

FINAL APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE WATER & SEWER COMMISSION MEETING
THURSDAY, MAY 20, 2021
2:00 P.M.

Members Present: Normand Houle, Chairman, Richard White, John Ireland, Carl Roediger, Alternate

Members Absent: Walter Liff, Dave McGuckin, Select Board, Steve Tabbut, Department of Public Works

Also Present: Christiane McAllister, Accountant, Anne Miller, Secretary, Fred Pulitzer, 68 Wentworth Road

Chair Normand Houle opened the meeting at 2:00 p.m., noted the quorum present, and elevated Mr. Carl Roediger to voting member.

1. Public Questions

Mr. Fred Pulitzer appeared with questions concerning the backflow testing program letter he received. Chair Houle confirmed that testing is a New Hampshire requirement because after the removal of the check valves between the New Castle and Portsmouth systems, the Town's water system now meets the threshold of serving "1,000 or more" in that it is effectively an "extension" of the Portsmouth water utility. Mr. Pulitzer's backflow preventer is attached to a fire suppression system. It is possible that its backflow preventer will have to be tested twice/year. It is not yet clear how the second test will be scheduled. It is possible that the town's provider, New England Backflow, will establish direct contact with homeowners to schedule the tests.

Customers are not required to utilize New England Backflow to make repairs, but will need to have them return to re-test after the repair work is completed by an alternate qualified plumber.

Separately, Mr. Pulitzer asked about access to minutes to 1995 and 1996 Commission meetings to research an issue. The Chair referred him to Jennifer Smith, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board, in Town Hall.

2. Approve Minutes of the April 15, 2021 Meeting

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

3. Financials

A. Review, approve, and sign checks

A Northeast Integration (NEI) invoice of \$835 does not reflect the number of hours spent on the \$700 item concerning an internet problem. Mr. Houle will contact NEI and will hold the NEI invoice until the detail is added and confirmed by the superintendent of public works.

Chair Houle read the checks as presented. Mr. Richard White moved to approve the checks, with the exception of the NEI invoice, as read. Mr. John Ireland seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Notably:

Mr. White asked how a towel was able to clog one of the pumps of the Steamboat sewer pump station as all sewerage first passes through a “basket,” which should be cleaned regularly. If the towel was a disposable wipe, then it may have been able to get through. Mr. White will revisit the question when Mr. Steve Tabbutt is present at the next meeting.

There is no phone bill this month due to an erroneous consolidation with the town’s bill by the provider, Consolidated Communications.

B. Accountant’s report

1. Commitment for the period January 1-March 31, 2021

Mr. White moved to approve the commitment for Authorities 2 and 3 and Wentworth by the Sea Hotel and Marina as read. Mr. Roediger seconded the motion. Motion carried, unanimously.

2. Balances as of April 30, 2021

Water:

Cash:	\$248,560.98
Trust Fund (Select Board):	\$147,340.57
Trust Fund (Water & Sewer Commission):	\$27,777.17

Sewer:

Cash:	\$249,267.35
Trust Fund (Select Board):	\$0
Trust Fund (Water & Sewer Commission):	\$38,765.23

4. Selectman’s Report

Selectman McGuckin was not present. Per Ms. McAllister, after four postings, the town does not have any active viable candidates for Mr. Tabbutt’s replacement. The Commission discussed whether the staffing plan and compensation make sense for the town’s needs.

5. Continuing Business

A. New England Backflow

From Chair Houle’s conversation with New England Backflow:

- About half of the customers identified for device testing have called to be scheduled.
- The second round, for those high hazard backflow preventers which must be tested twice per year, will take place approximately six months later, i.e. in December.
- New England Backflow will advise Ms. McAllister of any customers that don’t respond to the letter for her to contact. Ms. McAllister is researching a local contact for the Coast Guard station’s testing.

The Commission will need to determine how they intend to inform those customers designated for twice annual testing.

B. Spring hydrant maintenance

DPW Supervisor, Mr. Steve Tabbutt was not present to report.

Mr. Carl Roediger noted that the hydrants need to be painted appropriately. Ideally the tops should be painted with a reflective white paint; the barrels, red; and the caps should be color-coded indicative of their flow, as dictated by the results of flow testing conducted in November 2020.

Chair Houle noted that hydrant painting— including the cap color based on the flow tests conducted in November 2020, and the barrels painted red to indicate they are New Castle hydrants— remains an outstanding DPW item.

