

Water Commission Meeting Minutes
August 9, 2007; 7:00 pm
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER: 7:03 p.m.

PRESENT: James McLaughlin, Raymond Bahr, Bill Milardo, Catherine DeNunzio, Renee P. Edwards, Patricia Crowley, and Robert Dynia

ABSENT: Brad Wilkinson

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA OF AUGUST 2, 2007 BY C. DENUNZIO AND SECONDED BY B. MILARDO. All Aye

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

MOTION TO APPROVE MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 12, 2007 BY P. CROWLEY AND SECONDED BY J. MCLAUGHLIN. All Aye

MOTION TO APPROVE MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 2, 2007 BY P. CROWLEY AND SECONDED BY R. BAHR. All Aye

WATER PROJECT UPDATE - FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING

J. McLaughlin reported that the electricity was connected on Tuesday. The tanks were filled and are now ready for testing. According to the spreadsheet of the financial accounting of the HUD grant, approximately \$18,000 remains in the HUD grant; however, there may still be outstanding bills that haven't been received for payment. R. Bahr requested that the commission review the schedule of items and bid quantities associated with the project. J. McLaughlin stated he would speak with Jan Muraca to obtain the information. R. Primus requested that a spreadsheet accounting of the STEAP grant also be made available to the commission members.

The commission is still waiting for estimates from Connecticut Water Company (CWC) for 15 new hook-ups to the water system. This information is needed for the new STEAP grant application.

WATER COMPANY FINANCIALS

Connecticut Water Company (CWC) provided aging sheets for each customer of the 3 water systems. However, it is unclear if the sheets reflect all customers of the water systems. J. McLaughlin will contact CWC and ask specifically how many customers are currently using the water systems.

DISCUSSION OF PROCESS FOR RATE INCREASES

The town's attorney provided an opinion on the process that should be followed for increasing rates. In particular, the opinion noted that a public hearing is not necessary if the user rate increase is the same over all classes. The process recommended after review of state statute and local ordinance is as follows:

1. Determine whether the proposed rate increase would be made substantially pro rata as to all classes of service. If the answer is yes, then a public hearing is not required, although there is no problem in holding one. If the answer is no, i.e., if the changes are NOT pro rata as to all classes of service, then a public hearing must be held.
2. If a public hearing is held, it should be held by the Water Commission because the ordinance provides that the Water Commission has the power to hold public hearings on rate increases required by statute. If a public hearing is held, notice should be published in a newspaper at least 10 days before the hearing (as per the statute quoted above), which notice should set forth a schedule of rates. The rate schedule should also be on file in the Town clerk's office and the First Selectman's office, and any office where Town meeting records are kept.
3. If a public hearing is held, the Water Commission, after the close of the public hearing should vote on the rate increase, even if there is no change in the earlier recommendation on the rate increase, and should transmit that recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.
4. After the Board of Selectmen receives the recommended rate increase from the Water Commission, the Board should vote on whether to recommend approval of the increase.
5. Assuming both the Water Commission and Board of Selectmen have recommended approval of the rate increase, the increase should be voted on by the Town meeting.

After discussion, the commissioners decided that a Public Hearing was not necessary. However, it is desirable to inform all users of the reasons for the rate increase and to notify the users of the date for Town Meeting to vote on the proposed increase. In order to reduce costs for mailing, P. Crowley volunteered to notify, via email, all Lexington Place residents, and C. DeNunzio volunteered to post the information at Trinity. The remainder of the customers will receive a mailing.

J. McLaughlin reviewed the dollar amount of rate increases for each customer for the 3 systems

- 1) Durham Center – Basic service \$6.50, per gallon rate \$1.24
- 2) Lexington Place - \$9.88
- 3) Trinity - \$5.50

MOTION BY P. CROWLEY AND SECONDED BY R. BAHR TO RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN AN INCREASE IN WATER COMPANY USER RATES BY 25%. All Aye.

The commissioners recommended that the Board of Selectmen call the Town Meeting for September 4th at 8:00 and to place this item first on the call.

DISCUSSION OF TREASURER POSITION

The commissioners discussed the creation of a treasurer position given the need to maintain clear and up-to-date records of water company finances.

MOTION BY R. BAHR AND SECONDED BY J. MCLAUGHLIN TO CREATE TREASURER POSITION FOR THE WATER COMMISSION. All Aye.

MOTION BY R. BAHR AND SECONDED BY B. MILARDO TO ELECT P. CROWLEY AS TREASURER FOR THE WATER COMMISSION. All Aye.

BILL APPROVALS

J. McLaughlin requested that electric bills be paid immediately upon arrival without prior water commission approval in order to ensure timely payment. All agreed. P. Crowley commented that several items, such as fixed costs of CWC contract payments, might fall into this category. In contrast, bills for repairs, water testing, and other non-routine items should be reviewed first by the commissioners. P. Crowley also emphasized that we need to get a better understanding of why we are being billed for expenses such as meter installations, resident service calls, call before you dig, etc., and that we should consult our Rules and Regulations Handbook.

MOTION BY R. BAHR AND SECONDED BY P. CROWLEY TO APPROVAL PAYMENT OF BILLS DATES 5/30/07, 6/28/07, 7/11/07, AND 7/25/07. All Aye.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

The regularly scheduled meeting on September 13th will be cancelled and rescheduled one week earlier on September 4th at 7:00 pm, which is the same night as the proposed Town Meeting at 8:00 pm. R. Bahr suggested a site walk of the pump house and grounds. This site walk will be open to everyone and will occur at 6:30 pm on September 4th.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:21 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Renee Edwards, Secretary