

July 18, 2019
Conference Room A
Town Hall

Present:

DPW Board Members Tom Nephew, George Clark, Paul Brinkman, Pat Harrington; DPW Director Ken Kalinowski; Water & Sewer Supt. Joe Jordan

7/18/2019 - Minutes

1. Call To Order At 6:30 P.M.

Chairman Tom Nephew called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and announced that it was being broadcast and recorded.

2. Acceptance Of Minutes

2.a. June 20, 2019

Paul Brinkman made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. George Clark seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Pat Harrington abstaining

3. Abatements

3.a. 14 Tarbell Street (Greelish)

14 Tarbell Street. Ken noted that this abatement request was being heard tonight to facilitate an extension due to the time period involved, i.e., the current billing cycle. Theodore Topouzis, counsel for servicer of the asset (14 Tarbell), asked for a continuance to allow for the completion of an eviction that was in process. This would allow the town to access the structure to investigate and confirm the details of the leak and subsequent disposal of the water. Only one occupant is to be removed as the 2nd unit is currently vacant. Joe Jordan supplied the details for discovery of the leak and termination of service. The realtor representing the property stated that they did not see a clear indication of a leak based on the past water bills issued for the property. He also clarified that they were primarily interested in abating the sewer portion of the invoice. Paul Brinkman made a motion to table the abatement request until the next meeting. Joe added that he requested that a substantial "good faith" payment be made on the account to avoid a service termination for non-payment. Ken also noted that technically we could not address the December billing, as this was past the window of time for filing an abatement. Pat Harrington seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Water & Sewer

4.a. Water/Sewer Connection Fees (Discussion)

Water Connection Fees. Ken presented water connection fee language to amend the Water Rules and Regs. The proposed language was intended to reflect the Boards' discussion at the June meeting as well as to provide clarifications reflecting the Towns current practices. The basic premise presented was to set a range with the minimum connection fee based on the number of equivalent single family connections, all to be charged at the single family rate in place at the time of the application. In addition, there would be a \$5k fee per hydrant. The maximum potential fee would be based on the size of the main connection. There was a lengthy discussion about crediting developers for infrastructure extensions in the public ways, with the primary difference being that in one scenario, the fee could potentially be zero if the credits outweighed the cost, and in the other scenario, there would always be a minimum fee due regardless of any credits that may be possible. The issue of the town guaranting a

given capacity for a given sized main was also discussed. Paul Brinkman expressed concern that too liberal a credit policy could result in numerous extraneous penetrations of the system which could result in a decrease in the integrity of the system. Ken presented an alternative proposal that had no minimum fee, but used the entry fee cost table previously derived by the Board, but left the determination of any 'benefit' to the system (credit) up to the DPW staff, with the Board being the final arbitrator. Tom noted that while he was comfortable with the value of proposed improvements being subjective and evaluated case-by-case, he strongly favored an alternative minimum fee be available to weigh against the entry cost as based solely on the entry fee table. The Board noted that they were comfortable in having staff make the initial determination as to what, if any, value a proposed extension may provide. Paul cautioned that the town needs to encourage responsible development (and expansion of the water system). There was a brief discussion about if and how to charge new connection fees for redevelopment. Paul noted that the application should specify how much capacity is being purchased at the time of connection, while realizing that it will be a significant burden to monitor this information long term. Tom noted that the developer would have to defer to the towns requirement as to what size main will be allowed for extensions, so as to ensure a compatible extensions for future development. It was further decided that the maximum credit would be the required connection fee. Pat asked that a written draft be circulated to the Board for review prior to the next meeting. Tom summarized the desired policy as the developer being charge \$2500/unit plus \$5000/hydrant up to the maximum as specified in the table below. Further, the developer could petition the town to consider issuing a credit for the benefit of the improvements realized by the main extension (250 ft. min extension) up to the value of the connection fee as determined. Should the developer not agree with the staffs determination of the value, the developer could appeal to the Board.

The Board agreed to use the following table as the maximum connection fees:

- 1- inch : \$2500 (plus meter and inspection)
- 1.5-inch: \$5000 (" " " ")
- 2- inch: \$8000 (" " " ")
- 4- inch: \$25,000 (" " " ")
- 6- inch: \$40,000 (" " " ")
- 8- inch: \$50,000 (" " " ")

Joe then presented the revised sewer connection fees and how they were derived. The basic premise was to eliminate the per-bedroom benefit fee and move to a \$6500/house flat connection fee. For multifamily units with separate owners, each unit would be \$6500. For attached multifamily 'rental' units, ie, apartments, etc... the 1st unit would be charged \$6500 and each subsequent rental unit would be billed 50% (\$3250). Ken added that an 'equivalent unit' would be a typical 3BR unit, as this would provide consistency with the rates that are currently in place. This fee would include 2 hours of inspection. Joe noted that the calculations put \$6500 the approximate maximum defensible fee that could be charged, but the Board was free to consider lower rate such. Redevelopment projects that add units to an existing connection would pay the connection fee for each new equivalent unit (owner occupied or rental) as appropriate. It was explained that this would not replace betterments for new sewer extension projects, but rather to replace the benefit fee assessed to un-bettered properties that choose to connect to the sewer at a later date. It would also eliminate the benefit fee assessed for minor expansions such as adding a bedroom to an existing home. The Board supported the concept of a flat fee per household that includes inspection and agreed that the actual cost of construction would be borne by the homeowner. Changes in use and redevelopment would be evaluated as to the number of existing and proposed equivalent dwelling units (3 bedrooms = 330 gpd based on MA Title 5 regs) and billed accordingly. Reductions in use would not be issued a refund from any previously issued fees.

The Board then discussed the actual per household fee with the goal to make the connection fee and cost of physical construction comparable with the cost of installing a septic system. It was determined that \$5000 per dwelling unit (including inspection) was a fair and equitable rate. It was also decided that attached multifamily units would be billed at \$5000 for the 1st unit and \$2500 for each subsequent unit. Ken was asked to provide language to the Board for review, similar to the water rates as previously discussed.

5. DPW

Ken noted that Mike Schrader and the Highway crews had cut back the brush along the Townsend Street

guardrails, and that final arrangements were being made to mill and pave this street over the next 4-5 weeks.

5.a. Misc. Updates

6. Review, Approve And Sign Any Documents Requiring Board Signatures
None.

6.a. As Requested
None.

7. Commissioners Comments

- Pat mentioned that the Board could expect to hear from a local farmer who wants to see the stormwater fees waived for farms.
- George thanked Paul for his work on the Groton IMA.

8. Next Meeting Date/Dates

8.a. August 22, 2019 (Tentative)
The next Board meeting date is August 22nd, 2019.

9. Any Other Matters That May Arise Which The Chair Could Not Reasonably Anticipate.
None.

10. Executive Session
None.

10.a. Meeting Pursuant To G.L. C. 30A, Sec. 21(A)(3), (7) And Suffolk Construction V. DCAM, 449 Mass. 444 (2007) To Discuss Sewer IMA Negotiations With Town Of Groton.
None.

11. Adjournment

Paul Brinkman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Pat Harrington seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.