Testing on those additional hydrants requiring flow tests was to be completed in Spring 2021. Status deferred until the next meeting with Mr. Tabbutt present.

C. Access to ARVs

DPW Supervisor, Mr. Steve Tabbutt was not present to report.

6. New Business

A. Transfer funds to trust accounts

The Commission had budgeted for a \$20,000 transfer to the Water Trust Fund and \$15,000 to the Sewer Trust Fund. Based on Ms. McAllister's year-to-date projections she recommends increasing the Water transfer to \$30,000 and the Sewer transfer to \$20,000. The Commission reviewed the Accountant's assumptions.

Mr. John Ireland moved to transfer \$10,000 in addition to the appropriated \$20,000 to the Water Reserve. Mr. White seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. John Ireland moved to transfer \$5,000 in addition to the appropriated \$15,000 to the Sewer Reserve. Mr. White seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously approved.

Commissioners discussed the challenge of adding to the Sewer Reserves noting that Portsmouth is charging the Town its city residential rate rather than some lesser "wholesale" rate even though the town's sewerage is not using Portsmouth's sewer pipes. (New Castle is the "owner" of its sewer line all the way to the wastewater treatment plant (WWTF) on Peirce Island.) While it is expected that the Town's sewer rates should cover its fair share of the operating cost of the WWTF as well as a capital charge for the upgraded treatment plant, the commission believes that it should not be paying for the system's collection system. The rate savings, expected to be ~\$5 per unit, could be steered to Sewer Capital Reserves for anticipated upcoming needs.

Mr. Houle asked Ms. McAllister to help put together an analysis of the sewer rate costs to determine a fair wholesale rate so that the Commission can write a letter to the City to make its case.

B. NEI annual SCADA support contract

The Commission anticipates a June invoice for the annual SCADA support contract. The Commission will discuss once cost and terms are received.

C. Ordinance Update

Chair Houle noted the need to revise the ordinance and agreed to continue to be point person for updates. Currently, the backflow preventer information needs to be added.

D. Water & Sewer CIP

Mr. White asked the Commission to begin the capital planning process, even if it is just a list of needs. Chair Houle added that asset management is another aspect of capital planning. Completion of an asset management plan is a condition of the Drinking Water SRF (DWSRF) that funded the town's water main project and final payment would not be made by the state until the condition is fulfilled.

Chair Houle researched the state's Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) as a tool to finance capital sewer needs. The 2016 sewer report estimated costs for electrical work—including emergency generators (minus SCADA systems which are already installed)—at \$155,390, adding 30% for inflation is \$202,000, and adding 10-20% for engineering support, the total is in the range \$222,000 to \$262,000.

Some criteria:

- Pre-applications are due June 1, evaluations are thereafter
- Not all winners pursue application, therefore even low scores could possibly be funded
- This project would qualify as "replacement or upgrade of aging infrastructure" (10 points)
- Need Town Meeting approval (which would be May 2022)
- Application submission due by June 30 (2022)
- Funding available in the next FY (FY2023)
- Prior awards in the DWSRF (i.e. the water main project) do not negatively affect awards in the CWSRF
- There may be additional funds from the American Rescue Plan which would include grants.

Mr. White believes there is an opportunity to access additional points due to the seawater infiltration of the River Road conduit. The 2016 report would be the starting point for a consulting engineer.

Hearing no dissent from the Commission, Chair Houle will work on the pre-app.

7. Any Other Business for the Commission

A. Appointments expiring

In response to a request for information from Ms. Jennifer Smith, administrative assistant to the select board, Chair Houle reviewed member status and intentions.

<u>Member</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Current Expiration</u>	<u>New Commitment</u>
Carl Roediger	Alternate	May, 2021	re-appoint for 3 years
Walter Liff	Member	May, 2021	re-appoint for 3 years
Normand Houle	Member	May, 2021	re-appoint for 3 years

Re-appointment letters will be needed for Chair Houle, Mr. Liff, and Mr. Roediger— who will also be changed to Member. Mr. Ireland will submit a letter of resignation as vice chair and request reinstatement as an Alternate.

B. Building Permit Coordination

Water and sewer applications will remain a separate process from plumbing permits. This is consistent with norms.

8. Adjourn

Mr. White moved and Mr. Ireland seconded, to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 4:23 p.m.