

**Final approved by the Commission**  
**Town of New Castle Water & Sewer Commission**  
**January 21, 2021, 3:00 PM**  
**Macomber Room**

**Members Present:** Normand Houle, John Ireland, Richard White, Carl Roediger, Alternate, David McGuckin, Selectman; Walter Liff; Steve Tabbutt, Department of Public Works

**Members Absent:** None

**Also Present:** Christiane McAllister, Accountant

Chair Normand Houle opened the meeting at 3:06 p.m.

**1. Public Questions**

None

**2. Individual Applications/Petitions**

None

**3. Approve Minutes of 12-18-20 Meeting**

Mr. Ireland moved, and Mr. White seconded, to approve the minutes as drafted. The motion carried unanimously.

**4. Financials**

a. Review, approve and sign checks

Chair Houle read the checks as presented. Mr. Ireland moved to approve the checks as read, and Mr. White seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Accountant's report

Balances as of December 31, 2020

Water

Cash: \$235,191.73

Trust (SB): \$147,332.76 (Nov. balance\*)

Trust (WSC): \$27,775.60 (Nov. balance\*)

Sewer

Cash: \$320,348.42

Trust (SB): \$16,492.90 (Nov. balance\*)

Trust (WSC): \$45,547.78 (Nov. balance\*)

\*Cambridge Trust statement for December had not been received in time for the meeting.

- c. Wentworth by the Sea (WBTS) Marina. An issue regarding proper billing for sewer services has been raised by Ocean Properties which owns the WBTS hotel, claiming that the marina is not an element of the hotel which heretofore had been paying sewer charges associated with the marina's water meter. The Town accountant sent a certified letter (return receipt) to the Marina requesting payment. The Marina has acknowledged receipt. They still have approximately one week to reply with payment.

## **5. Selectman's Report**

Selectman McGuckin reported that two more candidates for Superintendent of Public Works are being considered. Interviews are scheduled for next week.

## **6. Continuing Business**

- a. Air Release Valve Discussions. With Andy Sharpe of Underwood Engineering (UE) participating via video chat, an extensive discussion was held regarding the way forward regarding the three sewer utility air release valves (ARV): one under the Sawtelle Bridge, one at the intersection of Walton Rd. and Mainmaist Cir. and one on Portsmouth Ave. at Tarbelle Lane.

The UE estimated costs to replace:

- Sawtelle Bridge: \$87K
- Walton Rd.: \$15-30K
- Portsmouth Ave: \$15-30K

These exceedingly high estimates have led the commission to reexamine the need to replace these three given the lack of evidence that any force main failures might be directly attributable to them. However, the purpose of ARVs is indisputable: to vent any trapped air or sewer gases which could otherwise prevent the proper flow of effluence. In short, they cannot be ignored and could fail without notice, failure defined as an "air bound" force main through which no effluence would flow.

Replacement of the Sawtelle ARV is especially problematic in light of very restricted volumetric space under the roadway, which precludes accommodating an automatic ARV. The two others are also problematic in that access to them has been denied because of seized/rusted enclosures within their respective manholes. In short, UE has had to estimate "worst case" replacement of these two based on their evaluation of the cost to replace the Sawtelle unit.

The commission's focus has shifted to the near term issue of gaining, and subsequently maintaining, ready access to the Walton Rd. and Portsmouth Ave. ARVs which probably have not been touched in 45 years. After much discussion, the path forward is for Mr. Tabbutt to make contact with person(s) in the Portsmouth DPW to see if they have experienced and successfully resolved similar access challenges. The ultimate goal would be to replace these two ARVs and provide prompt access to vent their respective force mains should they become air bound. (This presumes automatic ARVs may not be possible as with the Sawtelle Bridge.)

Further discussion ensued regarding devising means to monitor the overall health of the force mains. Chair Houle will contact Dylan Kimmel of Northeast Integration, LLC (NEI), the SCADA

support contractor to see if there might be SCADA parameters that could be analyzed which would point to a degradation in performance, hopefully forestalling (catastrophic) failure.

