

## Board of Public Works

### 09/21/23 – Minutes

### Conference Room A

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

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

Also in attendance: Christopher Razzaboni, Transfer Station Operator; Derek Flanders, Cemetery & Parks Operator

#### Call to Order

Chair, Tom Nephew, calls the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., announcing that it is being broadcast and recorded. The Video on Demand recording can be viewed at <https://pepperell.vod.castus.tv/vod/?video=1f8a2de5-eea2-419e-9bcb-1efdac88aa56>

#### Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

- August 17, 2023 (Regular)  
*Pat Harrington motions to adopt and approve the Meeting Minutes for August 17th as amended; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Joe Mercado. All in Favor (AYE – 5-0-0). **The motion passes unanimously.***

#### Abatements

None

#### Water / Sewer

##### PFAS update – Jersey St pilot project

- Project is underway. Based on the pilot, sizing the treatment will be determined based on when the breakthrough detected.
- We have three (3) different types of PFAS removal/treatment media: Carbon, Ion Exchange and Bentonite. Bentonite has a longer life span, where Carbon may have a short life span and is very expensive.
- We will begin moving forward with plant design, the actual media type will be determined at a later date.
- Conversations with PFAS Regulators have indicated a likelihood we could receive grant funds to help offset the cost for this.

##### Water/Sewer rates - clarifying vote

- Ken Kalinowski requests the BPW hold a vote clarifying the Rate Hearing vote which was taken at the BPW meeting previously held on the June 22, 2023. The BPW voted on a 5% rate increase effective July 1, 2023.
- Rates are based on revenue from the previous year. August billing includes usage from May, June and July.
- The intent of the vote was to make the new rates effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, where any billing processed after July 1<sup>st</sup> would also incorporate the earlier months in the billing cycle at new rate.

*Pat Harrington moves that the Water and Sewer rates approved by the Board of Public Works on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, with an effective start date July 1, 2023, were for all billings after July 1<sup>st</sup> which included the consumption in the quarterly billing period from May-August 2023; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Joe Mercado. All in Favor (AYE – 5-0-0). **The motion passes unanimously.***

##### Consumption/revenue forecasting (discussion)

- As a result of the 2 previous years of drought and the heavy wet rain this year, calculating estimated water usage for rate setting purposes has been challenging.
- Rates are established by estimating water consumption, and water usage has been trending downward due to the recent rainy, wet season which could fiscally impact us. Although the rates have been increased, the projected consumption and associated revenue has not been realized.

- Winter usage has remained pretty stable, but Paul doesn't foresee us making up revenue shortfall over the remainder of the year.
- Paul proposes that the BPW members think about how future rates could be based, and then adjusted if necessary, to reduce reliance on summer usage to reach targeted retained earnings. Retained earnings may also be used to control rate increases.
- Tom Nephew would like to have a future discussion regarding establishing targeted retained earnings amount, and how other communities are establishing and arriving at their target as well.

#### Misc. updates

- Paul Brinkman announces that Valerie Brock, Compliance Analyst has been working out awesome!
- Preparations for the IMA for the inter-town PFAS resolution at the high school are moving forward.
- Groton & Dunstable Boards have met and arrived at a regional plan. They had to agree on what will be built to solve the problem at the high school, which they share. There is no town water at the high school and they need to bring water to the high school. The plan is to connect the school from both sides (Dunstable and Groton), with Pepperell essentially taking over the system built in Dunstable. Ultimately, all the towns would be able to provide water to each other. Groton has applied for their own funding.
- Ken Kalinowski announces that we had a very good meeting with Rep. Margaret Scarsdale and Senator John Cronin regarding PFAS in the region. Mass Water Works explained in detail what PFAS means to water suppliers in Massachusetts and what water suppliers are up against.
- IMA Update – Tom Nephew would like Paul to coordinate a meeting with Tom, Paul and Andrew MacLean to circle back and review their previous discussion on the evaluation of the plant.

#### **DPW**

##### Project / storm updates

- Paving of the Riverside Subdivision, Heald Street, Maple Street and Chestnut Street is essentially complete.
- The Heald Street culvert crossing is almost complete. Half of the guardrail installation is done, but we are having an issue with National Grid causing delays in installing the other half. The gas main is a too close to the edge of the pavement and is located where the guardrail posts need to be.
- Minor complaints have been received regarding the Merrimac and Deerfield paving project. When the paving company returns to town this fall, we'll go back and fix what can be done.
- The cemetery project has been making great progress.
- Contracts have been signed for Railroad Square, the Rotary and Hollis Street. We are waiting the scheduling from the contractor. Due to radius curbing production delays, it's very unlikely that the rotary will be done this year. We will be contacting the state to request an extension on the grant.
- September 11<sup>th</sup> storm damage was extensive in town, and the region.
  - Crews were out for 3 days with dump trucks full of trap rock and all DPW departments were all hands on deck pitching in, the Sewer department were hand shoveling rock into trenches.
  - The storm was significant and extensive.
  - The Oak Hill Road culvert started to buckle and was closed to traffic. Prepping is being done for the contractor to make repairs next week.
  - Dirt Chestnut has been closed due to water erosion damage as well.
  - Pepperell/Dunstable town line culvert was struggling as well and 113 almost needed to be closed.
  - On behalf of the BPW, Tom Nephew expresses gratitude to the Highway staff and all of the other DPW department staff that pitched in to help.

##### Transfer Station bag options

Ken Kalinowski and Paul Brinkman propose converting away from MSW bag tags and move to using two different sizes of trash bags to help regulate our pay-as-you-throw program (PAYT). We would purchase bags from Waste Zero who is probably the largest nationwide manufacturer/distributor of trash waste bags used to promote PAYT programs. Many

years ago we partnered with them to provide smaller 13-gallon kitchen sized bags, which were initially intended for senior use.

