

FINAL APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE WATER & SEWER COMMISSION MEETING
Thursday, May 18, 2023
TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM, 1:00 P.M.

Members Present: Normand Houle, Chairman, Chris Robillard, (Superintendent of Public Works), Carl Roediger, Richard White, Scott Stringham

Members Absent: Pamela Cullen (SB liaison)

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.

a. Mr. G. Rumph re: Winterizing WBTS MA Hydrants

Although scheduled, Mr. Rumph was unable to appear for personal reasons, so Chair Houle brought up his conversation with Mr. Rumph regarding winterization service heretofore provided by Town DPW. The commission had previously recommended to the Select Board that the Town discontinue any hydrant services to private hydrant owners due to liability concerns. Chair Houle asked the members if their position had changed. After discussion, the commission agreed its position had not changed and that it will be up to Mr. Rumph to bring up this issue with the Select Board. Former Selectman McGuckin noted that the Select Board did endorse the commission recommendation as recorded in the minutes of the Select Board meeting of May 1, 2023.

3. Approve Minutes of the 20 Apr 2023 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

In the course of reviewing the sewer checks, there was one for services from Chris-Co regarding an effluent trucking charge. Mr. Robillard explained that it was needed to vacuum out the manhole at Mainmast and Walton where the new air release valve was installed.

In the course of this conversation, Chair Houle asked Mr. Robillard why DPW had excavated the sewer trench at the Michelin property, 115 Walton Rd., where there had

been problems connecting the Michelins' new effluent system to the Quarterdeck Lane force main. Mr. Robillard reported that the third party hired by Mr. Michelin to tap the force main had failed to do so properly, and that DPW correction was the most expeditious way to resolve what had become a longstanding, festering problem. Mr. Robillard reported that Mr. Michelin felt the Town should be liable for the extra expense to hook up his system to the force main. Chair Houle pointed out that, per ordinance, the property owner is responsible for all expenses, and further, because DPW staff had to provide a service outside of the norm, Mr. Michelin could be charged for that service. In the end, it was agreed that the right thing to do was to write off this DPW expense to resolve the problem. In that the commission had waived the performance bond for the road trench, the Town would also have to pick up the expense to have the road cut paved. The discussion closed with Chair Houle asking that Mr. Robillard draft a memorandum for the record which would explain what had occurred, to include the expense incurred by DPW to correct the problem, should there be any future ramifications.

Chair Houle read the checks as presented, but withheld a check for payment of water service from the City of Portsmouth in light of ambiguity/uncertainty about the number of hydrant rentals. Mr. Robillard is going to research/identify the exact number and their locations to resolve the issue. Mr. White made a motion to approve the checks, with the exception of the one just discussed, as a read; seconded by Mr. Stringham. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Accountant's report

1. Balances as of 30 April

Water:

Checking Account:	\$252,068.39
Trust Fund(Select Board)	\$58,414.61 (Apr 30)
Trust Fund (WSC)	\$78,203.37 (Apr 30)

Sewer:

Checking Account	\$353,636.02
Trust Fund (WSC)	\$91,315.79 (Apr 30)

2. Commitments

- a. Authority 2 \$7,592.00
- b. Authority 3 \$16,244.80
- c. Authority 5 (WBTS) \$39,041.60

Mr. Roediger made a motion to approve the commitments as presented; Mr. Stringham seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. End of Year Review

Chair Houle reported that on May 16, he had met with Town Administrator Ruest, Mr. Robillard and Mr. White to determine if unspent funds could be swept up and added to capital reserves at the June meeting of the commission. Also, Mr. Robillard was asked if he had any big ticket purchases which would improve the efficacy/efficiency of the DPW for the benefit of the water and sewer utilities. There will likely be requests for four items which Mr. Robillard will be costing out.

5. Selectman's Report – The Sewer Agreement with Portsmouth

Chair Houle and former selectman McGuckin reported on the status of the agreement following the preliminary presentation by Deputy City Manager Suzanne Woodland to the Portsmouth City Council on 15 May. Some councilors had concerns. Atty. Woodland has proposed additions to the draft agreement to address these concerns. The commission was asked to review them and comment. Other than Mr. White noting that the Town of New Castle was inadvertently omitted from "Recitals #2," the commission concurred with the proposed changes. The next step will be another presentation to the Council on 5 June and, hopefully, a favorable vote to approve the agreement. Chair Houle noted that if the agreement is approved and signed, the commission will reconsider the FY24 sewer rate, likely lowering it.

