

**FINAL APPROVED**  
**MINUTES OF THE WATER & SEWER COMMISSION MEETING**  
**Thursday, November 18, 2021**  
**MACOMBER ROOM, 2:00 P.M.**

**Members Present:** Normand Houle, Chairman, Walter Liff, John Ireland, Chris Robillard, Department of Public Works Supv., Carl Roediger.

**Members Absent:** Richard White, Dave McGuckin (SB liaison)

**Also Present:** Bette Jane Riordan, Recording Secretary, Scott Stringham

Chair Normand Houle opened the meeting at 2:00 p.m, indicating a quorum was present.

**1. Public Questions**

None

**2. Individual Applications/Petitions**

None.

**3. Approve Minutes of the October 16, 2021 Meeting**

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

Chair Houle welcomed resident Scott Stringham who expressed interest in joining the Commission.

Prior to reviewing the financials, Chair Houle noted that Ms. Lori Ruest, Town Accountant, is presently developing protocols and SOP's ( Standard Operating Procedures) for her role in supporting the Commission. She will hopefully be able to join a monthly meeting soon.

**4. Financials**

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

Chair Houle read the checks as presented. For the benefit of Mr. Stringham, Chair Houle explained that sewer bills were invoiced on a monthly basis, and water, quarterly.

Regarding a Northeast Integration (NEI) invoice, Mr. Robillard reported on the recent problems with the Quarterdeck Lane pumping station. The problem involved a low level switch which was failing, which NEI adjusted, and determined a new switch was needed, and they ordered one.

Mr. Roediger made a motion to approve the checks as a read; seconded by Mr. Ireland. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Houle next reported on the commitments for sewer service for Authorities 2 and 3. \$91,825.50. Mr. Liff moved to approve the commitments as presented; seconded by Mr. Roediger. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **b. Accountant's report**

1. Balances as of October 31, 2021

Water:

Checking Account:	\$248,626.43
Trust Fund(Select Board)	\$147,347.19
Trust Fund (WSC)	Not available

Sewer:

Checking Account	\$248,048.99
Trust Fund (WSC)	Not available

#### **5. Selectman's Report: Selectman McGuckin not present.**

Although Selectman McGuckin was not present, Chair Houle proceeded to summarize two issues of interest:

- The 30-year 1978 sewer agreement with the City of Portsmouth expired in 2008 and a new one was apparently never consummated. Both Chair Houle and Selectman McGuckin have communicated with Mr. Brian Goetz, Deputy Director of Public Works in Portsmouth regarding the subject. In the context of renegotiating the agreement, there is a potential for reducing the sewer rate charge to the Town based on rationale developed by Chair Houle and former accountant, Ms. C. McAllister.
- At its 1 November meeting, the select board approved \$56,700 from the select board controlled water trust fund for the Advanced Meter Infrastructure Mr. Robillard had briefed the commission in September. Chair Houle noted that there is a \$2,800 annual software maintenance fee, an amount not budgeted for the current fiscal year. Mr. Robillard will see if the maintenance fee for the current fiscal year is incorporated in the quoted price. If not, Chair Houle has suggested that it be so covered. Going forward, this needs to be incorporated into the water utility budget.

Mr. Robillard stated that the week of December 6<sup>th</sup> has been set for the installation of the infrastructure for the system, and that he expects to start connecting houses by the end

of that week. Mr. Roediger asked Mr. Robillard if the “full system” was being installed, which was confirmed.

## **6. New Business**

### **a. Pre-App Update:**

Prompted by NHDES direction to update costs and schedules, Chair Houle updated the commission on the status of the Pre-Application to the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) for electrical upgrades at the three pump stations. The original amount was \$272,100.00. The amount has increased to \$335,500.00 based on increased cost estimates and skyrocketing inflation. He pointed out that, further down the road, we will have to assess how repayment of the loan can be accommodated in the budget.

### **b. Establishment of Contingency Funds.**

Chair Houle reported that he had received permission from Selectman McGuckin to confer with NHMA (New Hampshire Municipal Association) legal staff regarding possible establishment of reserve “contingency” funds within both utility funds to cover unexpected operations and maintenance expenses. This was brought on by the unexpected 50% increase in the July sewer bill reported in minutes of earlier commission meetings. Discussion ensued on what the upper limits of these funds should be. In the end, the commission settled on \$40,000 for sewer and \$20,000 for water. Chair Houle will communicate with NHMA legal to see if there is a legal basis for establishing such funds.

### **c. Water Meter Age and Replacement.**

Mr. Robillard handed out a graph reflecting the approximate age of installed water meters based on their date of manufacture. (See Attachment A). Of some nearly 400 meters, approximately 60 date back to 1998 or older. A discussion ensued with Mr. Robillard noting that the City of Portsmouth has a practice of replacing meters every 10 years. The vast majority of ours are much older. Chair Houle noted that funds to replace have not been in the budget and wondered if the cost might be covered using the Select Board Trust Fund.

Mr. Robillard will come up with a replacement and installation schedule as well as a funding proposal to be discussed with Selectman McGuckin. Eventually he is looking to the commission for a meter replacement policy to be addressed in the Water and Sewer Ordinance.

## **7. Continuing Business.**

### **a. Status of SCADA cabinet problem (water) at Quarterdeck Lane pump station.**

Mr. Robillard reported that NEI recommends installing a “breather.” Various remedies were discussed and rejected as inappropriate. For the time being, the commission settled on pursuing the breather approach to see if this will resolve the problem.

**b. Code Enforcement Officer Role.**

To reiterate from last month's meeting: At the heart of this issue is the extent to which the plumbing inspector should play a role in matters which heretofore had been understood to be under the exclusive purview of the commission and/or the superintendent of public works. Chair Houle asked Mr. Robillard to check with Portsmouth to see how they handled this. Mr. Roediger was going to reach out to his contacts in Portsmouth as well for insight. The issue remains unresolved and will be discussed at a future commission meeting.

**c. Ordinance Update.**

Chair Houle reviewed his questions concerning the draft Version 2.0 of the Cross Connection Appendix to the Water and Sewer Ordinance and noted that he had reached out to New England Backflow to get their comments as well. The review will continue at a future commission meeting.

**8. Any Other Business for the Board: None.**

**9. Adjourn:**

Mr. Ireland made a Motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Roediger. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:15 PM.

Attachment A: Meter Age Graph

Respectfully submitted,  
BJ Riordan  
Recording Secretary.