

8/30/2018 - Minutes

1. Call To Order

Chairman Tom Nephew called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

2. Acceptance Of Minutes

2.a. August 09, 2018

George Clark made a motion to accept the minutes of the August 09, 2018 meeting, as amended. Tom Nephew seconded out of necessity, as Paul Brinkman abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Abatements

3.a. George - 13 Olivia Way (Admin)

13 Olivia Way. (Admin)) It was reported at the last Board meeting that we could expect abatements related to a billing software glitch that only impacts new customer accounts created after the last major CUSI software upgrade. Essentially, the issue is that calculation formulas that affect the "resolution" of the reading were inadvertently changed at the time of the upgrade, and this resolution affects the number of digits that are read by the laptop meter reading device. It does not affect the handheld devices. Water Secretary Alicia Adams has worked diligently and has rectified the situation with CUSI. Therefore, the staff recommended abating this account in the amount of \$691.76 for water and \$1160.24 in sewer. George Clark made a motion to abate \$691.76 for water and \$1160.24 in sewer. Paul Brinkman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3.b. LaSamana Trust - 11 Tucker St. Unit 2 (Admin)

11 Tucker St, unit 2. (Admin) The customer was billed water base and sewer maintenance charges for this unit. Pursuant to a pre-existing agreement for this development, these charges were to be deferred until such time as each building permit is pulled. Paul Brinkman made a motion to abate \$43.70 for water and \$58.75 in sewer. George Clark seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3.c. McFarland - 39 Hollis St., Unit A (Admin)

39 Hollis St, Unit A. (Admin) This request was another CUSI software-related error, similar to the one just presented for 13 Olivia Way. Paul Brinkman made a motion to abate \$233.91 for water and \$501.40 in sewer. George Clark seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Water & Sewer

4.a. Groton IMA - Update

Paul Brinkman reported that he had met with Bob Rafferty, the Groton Sewer Commission's (GSC) engineer, and they discussed the list of issues raised during prior meetings. These primarily related to the "core" and "additional" services to be provided under the IMA. It was noted that certain specific costs such as legal fees and consultants that are specifically related to Pepperell projects should not be the responsibility of Groton, but overall, there appears to be positive movement. Bob Rafferty noted that the GSC was meeting in a couple of weeks and would have further discussions. Tom Nephew reported that Jim Gmeiner (GSC Chair) commented that things appeared to be going well with the negotiations. It was agreed that this is a very uncommon model for an IMA, and that it may take another couple of meetings to work through the details.

4.b. Rate Study - Report / Presentation (Tighe & Bond)

Rate Study – report / presentation by Tighe & Bond

Mike Schrader of Tighe & Bond presented the results of the rate study/tool that was commissioned by the Water/Sewer Dept earlier this summer. Mike covered the items that were involved in setting rates, and then provided a review of their analysis and the recommended rates. He noted that Pepperell has too many rate tiers which is very cumbersome and confusing. He also stated that there were many

anomalies in the multi-unit accounts such as differing number of units being reported for the water and sewer accounts for the same property. These discrepancies were impacting the accuracy of the model. There was discussion about how the various tiers affected mobile home parks. George Clark felt they were entering the highest tiers too quickly, but Joe Jordan noted that, in fact, the parks were billed multiple base charges (typically equal to the number of trailers), but the thresholds for each of the various tiers were multiplied by this same factor. Mike stated that most communities treat multiple unit accounts with a "1-meter, standard tier thresholds" approach. Tom Nephew stated we are not ready to set rates at this point and wanted to have further discussion about this at the next meeting. He also wanted to review the operating budgets to see if there were additional efficiencies that could be achieved before simply raising the rates. He asked that the PowerPoint presentation be brought to the next meeting. Paul Brinkman requested a copy of the Excel spreadsheet (rate tool).

5. DPW

5.a. Dunstable Request To Use Pepperell Transfer Station

Ken Kalinowski reported that the Dunstable Board of Health had sent a letter to the Pepperell Board of Selectmen formally requesting permission for Dunstable residents to utilize the Pepperell transfer station. Dunstable's transfer station ceased operations on September 1. Ken did not feel this would create an undue burden on our system as the entire Dunstable subscription was approximately 300 customers, and it was estimated that only a handful of these customers would prefer to continue with a transfer station style trash management program versus a curbside option. Ken had requested the letter from Dunstable in order to avoid an appearance of "poaching" customers, and would expect that the Town of Pepperell would issue a formal response. He was simply looking for the Board to endorse the approach. Tom Nephew requested that Ken check with the transfer station staff. A question was raised as to the financial viability of this arrangement. Ken said he did not expect a large revenue windfall, as the post-secondary recycling market continues to decline and revenues from recycling are continually dwindling. He noted that it may not be long before Pepperell is in a similar situation to Dunstable, as simply raising user fees for our services could drive us out of business due to the extreme price sensitivity associated with trash disposal.

5.b. Fall STM - October 01, 2018

Ken informed the Board that the Fall STM was scheduled to be held on October 1, 2018. He was requesting that the board sponsor articles to create and fund an Enterprise Fund for storm water. He and the staff have been studying various options to achieve compliance with the NPDES MS4 permit, and the most logical and reliable funding source is an enterprise fund. This approach would allow for flexibility, as well as full transparency. Relying on the general fund is, in Ken's opinion, too risky, as it is tempting to defer various items to balance budgets, and you are always in competition with other needs that may be able to be deferred or that are not mandated such as the MS4 compliance. Ken apologized for the short notice, but stressed that the STM warrant was closing in less than a week. Paul Brinkman made a motion to submit an article to establish an enterprise fund for storm water, George Clark seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Ken said that he will present more information and detail for discussion at the next board meeting.

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

6.a. As Requested

7. Any Other Matters That May Arise Which The Chair Could Not Reasonably Anticipate.
NONE

8. Commissioners Comments

George Clark asked for an update on the road opening permits. Ken explained that due to several requests of developers to cut recently resurfaced roadways, it would be advisable for the town to adopt a more formalized Road opening permit policy than currently exists, but that due to an overwhelming number of projects the summer, it had slipped in the schedule. George would like to see something in place by October. Ken said he had a draft started and would try to get something done by October; however, in the worst-case scenario, we could fall back on the conditional permits issued by the board earlier this year. He

also noted the relatively small number of requests for this type of work, as well as the fact that the permit season would be drawing to a close in another month or so.

9. Next Meeting Date/Dates
August 13, 2018
September 27, 2018

- 9.a. September 13, 2018

- 9.b. September 27, 2018

10. Adjournment

Paul Brinkman made a motion to that the meeting be adjourned. George Clark seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.