6. Superintendent's Report

Outside of specific items on the agenda, Mr. Robillard noted no major issues at this time.

7. New Business

a. Status of Accufund Software Enhancements

Mr. Robillard reported that the contract outlining the requested enhancements has been drafted and that he is waiting for Selectman Stewart and Treasurer Smith for concurrence on the credit card processing part of the contract. Among other things, this will allow customers to pay for their water/sewer bills with a credit card with the service charge levied against the customer.

b. Irrigation System of New Castle Historical Society

Chair Houle again asked Mr. Robillard to speak with the leadership of the NCHS regarding their newly installed irrigation system. It will require a backflow prevention device, and they could benefit from the savings garnered by having a second meter for irrigation. This is somewhat complicated by the fact that the building is Town owned and, in Mr. Robillard's opinion, the Town will not be interested in paying for irrigation water that would include the sewer charge (without a second meter).

c. Revised EPA "Co-Permittee" Draft Permit

Chair Houle will owe a response to EPA Region 1's revised draft of the permit for the Peirce Island Waste Water Treatment Facility, of which New Castle is a "co-permittee" by 26 May 2023. The Town's responsibilities have not changed in the revised draft. Chair Houle intends to update changes made to our collection system in the past year. There was discussion of what constituted a "sanitary sewer overflow." Mr. Robillard believes the two breaks at the Sawtelle Bridge in June 2018 and the sewer overflow on Piscataqua St. in January 2023, constitute such overflows. Chair Houle will consider amending his response accordingly .

8. Continuing Business.

a. Status of Meter Discrepancy: CoP PI WWTF vs. NC River Rd.

This has been a sticking point of the sewer agreement under negotiation as it has a significant bearing on where New Castle effluent is to be metered, namely at the PI WWTF. Much of the discrepancy is now being ascribed to a Portsmouth data problem, not a meter problem. Mr. Robillard believes that any difference between the two meters of less than 10%, which would account for the 20+ accounts which dump effluent into the force main after it has been metered at River Rd., is reasonable, but he would still like more information/insight into the SCADA system at the WWTF.

b. Northeast Integration Assessment of River Rd. Meter Accuracy (Round 2?)

NEI has not followed through with their offer to try another piece of equipment to validate the accuracy of the River Rd. meter. Issue closed.

c. Private Hydrants on New Castle Water Utility

In addition to the earlier discussion regarding this subject, Mr. Robillard identified five private hydrants on the New Castle water utility (northside): two at UNH, two at the USCG Station and one owned by Mr. Alan Weston. The Chair will inform the Select Board about these five and, like the WBTS MA hydrants, recommend that the Town not provide any service for these hydrants. Mr. White suggested having a list of contractors who provide hydrant service.

d. New England Backflow Testing 5 and 6 June

Chair Houle has authored a notice to be uploaded to the Town website.

e. Status of 2022/2023 CWSRF Pre-Apps and Applications

There are four applications in play:

- a. 2022 Application for the Planning for the Force Main Replacement at the Sawtelle Bridge. Town approval regarding funding was achieved at the 9 May Town Meeting. Now there is paperwork which will have to be processed and signed by Selectman Stewart at the 5 June Select Board meeting.
- b. 2023 Pre-Application for the Manhole Remediation Phase 1. Chair Houle has submitted this to NHDES.

- c. 2023 State Aid Grant (SAG) for supplemental funding the Electrical Systems Upgrade. Chair Houle has submitted to NHDES.
- d. 2023 Pre-Application for the construction phase of the Force Main Replacement at the Sawtelle Bridge. This would be the follow-on to the planning project mentioned above. It is being submitted by Mr. Andy Sharpe of Underwood Engineers on behalf of the Town.

9. Any Other Business for the Board. None.

10. Adjourn.

Mr. White made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Roediger. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,
BJ Riordan
Recording Secretary