

**APPROVED**

**MINUTES OF THE WATER & SEWER COMMISSION MEETING THURSDAY,  
March 21, 2024,  
TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM, 1:00 P.M.**

**Members Present:** Richard White, Chairman, Pam Cullen, SB Liaison, Carl Roediger, Scott Stringham, Lorn Buxton, Stephen Johnson, Alternate, Jim Rini, Alternate, Larry Doyle, Alternate, Chris Robillard, Director of Public Works.

**Also Present:** Bette Jane Riordan, Recording Secretary.

Noting a quorum, Chair White opened the meeting at 1:02 PM. Voting members are Chair White, Pam Cullen, Carl Roediger, Scott Stringham, Lorn Buxton.

The Chair proceeded to the agenda.

**1. Public Questions.** None

**2. Individual Applications/Petitions:** None

**3. Approve Minutes of the February 15, 2024 Minutes.**

After review of Draft Minutes, Chair White called for a motion.

MOTION: To Approve the Minutes of the February 15, 2024, Meeting of the Water and Sewer Commission as amended.

MOTION: L. BUXTON  
SECOND: S. STRINGHAM  
UNANIMOUS

Chair White noted that Director Robillard will be joining the meeting shortly so the Commission can thoroughly discuss the budget and any “what if” questions which may arise.

**4. Financials.**

**a. Review, approve, and sign checks.**

**Sewer Utility:** After review, Chair white called for a motion.

MOTION: To Approve the sewer utility checks as read and presented.

MOTION: L. BUXTON  
SECOND: S. STRINGHAM

UNANIMOUS

**Water Utility:** After review, Chair White called for a motion.

MOTION: To Approve the water utility checks as read and presented.

MOTION: L. BUXTON

SECOND: S. STRINGHAM

**b. Commitments: None**

**c. Accountant's Report.**

Chair White related the following figures from the Financial Administrator:

**Water**

Checking Acct.	\$240,750.99. As of end of February 2024
Trust Balance: (Select Board)	\$54,236.06
Cap. Reserve Balance: (W&S)	\$.108,430.63

**Sewer**

Checking Acct.	\$326,556.26
Trust Balance (Select Board)	\$.08
Cap. Reserve Balance (W&S)	\$205,892.07

Mr. Doyle asked about the origin of the trust funds. Chair White explained when Water/Sewer became a Commission, by statute it allowed the Commission to form the Capital Reserve Fund controlled by the Commission. Prior to that, when it was the Water Board, the Select Board had control of the Water Sewer trust fund. He noted that the Select Board has been very good in dealing with the trust fund balances and working with the Commission.

Chair White delayed Budget discussion pending Mr. Robillard's arrival and proceeded to the Select Board's Report.

**5. Select Board Report.**

Select Board Member and Liaison to the Commission, Pam Cullen reported that the new Town report (FY24) will be going to print next week. (1<sup>st</sup> Draft).

Chair White asked Mr. Johnson

**9 b. I&I Data Tracking: Member Steve Johnson Report.**

Chair White asked Mr. Johnson to present his report, which addresses impacts on Inflow and Infiltrations into our sewer system. He had offered to present this information to the Commission.

Note: Attached to these minutes, you will find the full presentation presented at the March 21, 2024, Commissioners' meeting. This ongoing study is comparing the sewer flows at each pump station and how precipitation and tides effects our sewer flows. Chair White noted the good work by Steve and thanked Director Robillard for providing the sewer flows off our SCADA system.

Mr. Johnson stated his data analyses runs from January 2022 through January 2023. He explained his tidal charts and depicted spikes which occurred. The graphics are all color coded and available to the public with these minutes. He highlighted 10 spikes of over 100,000 gallons each for a two-day period. The spikes are not just for one day. Each pumping station has its own data graphics. (Steamboat, River Road, Bosuns Hill). All three have spikes, but each one is different. There are distinct seasonal variations. Some of the take-aways include the fact that overflows are precipitation driven, not just tidal, but high tides are part of the problem making things worse. Commission Members asked some questions, and Mr. Johnson pointed out some surprising facts about how the ground dries out affects the data. His graphics point out the trends in both the spike times as well as those days below 100,000 gallons. He noted 62,000 would be the average daily number of gallons according to the data if the 10 spikes are taken out of the equation. What we pay Portsmouth would be affected and is worth considering. Chair White and the Commission thanked Mr. Johnson, who will provide a PDF of his data.

Chair White stated he had discussed with Mr. Robillard about tidal issues and is interested on getting a peek at what the high tide does without a storm, on a nice sunny day. This will help us with the tidal issue. While we clearly have the precipitation problem, the tides are a factor. Chair White also stated that each pump station has a catchment basin. He would like to identify whose home flows into which basin and compare that with the metered rates. This project will be some time down the road. Mr. Robillard would like weather station for DPW which would aid in getting the big picture of Inflow and Infiltration.

