

FINAL APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE WATER & SEWER COMMISSION MEETING
Thursday, April 14, 2022
Town Hall, 2:00 P.M.

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

Members Absent: Carl Roediger

Also Present: Lori Ruest, Town Accountant, Bette Jane Riordan, Recording Secretary

Chair Normand Houle opened the meeting at 2:00 p.m. Chairman's note: several interrelated agenda items were discussed together, not necessarily in the order of the agenda. They may be reported here in original agenda order.

1. Public Questions

None

2. Individual Applications/Petitions

None

3. Approve Minutes of the 17 March 2022 Meeting

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

4. Financials

a. Review, approve, and sign checks

Chair Houle read the commitments for Auth 1 (northside) \$63,255.12 and Auth 4 (USCG) @2,217.60. Mr. Liff moved and Mr. Ireland seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Houle then read the checks as presented. He questioned an invoice from Northeast Integration for one rate entry, \$150/hour vs. the correct, negotiated \$135/hour. During the meeting, Mr. Robillard communicated with NEI indicating they would resubmit the invoice. With the exception of the NEI invoice, 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 March 31, 2022

Water:

Checking Account:	\$258,773.57
Trust Fund(Select Board)	\$147,350.69 (Feb 2022)
Trust Fund (WSC)	\$57,780.85 (Feb 2022)

Sewer:

Checking Account	\$298,674.45
Trust Fund (WSC)	\$51,223.67 (Feb 2022)

Chair Houle noted that the we had exceeded the budget for NEI and the salary of the Superintendent. The superintendent budget line had not taken into consideration the fact that we would be paying two salaries during the turnover last summer of the incumbent; and the budget line for NEI SCADA support was increased for FY23 from \$8,000 to \$12,000.

5. Selectman's Report

Mr. McGuckin has continued to try to establish substantive communication with the City of Portsmouth regarding an adjustment of our sewer rate. One alternative being considered to encourage the City, was to pay the current sewer bill at the (lower) rate Chair Houle had calculated as fair, rather than at the rate listed on the bill. Yesterday, the City did forward their consultant's evaluation of the arguments put forward by Chair Houle last October. Initial conclusion: the evaluation contains factual errors. Nevertheless, in light of the fact that we were now seeing at least some movement on the part of the City, the commission voted 3-2 to pay the higher amount. At Mr. McGuckin's request, Chair Houle will draft a response to the City's memorandum for Mr. McGuckin.

6. Superintendent's Report

a. Following up on Mr. Robillard's assessment of two competing generator service contracts, Milton Cat and Power Up, the commission agreed to go forward with the lower priced company, Power Up.

b. The department has installed 104 of the Zenner radio modules so far. Mr. Robillard highlighted a problem at 108 Main St.: a virtually inaccessible crawl space to perform the Zenner installation and possibly replace meter(s). An additional challenge: a racoon has made the crawl space its home. What could be done? Chair Houle read from the ordinance, "Owners shall provide a clean, dry, warm and accessible place for location of the meter, as near as possible at the point of entrance of the service pipe to the

building.” Mr. Robillard will discuss with the property owner possible alternatives. One being suggested is to create an overhead access hatch through the floor. As this is a situation of long standing, it is not clear if the property owner can be forced to make any changes. Issue tabled for resolution. Mr. Robillard indicated this likely would be the last Zenner installation he would perform.

c. The radiator core of the Quarterdeck Lane emergency diesel generator has been successfully replaced. Now on to the one at the River Rd. station.

d. A resident adjacent to the River Rd. pump station asked if some trees surrounding the station couldn't be cut down because they were blocking their view. Answer from the commission: no.

7. New Business

a. Changes to Accufund Software: Billing Date, Reminders, Meter Fees

Ms. Ruest reports that, with minor changes to our billing process, the software is capable of generating late payment reminders. She would like to have two quarters to see if the new processes can be successfully implemented.

Chair Houle asked if it would be possible to incorporate an additional charge line for non-standard meters. (A “standard” meter is defined as a $\frac{5}{8}$ by $\frac{3}{4}$.) And Mr. White suggested a fee for fire service, as is done in Portsmouth, in lieu of non-standard meter fee in those instances where a property has a fire suppression system.

b. Ordinance Changes and Public Hearing: Second meter fee charge

Chair Houle reported that at its 4 April meeting, at a public hearing, the select board did approve increasing the second-meter fee from \$40 to \$300. Chair Houle will prepare an amendment to the ordinance reflecting this change.

c. Water Meter Sizes: Tracking Sizes and Fees

See item 7.a. above.

8. Continuing Business

a. Diesel Generator Radiator Recore: Quarterdeck Ln. and River Rd.

See item 6.c.

b. W&S Ordinance: Cross-Connection Update, New Residences

Issue being revisited: As discussed at a previous meeting, should new residences be required to install a dual-check valve on the outlet side of the main water meter? Mr. Robillard would like this proposed requirement to remain in effect. Chair Houle had Mr. Roediger check with the plumbing inspector to see if this is required of the plumbing code. Answer: no. Chair Houle's view is that it is an unnecessary redundant expense; further, it is a non-testable backflow device. The commission agreed to delete the requirement.

c. W&S Ordinance: Non-Payment Penalties

Chair Houle presented "Round Two" of his proposal on how to deal with non-payment, along with a timeline of when exactly penalties would be applied. There seems to be consensus on: (1) a new timeline; (2) retention of the \$20 amount; and (3) inclusion of a "weather exception" (1 November to 1 April) during which water service would not be turned off for non-payment. Chair Houle will incorporate all changes into a "Round Three" to be discussed at the next meeting. Ms. Ruest offered to produce a draft of what would be a new "past due reminder" letter.

9. Any Other Business for the Board.

Chair Houle reported that he had received short notice, a request to provide input for the May edition of Island Items by 20 April. He had provided a draft to members earlier in the day. Hearing no recommendation for changes and receiving Selectman McGuckin approval of the text, the input will be forwarded to the select board administrative assistant as drafted.

10. Adjourn.

There being no further business, Mr. White made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Liff. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:02 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,
BJ Riordan
Recording Secretary