

Board of Public Works

7/16/20 – Minutes

“GoTo Meeting” – 5:30 p.m.

Present via remote login:

DPW Board Members: Chair – Tom Nephew, George Clark, Paul Brinkman, Pat Harrington, Lewis Lunn, DPW Director – Ken Kalinowski, DPW Superintendent – Joe Jordan, and Susan Tocci.

Call to Order 5:30 p.m.

Chairman Tom Nephew called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:

June 18, 2020 (Regular)

Pat Harrington made a motion to accept the minutes from the June 18, 2020 meeting as amended. Lewis Lunn seconded the motion.

Lewis Lunn - aye

Pat Harrington - aye

Paul Brinkman - aye

George Clark -aye

Tom Nephew– aye

The motion passed unanimously.

Abatements (as requested)

None

Water / Sewer

- MA drought status (update)

Joe Jordan gave a brief update. We received a letter from MA DEP, dated 7/13/20, stating that Pepperell is at a “Level 1” which is a mild drought. Barring any significant changes, we should be good with odd / even water bans. If we have severe heat that could change; this is with the Bemis well off-line.

- **Bemis Treatment Facility (update)**

Bemis site is still moving along very well. We are ahead of schedule and we plan to start up a few months earlier than originally anticipated.

Paul Brinkman asked about the ASR (Annual Statistical Report). This is a report that is sent to the DEP each year.

Joe stated that our unaccounted water was 9%; the standard is 10%.

Our per capita consumption is approximately low 60's gallons per day (GPD). The DEP recommended average is 65 GPD.

Pepperell met both standards. Paul Brinkman stated that it is difficult to hit both numbers and this is good; it means we are being very efficient with our water.

Ken Kalinowski reviewed photos that Adam Dufour had taken showing the construction at Bemis construction site.

Pat Harrington requested a walk-through of the Bemis facility. Tom Nephew stated he would also like to go. Joe will send out an email to set up a date and time.

DPW

- **Leighton Street paving / sidewalk**

Ken reviewed photos of the Leighton St. paving job. It was a 2 ½ year duration project that started out as repairs to a few catch basins. Based on the overall conditions, the job expanded to Highway replacing the entire drainage system, National Grid renewing all their gas services, Highway extending the sidewalk and connecting it to the VFW, and Highway replacing the culvert. The DPW crews did all the prep work and we only subcontracted out the paving of the sidewalk, berm and road.

George asked whether there was a pedestrian barrier at the culvert. Ken stated that Mike Schrader will install a railing; it has caution tape around it right now. The railing was removed as part of a bridge project near Shattuck Oil and will be repurposed on Leighton St. We should have the permanent railing up within a week.

- **Stormwater fee (discussion)**

As a result of our last meeting with Emily Scerbo, Tom Nephew had asked what other towns do for stormwater fees. Ken stated that he sent out a spreadsheet to the Board which shows the fees are all over the map. The Town of Pepperell assesses the fee as a flat per parcel rate.

It's not driven by parcel size, usage or classification; it is driven by the fact that you are a landowner in town and use the roads. Our method is within the DEP and DOR parameters.

Paul Brinkman stated that if we decide to change it, there is an administrative cost associated with doing that and this administrative burden could cost as much as the program itself.

Tom Nephew stated that there are some inequities with the rates and thought it would make sense to explore this. For instance, a piece of property that is split by a road, or multi-family properties that have all the families using the road are some things that need to be looked into.

Pat Harrington stated that the farmers have voiced their opinions saying that they feel they are not being treated fairly.

Joe Jordan said that with the exception of the farmers, the stormwater fee is not being questioned.

Pat Harrington and Tom Nephew both agree that the farmers should not get relief from the fee as they are still using the roads and they contribute to the overall problem because of the use of their farm equipment.

Ken stated that when you look at the spreadsheet, it can be extremely complex in figuring out the fees. It is a slippery slope and it typically leads to some sort of impervious cover analysis that the Town of Pepperell is not ready to get into.

Ken stated that we currently have exemptions for permanently protected properties that cannot be taken out of conservation restriction without an act of legislature. He also agreed with the issues surrounding multi-families. He suggested that perhaps we can give a rate relief to other chapter properties that are not permanently protected. We can also look at multi-family properties and possibly assess them at a higher rate. However, we should try to remain revenue neutral. In addition, we need to try to keep commonality with the parameters set out by the Town Assessor. The state does have a different definition of contiguous parcels than Pepperell does.

Ken suggested the following 4 rate types might be worth considering: commercial, chapter land, multi-family and single-family.

Joe Jordan stated that right now we have 25 – 30 different rates set up in our system for stormwater fees. The rates are set up for parcels such as multi-family, single family, etc. It took 3 months to initially set this all up.

Paul Brinkman stated that we need to come up with definitions that are irrefutable. He also suggested to look at the parcels by type and overall impervious area.

Tom Nephew requested that Ken and the staff get together and look at how we do it now, and then get back to the Board in a month or two.

- **Other**

Ken discussed with the Board, information that was received from town counsel in regards to the rate hearing. He stated that the rate increase was predicated on the fact that we also increased the base rate.

Town counsel said that the quarterly base rate was considered a fee. However, because it was not specifically voted on at the last meeting, the Board would need to have a discussion and formally agree that this increase was the intent of the Board. At the August meeting, we will have a clarifying agenda item and we will make the rate change effective July 1st. If you do not want this, then this will cause us to increase rates later in order to come up with needed funds.

Tom Nephew asked the Board to take a vote on whether they thought this was also an increase in the base rate.

Pat Harrington – yes, it was my understanding

Lewis Lunn - yes

Paul Brinkman – did not think that this was what it was based on

George Clark – yes

Ton Nephew – yes

With a majority agreeing as to the intent, the base rate increase will be put on the agenda and brought up for a vote in August.

The Board historically signs a formally written copy of the rate increases when they are voted on. The initial one did not show the rate increase. Ken asked the Board to vote to allow Tom to sign the rate increase with the adjusted base charge. Ken will then post this on the website showing the rate increase.

Pat Harrington made a motion to have Tom Nephew sign the rate increase notice on behalf of the Board members. Lewis Lunn seconded the motion.

Lewis Lunn - aye

Pat Harrington - aye

Paul Brinkman – aye
George Clark - aye
Tom Nephew – aye

The motion passed unanimously.

Joe Jordan requested that we look at the amount we charge for final read-outs; as our rates are very low. Paul Brinkman stated that the fee is \$50 in the community that he works in.

Pat Harrington asked that this be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

Review & Approve any Documents Requiring Board Signatures

- June Commitments

Paul Brinkman made a motion for the Chair, Tom Nephew, to sign the commitments on behalf of the board. Pat Harrington seconded the motion.

Lewis Lunn - aye
Pat Harrington - aye
Paul Brinkman - aye
George Clark - aye
Tom Nephew - aye

The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioners Comments

Pat Harrington asked if the town has a maintenance program for poison ivy. Ken stated that we do not; however, we do mow as staffing allows.

Ken thanked the Board members for their support at town meeting.

Pat Harrington made a motion to adjourn. Lewis Lunn seconded the motion.

Lewis Lunn – aye
Pat Harrington – aye
Paul Brinkman - aye
George Clark - aye
Tom Nephew – aye

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:31p.m.

Next meeting date: Aug. 20, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Tocci
Administrative Assistant
Wastewater & Stormwater Divisions