years of usage.
 - As we move to determine future rates, TN would like the BPW to begin the exercise in setting target percent revenue goals for retained earnings.
 - Tom would like to begin including the retained earnings discussions at the next BPW meeting.
- Sewer use charges are discussed.
 - 2 loans are currently active.
 - Retained earnings are being used to cover expenses for equipment, repairs, etc.
- Stormwater use charges are discussed.
 - Stormwater fees are used to pay for the engineering design of the Heald Street Project and for the sweeper.
 - The Stormwater program will need to develop a Capital Plan for best management practices, Stormwater treatment facilities and maintenance, this should be probably be in the works within the next MS4 permit phase.
- Transfer Station rates are briefly discussed. Transfer Station rates are not subject to the upcoming rate hearing.
 - We are looking at best practice ways to offset substantial operational cost increases in FY24 beginning with increasing window permit and bag tag enforcement.
- PFAS (Update)
 - Ken provides an update from the meeting with the Town of Groton which was held on May 17, 2023.
 - Groton, Dunstable and Pepperell were all represented, Select Board members were present. The Dunstable Town Manager and Water Commissioners were also in attendance.
 - Groton is expected to make a public announcement regarding the Tri-Town Agreement at their upcoming Select Board meeting.
 - Groton is expected to vote on the funding authorization rewording.
 - Ken notes that although Groton will be part of the Tri-Town agreement, they may also move forward with constructing their own 3-town interconnection with a pipe coming from the center of town, which may complicate things.
 - Groton is encouraging us to initiate funding processes and get that going.
 - A RFP for design engineering will be advertised.
- Misc. Updates
 - No drought concerns at this time.

DPW

- Staffing Updates
 - 2 new hires will be filling vacancies in the Highway Department.
 - Jerry Enwright has been hired as a truck driver/laborer.
 - Tom McCaffrey brings a lot of experience running trucks and heavy equipment and was hired as a heavy equipment operator/laborer.
 - Shaun Pillsbury is doing extremely well in his new position with the Water Division.
 - We are working though the final steps with the AFSCME Union to recruit for the newly created, full time position in the Cemetery Department.
 - We are working on creating a full time Compliance Analyst position with Water, Sewer, and Stormwater.
- Municipal Solid Waste Disposal Fees
 - Our current disposal facility, WinWaste, is increasing fees by 30% (current disposal cost is \$77/ton, cost increasing to approximately \$100/ton).
 - We are currently comparison shopping and are scheduled to visit a landfill disposal firm in Fitchburg, fees would be close to the low \$90's/ton. We will do what is best financially for Pepperell.
- 2023 Municipal Conflict of Interest Training
 - All municipal employees, boards, commissions, volunteers, etc. are required to complete and pass Conflict of Interest training bi-annually.

- Misc. Updates
 - Memorial Day Parade will be held Sunday, May 28th
 - “Riverside” neighborhood residents (Deerfield, Merrimac, and Suncook) will be invited to a meeting sometime in June at the Fitz to discuss planned neighborhood improvements.
 - We have been working with the Planning Board on their improvement plans to upgrade Railroad Square parking; the reconstruction of the rotary approaches intended to manage/slow traffic entering the rotary; and install flashing beacon signs with crosswalks by the school on Hollis Street later this summer.
 - Donovan Springs has been able to repair the box on the tractor that pulls the trash allowing us to keep the older truck in service.
 - The new tree truck is being used regularly, 2 large trees were recently taken down in the cemetery.
 - Derek Flanders & GIS Analyst will be working to get the cemetery design laid out. We are hoping to find a local vendor that may be able to restore the old wrought iron sign. TN noted that he may know someone who does that type of work and may be interested in quoting it.
 - There was a sinkhole concern on Main Street caused by a water leak under the sidewalk. An emergency patch was done by the DPW and the developer will make the final appropriate repairs and pave.
 - The new multi-unit building was originally designed to be apartments, however, the 6-units are now slated to be condo units which require individual metering. This unexpected change of use identified the need to modify the service/meter process.
 - The Heald Street project is ongoing with minimal issues or complaints.

Review, Approve and Sign Any Documents Requiring Board Signatures

- April Commitments
April Commitments were signed by the Board.

Commissioners Comments

None

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, Jim MacDonald seconds the motion.
The motion passes unanimously.*

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

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