

FINAL APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE WATER & SEWER COMMISSION MEETING
Thursday, January 19, 2023
TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM, 1:00 P.M.

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

Members Absent: John Ireland, Carl Roediger

Also Present: Bette Jane Riordan, Recording Secretary

Chair Normand Houle opened the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

1. Public Questions

None

2. Individual Applications/Petitions

None.

3. Approve Minutes of the 15 December 2022 Meeting

Mr. White moved, and Mr. Stringham 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. Liff made a motion to approve the checks as a read; seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried unanimously. Chair Houle reviewed the most recent expense reports for water and sewer (31 Dec) and asked Mr. Robillard to resolve the line item regarding water testing. A water purchase was probably erroneously ascribed to this expense line.

b. Accountant's report

1. Balances as of December 31, 2022

Water:

Checking Account:	\$255,829.47
Trust Fund(Select Board)	\$58,131.04
Trust Fund (WSC)	\$77,823.74

Sewer:

Checking Account

\$349,016.41

Trust Fund (WSC)

\$90,872.50

2. Commitments

Chair Houle read the commitments as follows:

- a. Authority 1 (Northside): \$83,100.08
- b. Authority 4 (USCG): \$1,760.40

Mr. White moved to approve the commitments as read; Mr. Stringham seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Selectman's Report

Mr. McGuckin reported there are just a few issues remaining with the City of Portsmouth negotiations regarding the sewer agreement. Currently, Town counsel is reviewing an insurance matter. He is waiting for a response from counsel. Relatedly, Chair Houle stated he had sent an email to Brian Goetz asking him to provide by January 26, the rate increase for wholesale water, which is needed to set our FY24 rate.

6. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Robillard reported no major issues at this time; no new information regarding discharge of chlorinated water into the Peirce Island Waste Water Treatment plant, and that he has not spoken with Portsmouth officials on this subject. In response to a question from Chair Houle, there have been no grease problems at the Quarterdeck Lane pump station.

7. New Business

a. December 23 Storm Inflow

Mr. Robillard provided Chair Houle pictures and charts depicting the effect of the December 23rd storm inflow and infiltration at numerous locations in town. His report addressed the number of gallons pumped at each station and noted we were well within the parameters of the proposed sewer agreement. Due to increased pump runtime, we should expect an increase in the December electric bill.

Chair Houle asked if the wet wells had been broached; answer: unknown. Chair Houle suggested we might have to raise the elevation of their covers to allow for some margin in the event of storms. There was extensive discussion about manholes in the vicinity of the pump stations. There was clear evidence that river/ocean water had entered several of them; they were literally under water. Mr Robillard noted their poor condition.

Mr. White presented his views of how the Town could help itself temporarily, near term: consider installing gaskets around the manhole covers to reduce seawater and road

detritus entry as an interim stopgap solution. This would demonstrate to Portsmouth and the EPA that we are trying to be proactive in remediating the problem. Concern was raised on how to repair/change out covers/manholes in Lavenger's Creek, adjacent to the Quarterdeck Lane pump station. Mr. White believes NHDES would have to be consulted. There was general agreement that we should inspect problem manholes and install gaskets. Chair Houle asked Mr. Robillard to look into the cost of gaskets and into raising the wet well cover level at River Road. Mr. Robillard will research what is on the market and report back.

Mr. Stringham brought up sump pump issues. Mr. McGuckin suggested surprise inspections as a possible solution. While this is allowed by our ordinance, it is problematic. Mr. Robillard checks for this violation as he installs AMI radio modules or replaces meters. Already two violations have been noted and one property owner notified to resolve the infraction or face a fine. We have not done surprise inspections in the past.

Chair Houle also noted that there is an element of the Electrical Systems Upgrade project relating to sea level rise, notably to consider raising the elevation of the emergency generators. If it appears there will be funds remaining unspent in the project, we would try to use them to address other sea level rise issues as those brought on by this storm.

