

FINAL APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE WATER & SEWER COMMISSION MEETING
Thursday, December 16, 2021
MACOMBER ROOM, 2:00 P.M.

Members Present: Normand Houle, Chairman, Walter Liff, John Ireland, Chris Robillard, (Superintendent of Public Works)., Carl Roediger, Scott Stringham, Richard White, Dave McGuckin (SB Liaison)

Members Absent: John Ireland

Also Present: Bette Jane Riordan, Recording Secretary

Chair Normand Houle opened the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

1. Public Questions

None

2. Individual Applications/Petitions

None.

3. Approve Minutes of the November 18, 2021 Meeting

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

4. Financials

a. Review, approve, and sign checks

Chair Houle read the checks as presented. Mr. White made a motion to approve the checks as a read; seconded by Mr. McGuckin. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Accountant's report

1. Balances as of October 31, 2021

Water:

Checking Account:	\$367,870.16
Trust Fund(Select Board)	\$147,349.23 (31 Oct)
Trust Fund (WSC)	\$57,780.23 (31 Oct)

Sewer:

Checking Account	\$189,277.68
Trust Fund (WSC)	\$58,768.48 (31 Oct)

Chair Houle brought up the issue of the FY23 budget build and handed out worksheets for the members to review before the January meeting when the budget build process will begin in earnest. The Town accountant, Ms. Lori Ruest, will have calculated half-year expenditure numbers which Chair Houle intends to distribute to the commissioners before the next meeting. Chair Houle also noted the likely need for new line items, notably, "Sewer Used but not Billed," and water "AMI Software Maintenance."

5. Selectman's Report

Selectman McGuckin discussed the status of his communications with Mr. Brian Goetz, Dep. Dir. Portsmouth DPW, regarding septage and sewer agreements and the Town's justification for a lower sewer rate. Mr. Goetz has referred the rate matter to his rate consultant and deferred any meeting until after the holidays. Mr. McGuckin will follow up with Mr. Goetz to request/confirm that the consultant will review the Town's argument for a reduced sewer rate.

6. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Robillard reported that the shipment of the IT infrastructure equipment for the Zenner Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI) was delayed due to shipping issues, but should arrive shortly.

The generator inspections have been done resulting in an additional expense of ~\$1,000 for the replacement of a voltage regulator at River Rd.

In the course of the inspections, radiator leaks were observed at Quarterdeck Ln. and River Rd. Apparently these have been long standing, but Chair Houle noted that in the 13 years he has been on the commission, this is the first he had heard of this. Mr. White recommended that Mr. Robillard get with the contractor to assess "repair vs. replacement" of the radiators. Mr. Robillard will confer with the contractor with regard to "repair vs. replacement" with a focus/priority on the River Rd. pump station given its greater importance. Chair Houle noted that even under the best of circumstances, generator replacement under the Electrical Systems Upgrade project would not occur until some time in 2024, primarily due to an 11-month lead time for generator deliveries. Availability and reliability of the back up generators is essential. This was followed by a discussion concerning periodic exercising of all the generators. Mr. White expressed a preference for weekly tests.

Mr. Robillard gave a brief update on two hydrants which had problems during the fall flush. The issues with the one by the Riverside Cemetery have been resolved; the one on Laurel Ln. is awaiting parts.

Regarding the AMI software license charge for FY22, Mr. McGuckin requested that the cost issue of the license be cleared up. Two issues need to be resolved for this \$2,800 annual charge: (1) Will there be a charge for FY22, or has that charge been incorporated into the overall quote; and (2) the Town wishes that going forward, that the charge be invoiced on a fiscal year, not a calendar year, basis.

7. New Business

a. Asset Management Plan Grant Application

Chair Houle indicated, under the auspices of the commission, the Town was applying for this state grant. He, Mr. White and Mr. Robillard met with Underwood Engineering representative Andy Sharpe and Margaret Blank (asset management specialist) on 10 December to initiate discussion regarding the application which is due 7 January 2022. Ms. Blank will be authoring the application for commission review/approval.

8. Continuing Business.

a. Status of SCADA cabinet water problem at Quarterdeck Ln. station.

Mr. Robillard reported that the recommended “breather” to improve air circulation is on order.

b. Water Meter Replacement

Chair Houle noted that Mr. Robillard was asked to submit a recommendation regarding the cost and replacement schedule as this needs to be properly addressed in the upcoming budget build. There was discussion regarding the possible need for separate budget line items on both the expense and income side of the budget. Mr. Robillard will meet with the Town accountant to discuss this and report back to the commission.

Mr. McGuckin suggested a figure of 40 meters to start the replacement project, Mr. White expressed a desire to have extra meters in stock should we need meters on moment’s notice. This matter will be revisited at the next meeting.

c. Establishment of Contingency Funds

Chair Houle explained how the unexpected \$20K increase above average in the July sewer bill precipitated this initiative. After extensive email exchanges with legal counsel of the NH Municipal Association, the conclusion is that the commission may not unilaterally establish contingency funds to cover for unexpected shortfalls in the operational budget. However, it would appear that such contingency funds can be established via warrant put before Town Meeting.

An alternative to a contingency fund for sewer might be the establishment of a budget line "Sewer Used but not Billed." Chair Houle opened the floor for discussion. Mr. Roediger expressed his preference for going via the Town Meeting route, and stressed the need for transparency.

Mr. McGuckin suggested bringing the matter up in discussions regarding the sewer rate with Mr. Goetz. He also cautioned the commission regarding establishment of a fund which would necessarily require some increase in the sewer rate. There is sensitivity among some property owners regarding substantial increases in their property taxes brought on by the recent reassessment. Timing may not be optimum.

d. Ordinance Update - Cross-Connection Appendix

This appendix deals with a major revision of the Water and Sewer Ordinance regarding backflow prevention requirements. Mr. Roediger and Chair Houle have been making changes which were delivered as "Version 4.0" to all members before the meeting via email. Chair Houle also solicited comments from Mr. Paul Whittemore, president of New England Backflow, the Town's contracted company for device testing. Following discussion, Mr. Roediger was tasked to make suggested revisions which will result in a "Version 5.0." Chair Houle assesses the revised appendix at 98% complete.

e. Ordinance Update - Code Enforcement Officer Role

This matter was postponed to a future meeting.

9. Any Other Business for the Board

Mr. White expressed concern about "flows," for example, sewer out vs. water in, and that we should strive to get a better understanding of these components of our systems.

10. Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Liff made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Roediger. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,
BJ Riordan
Recording Secretary.