Chair White proceeded with Agenda Item 5:

## **FY2025 Budget Review**

### **WATER:**

Chair White distributed the copies of both water and sewer budget and discussion began with the Water Budget. He wanted to look at what major changes have occurred which affect the rate. The proposed rate is \$1.30 added to the current rate. .39 cents of that amount are wages & benefits which is under Select Board Control. The City of Portsmouth stated the increase would be between 4%, and 6%, and Chair White, in consultation with Mr. Roediger and Director Robillard, believed we should budget for a possible 6%, which accounts for .25 cents of the \$1.30. Water purchased represents .48 cents of \$1.30, which was explained by the Chair in referring to the "Water Purchased" line item in the budget, and Mr. Robillard clarifying the numbers. We are selling less water, and that factor had to be considered. Selling less water

means there are fewer units to bill. O&M represents .18 cents of the \$1.30. This is the increase needed to keep the system operating. Discussion ensued regarding the need to address the water sales loss, with the Chair reminding the Commission that all meters need to be horizontal, and more new meters need to be installed. Mr. Rini asked if the vertical meters were accurate and about what percentage of water sold was for irrigation. He was advised that both the vertical and horizontal meters are not accurate and need to be replaced. The Town is paying \$250 per homeowner for the changeover to horizontal as the town initially allowed vertical meters. Mr. Robillard noted that irrigation represents about 20%. Mr. Doyle commented on the lower sales of water as being attributable to people being away, and higher sales with landscaping. Mr. Stringham noted the Coast Guard has gone way down in water sales.

After further review and discussion, Chair White called for a motion.

MOTION: To Approve the proposed FY25 budget for the Water Utility as presented with a set water rate of \$9.95 per unit.

MOTION: C. ROEDIGER

SECOND: L. BUXTON

UNANIMOUS

#### **SEWER:**

Chair White started with the major changes, and noted the rate is .95 cents difference between FY 24 and Proposed FY25. The breakdown is as follows: Wages and benefits .21 cents; O&M. .32 cents; Sewer purchase .66 cents; Portsmouth 6% increase .58 cents; Capital Reserve .63 cents.

Chair White explained how the rate was kept under \$21.00 by utilizing the Capital reserves. The current rate is \$20.03. With the proposed increase the new rate would be \$20.98.

There was a brief discussion of the houses on Shapleigh Island with Mr. Stringham questioning the current situation and where or when that may change. Right now, we are not able to charge Portsmouth for our O&M costs. There are a deduction Portsmouth makes in our bill on the five houses in question. But there are a total of 22 houses (5 on Shapleigh; the other 16 on the force main). After further discussion, Chair White called for a motion.

MOTION: To Approve the FY 2025 Sewer Utility Budget as presented with a set rate of \$20.98 per unit.

MOTION: S. STRINGHAM

SECOND: L. BUXTON

UNANIMOUS

## **7. Director's Report.**

- **O&M:** Director Robillard noted all but one of the property owners have been contacted and informed of what they must do to correct the deficiencies uncovered by the smoke testing. One of them (Marina Heights) may be away, but he will follow up. Mr. Rini requested a copy of the letter that was sent.
- Chair White asked for an update on MAC, who is getting ready to start up work in Portsmouth again and Director Robillard hopes to get together with him before that happens. He also noted that Director Robillard is working on "camering" the whole system. Hopefully the RFP for this will be done in the very near future. As to the force main under the bridge, Mr. Robillard reported there is still a minor leak,
- An invoice has been sent to the Wentworth for the grease cleaning. UNH has paid for this as well.
- Copper pipe/lead pipe issue: Director Robillard needs information on about 100 homes.
- 60 new meters have been purchased by DPW and are being shipped. Hopefully DPW will be able to get those installed in the coming year.

## **8. 2023 NHDES Water Sanitary Survey.**

Chair White sent this out for information to the Commission, and indicated we are in good shape. The biggest item is the lead copper ruling. October 16<sup>th</sup> is the deadline to get this survey done.

### **Continuing Business.**

#### **a. Sewer Manhole Remediation Phase 1 -2023 CWSRF Project.**

Chair White explained his rationale for possibly foregoing the loan (\$77,000; 25 % forgiven)) at this time and why he recommends turning down the receipt of the loan. He did thank Norm Houle for the work done to get this grant. We are number 1 on the list to receive it, but Chair White is asking the Commission to turn it down. The requirements of federal laws such as Davis Bacon Act and Buy American and other requirements mean the wages to be paid for the work are high and the paperwork demands are high, requiring monthly reports. By not taking the loan there are savings to be had, particularly with wages. We would be saving by not paying the interest due on the loan. Also, we could save \$300 per manhole cover and frame. This is a small job, and with the loan requirements, many of the smaller contractors would not be willing to take on the responsibilities. By using capital reserves, we can begin the work this summer and get the needed replacements and repairs done more quickly which better suits the needs of the Town. We have been continuously putting money away into the reserves, and this project can be done with a portion of these funds. (Chair White noted that the \$3500 for Underwood Engineers was paid (engineering fees) because we needed a permit. Funds for that expense will come out of this year's budget.)

After discussion, Chair White called for a motion.

MOTION: To Decline the CWSRF loan for \$77,000 from the State of NH for frames and manhole covers.

MOTION: S. STRINGHAM  
SECOND: L. BUXTON  
UNANIMOUS

Lorn Buxton asked about the declination, wondering if there was a need to address any prior motion to approve the project. Chair White assured him there was not.

Other issues:

- Chair White stated the Water Asset Management plan is due May 2024, and he will be in contact with Underwood to make sure all deadlines are met. There is also an end of June deadline which will be followed up on. Underwood also owes the Town a proposal for a \$30,000 sewer asset management plan.
- June 4, 2024, is the deadline for creating an online account with the EPA to meet their requirements for NHDPDES Permit #NH 0100234.

There being no other issues to come before Board, Chair White called for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: To Adjourn

MOTION: C. ROEDIGER  
SECOND: L. BUXTON  
UNANIMOUS

Meeting Adjourned at 2:41 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bette Jane Riordan  
Recording Secretary

***NEXT MEETING IS THURSDAY APRIL 18, 2024 at 1:00 PM.***

Attachment: Johnson Presentation on I&I.