Before Mr. Sharpe's departure from the meeting, the commission voted to approve UE ESR 13-3 whose focus is on support of hoop installation on the sewer force main under the Sawtelle Bridge, in the amount of \$4,550.00. Mr. White moved to approve, Mr. Ireland seconded, approved unanimously. Chair Houle signed the authorization to proceed.

- b. Hydrant Flow Report. The Town has received the final report from UE. Chair Houle asked Mr. Tabbutt to investigate hydrant #6 on Oliver St. to determine why this hydrant has low flow numbers compared to adjacent hydrants,

In the report, UE recommended fire flow tests be periodically performed to forecast degradation. Mr. White suggested that testing a limited number, rather than all 31 tested in November 2020, would likely be sufficient. The following hydrants were suggested: hydrants near the entry of water from the Portsmouth system, namely a hydrant near the Kittery Point Yacht Club on Goat Island; one near the intersection of Wentworth Rd. and Main St.; the hydrant in Town center across from Town Hall; and the hydrant owned by the Town at the Commons to evaluate the flows on the south side of Town serviced by Portsmouth. Further, these tests should be conducted at the same time of the year; the spring flush was suggested. Chair Houle raised the question: Which Town entity should perform the tests? DPW? Fire department? Both together? Mr. Tabbutt will contact the fire chief to see if the fire department has the proper equipment and know how to perform these tests. Chair Houle opined that DPW and the fire department should work together to gather the data.

- c. DES Notice of Violation and Quarterly Reporting. Mr. Tabbutt, with assistance from "Chris" of accounting, has successfully submitted all delinquent reports. Chair Houle asked that in the future, this statistic be forwarded by the third week of the first month of the subsequent quarter, i.e. April, July, October and January. Ms McAllister indicated this is doable.
- d. Backflow Prevention Device Survey - New England Backflow (NEB) Inc. Proposal. A proposal was received. There are 42 locations to be surveyed. Chair Houle is concerned about the cost (penalties) for repeat visits should the surveyor be unable to find and/or access a customer's device upon first visit. Mr. White will communicate with NEB to determine how long they estimate it will take to complete the survey with the thought of judicious scheduling to obviate repeat visits in the event of "failed access-to-survey." Also, Mr. Tabbutt will evaluate the list of 42 to ascertain the exact location of individual devices. It is understood there are some customers whose BFD is inside the premises and that these will require appointment coordination.
- e. Water Conservation. (Tabled.)
- f. Utility Planning Solicitation. (Tabled.)

## **7. New Business.**

- a. SCADA Monitoring. Based on prior problems with the system, Chair Houle remains concerned about the accuracy of the SCADA system, particularly at the River Rd. pump station, whose numbers provide the basis for Portsmouth billing. Mr. Tabbutt has been asked to communicate with Mr. Rick Bogle of NEI to conduct a monthly “cross check” between the River Rd. flow meter and the SCADA reading which can be read remotely over the Internet by Mr. Bogle. In the past, this cross check was done with Mr. Tabbutt at the pump station and Mr. Jankowski (no longer in the employ of the Town) at the DPW building. With Mr. Jankowski gone, remote reading via the Internet is our only option.
- b. FY22 Budget Build. Ms. McAllister provided members spreadsheets to “fill in.” One major shift will occur with regard to personnel costs: instead of a 5% Water, 15% Sewer allocation of these costs, Ms. McAllister has suggested a 10%/10% equal sharing of the burden between the two utilities. No one knows the basis of the longstanding 5%/15% split. DPW’s work across the two utilities is nominally the same and the shift in cost can be reasonably absorbed by the water utility. This provides a small way to contain increases in the sewer rate which is more than double the water rate.

**8. Any Other Business before the Commission** None.

**9. Adjourn**

Mr. White moved, Mr. Ireland seconded, and members voted unanimously to adjourn. The January 21, 2021 meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission adjourned at 6:08 p.m.