

**FINAL APPROVED**  
**MINUTES OF THE WATER & SEWER COMMISSION MEETING**  
**THURSDAY, August 19, 2021**  
**MACOMBER ROOM, 2:00 P.M.**

**Members Present:** Normand Houle, Chairman, Walter Liff, Dave McGuckin, Select Board, Steve Tabbutt, Department of Public Works, Chris Robillard, prospective DPW superintendent, John Ireland, alternate, Carl Roediger, Richard White.

**Members Absent:** None

**Also Present:** Christiane McAllister, Accountant

Chair Normand Houle opened the meeting at 1:57 p.m.

**1. Public Questions**

None

**2. Individual Applications/Petitions**

None.

**3. Approve Minutes of the July 15, 2021 Meeting**

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

**4. Financials**

A. Review, approve, and sign checks

Chair Houle read sewer commitments for authorities 2, 3 and WBTS. Mr. White moved to approve, Mr. Ireland seconded, voted unanimously. Chair Houle read the checks as presented. Mr. White moved to approve the checks as read. Mr. Liff seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

There was concern regarding the upcoming sewer bill from the city of Portsmouth for July. While the invoice will not be received until next month, it is forecast to be in excess of \$60K, some \$20K higher than usual, a 50% increase. Mr. Tabbutt believes this is consistent with past seasonal data. However, the month of July was exceptionally rainy and so there is concern that we may have a significant infiltration problem. DPW will review past SCADA data to see if we have commensurate increases at the Quarterdeck Lane and Steamboat Lane pump stations. No flow reports are generated at these two pump stations (as is the case at River Rd.), so it is not clear if any insight will be gained. And since we receive only quarterly water consumption reports from Portsmouth for the south side, we would be unable to isolate July's consumption. We may have to ask Portsmouth DPW (Mr. Brian Goetz) if they can somehow provide a monthly report for July for south side customers so that we can get insight into whether there

truly was greater water consumption by those customers, especially the WBTS hotel. Mr. Robillard will also speak with Northeast Integration about creating monthly reports for the Quarterdeck and Steamboat SCADA systems; currently, there is only a River Rd. report.

#### B. Accountant's report

##### 1. Balances as of July 31, 2021

###### Water:

Cash:	\$214,372.53
Trust Fund (Select Board):	Data unavailable at time of meeting
Trust Fund (Water & Sewer Commission):	Data unavailable at time of meeting

###### Sewer:

Cash:	\$166,057.11
Trust Fund (Select Board):	\$0
Trust Fund (Water & Sewer Commission):	Data unavailable at time of meeting

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

Nothing to report.

#### **6. Continuing Business**

##### A. Status of New England Backflow (NEB) Follow-up to June Survey/Tests

Chair Houle reported that he and Mr. White met with NEB president and staff on 6 August to review the results of the June survey/tests. Several questionable reports were reviewed and updated/clarified. NEB staff indicated it normally takes three test iterations to achieve a good baseline. Chair Houle indicated his goal is to achieve an accurate baseline in a single iteration so as to minimize test issues in the future. Further, he indicated his intention to transfer the responsibility for the cross-connection program to the department of public work once a stable baseline is achieved, date to be determined. As NEB completes their outreach to customers who need to correct deficiencies or who have decided to abandon irrigation systems (and thus must sever/cap their supply lines), they will provide us with updates.

##### B. Access to ARVs

Mr. White reported the results of his research on pricing of manhole covers for the air release valve manholes at Walton Rd./Mainmast Cir. and on Portsmouth Ave. These "Type A" manholes are composed of an outer cover, an inner frame and an inner cover which makes a watertight seal to prevent water infiltration. They are manufactured by NEENAH Foundry Co. of Wisconsin. Cost for one unit is \$2,368.00.

Based on his research of local sewer system drawings, Mr. White learned that the specifications also called for "Type B" manhole covers at three point on the River Rd. force main: on the causeway and at two low points either end of the force main as it traverses from Shapleigh Is. to Peirce Is. These Type B covers allow for "clean out" should the force main become plugged. In

the likely presumption that these have an inner sealed cover likely seized shut, discussion ensued on whether we should purchase additional Type A's.

Given the concern of limited funds available in the commission's sewer trust fund, Mr. Roediger moved, Mr. Liff seconded and the commission voted unanimously to purchase three Type A manhole covers, two for the ARV access manholes and one "hot spare" to have in the event of a need for emergency access. Mr. Robillard will proceed with the purchase at an estimated cost of \$7,104 plus shipping and handling, funded from the sewer trust fund.

The next step will be to solicit bids from contractors to perform the replacement of the two ARV manholes.

#### C. SCADA Training

See the 15 July minutes. In short, training will be requested if/when Mr. Robillard feels the need. Any decision to provide commissioner (overview) training has been deferred.

#### D. Analysis of Portsmouth Sewer Charge

Delayed. With July billing software problems dominating her work, Ms. McAllister was unable to devote time to this initiative. Looking ahead, she is hopeful she'll be able to devote some time to this in early October.

### **7. New Business**

#### A. Sawtelle Bridge Water Line Wrapping

The commission is concerned that, now one year after majority completion of the water line project, those areas of the water line at the Sawtelle Bridge, which became exposed to the elements, have yet to be remedied. While Chair Houle believes this remediation is a legitimate water project cost, it is unclear that it will be picked up as a "punch list" action item prior to final closure of the water project. An option being considered is to proceed with the work using water trust funds.

Selectman McGuckin asked Chair Houle for a written summary of the issues surrounding this initiative which he could present to Selectman Stewart. Any decision to proceed is deferred for the time being.

#### B. Review of Penalty for Non-payment of Bills

Ms. McAllister presented two accounts (anonymously) for which late fees had been assessed and sought guidance as to whether penalties should be waived. After discussion, Chair Houle moved to assess the fees, Mr. White seconded and the commission voted unanimously to assess.

An extensive discussion ensued regarding a limitation of the Accufund software which does not have the capability of generating updated invoices, which would clearly identify late fees. The software is "statement based," which means late fees and subsequent late fees can only be

reflected in the quarterly statement. Thus timely notification of penalty is impossible without time consuming manual processing separate from Accufund.

Further discussion ensued regarding the fairness of the \$20.00 late fee regardless whether it was against a low usage customer or a high usage customer. Thought is being given to assessing late fees on a percentage basis, such as XX%APR, rather than a flat rate fee. This is being tabled for the time being.

Mr. Roediger, who is a southside resident served by the city of Portsmouth water system, as well as Ms. McAllister, will explore how Portsmouth addresses this issue for a possible solution.

#### C. Ordinance Update

With the recent establishment of a rigorous cross-connection (backflow prevention) program, the Water and Sewer Ordinance needs a substantial update. At the 6 August meeting with New England Backflow (see para. 6.A), they offered to provide us with a "Model Cross-Connection Control Plan" created by NHDES.

Mr. Roediger, who is leading the ordinance update, has proposed that we tweak the NHDES model to suit our needs and that it become a stand alone appendix to the ordinance which could be handed out by DPW to customers and their plumbers. Language in the main body of the ordinance would refer to the appropriate appendix.

After cross-connection has been addressed, the plan is to conduct an end-to-end update of the ordinance which was issued in May 2018.

#### **8. Any Other Business to Come Before the Board**

None

#### **9. Adjourn**

Mr. Ireland motioned, Mr. White seconded; motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.