

**FINAL APPROVE**  
**MINUTES OF THE WATER & SEWER COMMISSION MEETING**  
**Thursday, February 16, 2023**  
**TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM, 1:00 P.M.**

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

**Members Absent:** John Ireland

**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 19 January 2023 Meeting**

Mr. Liff moved, and Mr. White 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. Liff. Motion carried unanimously. Mr. White asked for confirmation that the December sewer bill was at the \$15.78 rate.

**b. Commitments**

Authority 5 (WBTS): \$51,542.40

Authority 2: \$9,360.00

Authority 3: \$23,608.00

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

**c. Accountant's report**

1. Balances as of 31 Jan 23

Water:

Checking Account:	\$265,558.32
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Trust Fund(Select Board)	\$58,131.04 (Dec 31)
Trust Fund (WSC)	\$77,823.74 (Dec 31)
<u>Sewer:</u>	
Checking Account	\$355,181.48
Trust Fund (WSC)	\$90,872.50 (Dec 31)

#### **d. FY24 Budget Build**

Chair Houle began the discussion noting that developing the water budget this year was challenging given that certain new fees needed to be taken into consideration. Chief among these is the meter replacement fee which must be instituted for FY24. Currently, the Town bills on a strictly volumetric basis (how much water you consume) with no “fixed” component (e.g., salaries). He cautioned that although the current rate is \$8.58 and may go down to possibly \$8.38, that does not necessarily mean that customers will receive a reduced bill when factoring in the meter replacement fee.

In a discussion about the February 2, 2023 water line break which cost over \$4,600 to repair, this expense wiped out the FY23 budget line for repairs in one fell swoop; it is now negative. He asked the commission to consider how to address this problem. Should money be taken out of capital reserves to replenish this line? General consensus: no, otherwise, you don’t get an accurate picture of a year’s expenses. Should the commission increase the budget line amount proposed for FY24? Yes, with Mr. White suggesting the line be increased from \$4,000 to \$10,000 to which the commission agreed.

Should the commission increase the capital reserve line from the current \$17,500 to \$20,000-\$30,000. Mr. McGuckin stated he would prefer to leave it as is and suggested that a notice of impending fees be inserted into the April/May bills. Chair Houle will draft such a notice.

On to the sewer side of the budget. The current sewer rate is \$20.80. Chair Houle explained how increasing the capital reserve impacts the rate, referring the commission to the budget sheets which contained various permutations based on different capital reserve allocations. Then Mr. Robillard identified figures which he believed were in error. Chair Houle tabled the discussion in order to review the budget with the Town Administrator and Mr. Robillard. A special supplementary commission meeting will be held on 23 February to establish the budgets. Mr. White strongly urged the commission to put additional money aside in capital reserves as opposed to lowering customer bills. In particular, when considering our inflow/infiltration challenge, we needed to demonstrate to Portsmouth that we are being proactive by setting aside funds for remediation.

#### **5. Selectman’s Report**

Mr. McGuckin reported that he is awaiting a response from the Portsmouth deputy city attorney to New Castle’s recent comments on the sewer agreement negotiations. Mr.

Robillard reported that he would be meeting on Friday at Mr. Brian Goetz, Portsmouth Dep. Dir. of PW at Mr. Goetz's request. Mr. Robillard will report back the results of the conversation at the next meeting.

## **6. Superintendent's Report**

a. Mr. Robillard reported that he has 30 AMI installations remaining; over 350 have been completed.

b. An air release valve has been installed in the manhole at Mainmast Cir./Walton Rd. Relatedly, no decision to purchase additional Type A manholes has been made yet. Mr. White requested an estimate of current costs.

c. Mr. Robillard reported on the poor condition of the 4" water line on Mainmast Cir. which broke on 2 February. A "wrap" was used; this is a "band-aid" fix. The pipe is in poor condition. Approximately 400' of main would need to be replaced; cost unknown, but likely very expensive.

## **7. New Business**

### **a. Sewer Overflow, Piscataqua St., 20 Jan 23**

The issue was promptly dealt with. However, Mr. Robillard wants to return to the area in the spring. He believes there is more detritus in the sewer line(s) in that area.

### **b. Water Line Break, Mainmast Cir., 2 Feb 23**

See the superintendent's report above.

## **8. Continuing Business.**

### **a. 23 Storm Inflow - Manholes (Inspections, Gaskets)**

Mr. Robillard reported he is waiting on a quote for gaskets.

### **b. Asset Management Plan for Water - Status**

Mr. Robillard has received the tablets and software and he provided a brief demonstration of its functions to the commission. He is awaiting an invoice from Margaret Blank of Underwood Engineers for reimbursement of the costs. Further, he reported that Mr. Adorno (NHDES) has authorized dollars not spent on these equipments could be allocated to the purchase of our new pipe locator.

### **c. Safety Building Water Meter Installation-Status**

Mr. Robillard reported that plumbers need to be scheduled. Compared to other issues, this is low priority.

**d. Electrical System Upgrade Project-Status**

Chair Houle stated that the Environmental Review is proceeding on schedule but is temporarily on hold as Underwood Engineers awaits a response from the NH Natural Heritage Bureau.

**e. Asset Management Plan Application for Sewer- Status**

Chair Houle stated that the application deadline is March 1, 2023. The scope of services has been completed and the draft contract will soon be sent to NHDES for their pre-approval.

**f. W&S Ordinance Update (Round 9)**

Significant progress was made on establishing various fees germane to water and sewer service. Mr. Robillard urged more consistency and standardization with regard to application and connection fees. Chair Houle noted that all sewer applications will have to be forwarded to Portsmouth to comply with the wholesale sewer agreement currently under negotiation.

Discussion turned to our DPW winterizing the private hydrants of the WBTS Master Association after which Chair Houle asked Messrs. Roediger and White to develop a position paper for the Select Board explaining what service we have been providing and why there are significant liability concerns. According to Mr. Roediger, there should be a service contract in place to protect the Town. While Mr. Robillard has sent emails to Mr. Rumph of the Association setting down liability exclusions, Mr. Roediger pointed out the need for formalization regarding maintenance of these hydrants and associated liabilities.

The commission is near the end of this update. Mr. Roediger will send out what hopefully will be the last iteration of the new ordinance for end-to-end review by the commissioners before forwarding the document to the Select Board for its approval.

**9. Any Other Business for the Board.**

Mr. Robillard wanted the commission to be aware that the Coast Guard Station has been without water since the deep freeze of 3 February. Among other things, the backflow prevention device froze and cracked. He is working with New England Backflow, our backflow device contractor, to get them back online

**10. Adjourn.**

Mr. White made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Roediger. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,  
BJ Riordan  
Recording Secretary