Chair Houle also stated he would likely resubmit a CWSRF pre-application regarding I&I remediation (a project proposed in the FY22 round of CWSRF application competition failed to achieve funding) this spring. He also suggested purchasing more Type A manholes near term to build up a local stock. The perennial challenge is that sewer capital reserves are low (~\$90K) and we try to keep ~\$50K on hand for bona fide emergencies.

b.FY24 Budget Build

Chair Houle had recently reviewed the budget spreadsheets with the Town Administrator and Mr. Robillard. He reviewed the figures with the commission. Specific discussion ensued regarding the following:

- Mr. Robillard explained the water meter reading and billing procedure in order to support a software expenditure of an Accufund/Zenner interface. He highlighted simplification of data transfer, reduced errors and other efficiencies. The commission approved the expenditure.
- Mr. Robillard requested the annual purchase of "Go to My PC" software to eliminate false SCADA trouble calls which otherwise require him to travel to New Castle from home in the middle of the night. The commission approved his request.

In light of the December 23rd infiltration challenge, Chair Houle raised again the thought of instituting a “contingency fund” for each utility. The idea would be to set aside a specific amount of money to address unexpected emergencies. Establishment of such funds would require Town Meeting approval.

8. Continuing Business.

a. Asset Management Plan for Water -Status

Chair Houle discussed the Gantt chart received from Margaret Blank via Mr. Robillard. It needs a bit more detail.

b. Safety Building Water Meter Installations

Parts are on board. Need to schedule a plumber.

c. Water Meter Replacement Charge - Large Meters

As reported last month, the commission settled on charges for small meters ($\frac{5}{8}$ " - 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ "), but still needed to resolve what to do with regard to larger meters (greater than or equal to 2"). In October, the commission was persuaded by Mr. Robillard that the water utility should, and did, absorb the cost of testing (\$300) and replacing (~\$1,200) the UNH meter as a “cost of doing business.” The commission was not convinced that this should become policy going forward and scheduled a \$500 fee in the FY24 budget to test the 8" USCG meter, and a cost to replace it on the order of ~\$2,700. In the interest of treating all customers equally by assessing a 10-year meter replacement fee, the commission voted to charge large customers for the testing and replacement. After much discussion/debate, a vote was taken to charge UNH (3") and USCG (8"), the only two customers with large meters, \$400 per year for testing (\$100 per quarterly billing period) plus a meter replacement fee to recoup the cost to replace over ten years. The cost to replace the UNH meter (future cost estimated at ~\$2,360) would be \$59 per quarter for a final quarterly charge of \$159. For the USCG, the cost to replace its meter (future cost estimated at ~\$5,408) would be \$135.20 per quarter for a final quarterly charge of \$235.20. The vote was four in favor, one opposed.

[The recording secretary had to leave the meeting at 2:40p.m.]

d. Fire Service Fee

It is standard industry practice to charge for the availability of a separate fire service line. Note that the water utility does not meter these lines. The commission believes that the small amount of water that would be used for periodic testing does not merit a meter, and not metering this water provides an incentive for installing a fire suppression system which is in the interest of Town safety. Nevertheless, its availability has intrinsic value. Accordingly, the commission unanimously approved a quarterly \$15 fire service fee. This is approximately the amount the City of Portsmouth charges for a 2" fire service line.

e. Electrical System Upgrade Project - Status

Chair Houle reported that the \$38,000 Engineering Design Phase Contract with Underwood Engineers has been signed. The ~18 months since the Pre-Application was submitted in May 2021 has at long last come to an end. Work can now begin.

f. Zenner AMI Contract

Mr. Robillard reported that he had received the contract with a company representative signature, and would forward it to Chair Houle.

g. W&S Ordinance Update (Round 8)

The focus this month was on trench permits and new Water, Sewer and Fire Service and, separately, Second Water Meter Service application forms. Chair Houle will work with Mr. Roediger to make updates.

9. Any Other Business for the Board.

a. Chair Houle noted that he had sent out for comment the commission's input for the FY22 Town Report and that he had received responses from Mr. Robillard and Mr. McGuckin. Changes will be made to the draft and recirculated to the members for final comment/review.

b. Chair Houle reported that Andy Sharpe of Underwood Engineers requested a site walk of the three pump stations along with Mr. Lee Carroll, the electrical engineer who had conducted the electrical review portion of the 2015 Sewer Infrastructure study, to get a "lay of the land." There is an element of sea level rise with regard to the elevation of the emergency diesel generators. Mr. Robillard will accompany these two engineers and Chair Houle asked if he and/or Mr. White could "tag along."

10. Adjourn.

Mr. Liff made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Stringham. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:01p.m..

Respectfully submitted,
BJ Riordan
Recording Secretary