- Paul proposes selling each roll of 5 large bags for \$17/roll, and each roll of 10 small bags for \$17/roll.
- Chris Razzaboni is introduced as the new Transfer Station Operator. Chris speaks to the board about the disposal of trash in oversized bags without tags. Chris advocates for the use of purple bags to increase compliance and revenue. Some people have been abusing and/or misusing bag-tag stickers as intended. Chris has been speaking with the customers and 90% are in support of going to bags.
- Tom Nephew is concerned about customers that are set in their ways and set on the convenience of using bag tags. Tom also supports having bags available for people that choose to use them.
- Tom Nephew proposes creating a Town Ordinance implementing \$100 fines for each occurrence of disposing of bags that are not properly tagged.
- Jim MacDonald is concerned that the Waste Zero bags may not fit a standard size trash barrel without slipping in to the container.
- Paul notes that Municipal Solid Waste tipping fees have increased by almost 30%. We are trying to increase compliance at the Transfer Station. 55-gallon bags are currently not permitted, yet are regularly found in the containers. Signs are posted on location indicating that drum barrels and loose trash are also not permitted and ignored.
- Joe Mercado summarizes that moving to purple bags for disposal would make it easier on the Transfer Station staff to easily verify customers are in compliance with the PAYT program, and we are losing revenue to non-compliance. Joe also reiterates that Tom's concern is to maintain convenience for customers that prefer using the tags placed on bags they have purchased, and suggests that we offer both.
- The board is in support of offering both sizes of bags and bag tags. The cost for a sheet of bag tags will increase by \$2/sheet and be sold at the same cost as larger sized bags.
- Tags are intended for use on bags up to 39-gallons, the maximum bag size which will be strictly enforced. 55-gallon bags are not allowed, will be easier to identify and will not be accepted. Blatant disregard of the maximum bag size will not be tolerated.
- Tom notes that there is currently no incentive not to attempt to cheat the system by using oversized bags. Members suggest asking the Town Administrator how to implement \$100 fines at the Transfer Station for each offense of violating policies that require bags to be tagged and/or no larger than 39-gallons. Customers will likely be embarrassed when called out and fined for violations.
  - Chris Razzaboni explains that embarrassed customers have been known to become aggressively hostile when approached by staff requesting to see a valid Transfer Station permit. Chris believes that will continue to be the case. The existing postage signage at the Transfer Station needs to be updated. Updated signage may help.
- Members discuss RFID gate access at the Transfer Station entrance could pay for itself in a couple of years, and help to eliminate unauthorized and unpermitted access.
  - There is currently no electricity or cable at the Transfer Station entrance.
  - The Transfer Station entrance and exit access may need to be reconfigured.
  - Ken also explains that planned construction of the RFP Solar Project up on the landfill will be coming and it's unclear what the project will require. We don't want to conflict with or be in the way or have our location at risk for damage during construction, we'd like to coordinate as much as we can with that project.
- Funds also need to be allocated to purchase a new trash trailer, the last one was replaced several years ago.
- The overall goal of implementing both options for customers to use either of the 2 sizes of bags, or to use bag-tags is to encourage customers to patron the Transfer Station by offering convenient disposal of household waste while providing the Town the benefit of reduced fraudulent waste disposal.
- Members request action taken to determine necessary steps to create a Town Ordinance. Members also request recommendations for updated signage so the BPW can vote to make necessary adjustments in managing the Transfer Station.
  - Implementing and enforcing a Town Ordinance to fine Transfer Station violations could be very complicated, however, Tom requests action taken to determine the necessary steps needed to bring before the Board at a future meeting.

- We currently have the ability to refuse future Transfer Station access or permits to customers that have violated the policies.
- Members have requested updates at the next BPW meeting in October.

*Pat Harrington motions to authorize the Pepperell Transfer Station to purchase trash bags in the size of 33-gallon and 15-gallon. Bags will be sold at a price of \$17/roll of 5 33-gallon size bags; \$17/roll of 10 15-gallon size bags; and to raise the sticker price by \$2/sheet to \$17/sheet of 5 bag tags; 2nd by Joe Mercado. All in Favor (AYE – 5-0-0).*

***The motion passes unanimously.***

#### Misc. updates

- Ken Kalinowski updates the board that Developers have asked that the Birch Drive Extension be added to the Fall Special Town Meeting for acceptance. Ken has reviewed the final set of DRAFT As-Built plans and has been working with the Town Administrator and the Planning Board to get on their October agendas and will be looking for a recommendation from the Board of Public Works to accept.
- MassDOT has a program that provides speed reduction signs to be used to reduce rural road departures. Sections of Elm Street and Brookline Street have been identified as areas of concern. Speed studies are required twice a year, for three years in exchange for the signs.
- Bike passage signage is available and advises vehicles to provide bicyclists 4-feet of clear space when passing. Ken will be meeting with the Highway Superintendent and the Police Department to discuss next week. Ken has identified 11 locations on major arterials in town, for signage reminders that bikes are everywhere, please pass safely.

#### **Review, Approve and Sign any Documents Requiring Board Signatures**

##### August Commitments

*August Commitments were signed by the Board.*

#### **Commissioners Comments**

- Tom Nephew mentions that other Boards open meetings with the Pledge of Allegiance and inquires how other members feel. Members are agreeable to opening future meetings with the Pledge of Allegiance and Tom requests it be added as a standard agenda item moving forward.

#### **Next meeting dates**

- October 19, 2023 – Regular BPW meeting

#### **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 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion.*

***The motion passes unanimously. Meeting is adjourned at 6:49 p.m.***

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