

Minutes of the Board of Water/Sewer Commission
Wednesday, October 19, 2022 - 4:00 pm
16C Perry Way, Newburyport, MA 01950

Present Commissioners: Roger Jones, William Creelman, Daniel Simon, Owen Smith

Staff:

Deputy Director, Jamie Tuccolo

Business Manager, Julie Spurr Knight

1. Appointments/Customer Inquires

- Debra Metivier, 9 Hutchins Road, Newbury – Cancelled her appearance before the Board.

Commissioner Smith made a motion to table the issue. Commissioner Simon seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Smith yes, Simon yes

- Wilfred Suozzo, 7 Hunter Drive, Newburyport – Mr. Suozzo appeared and told the Board that in 2020 he received an abatement for a leak in the liner. He explained that the reason he was appealing the denial of his abatement was that he had another leak that was discovered when the pool was opened up in the spring. Commissioner Creelman asked who put the pool away for the winter and Mr. Suozzo said he did. Commissioner Jones asked what froze and Mr. Suozzo said the return line froze. After much discussion Commissioner Simon stated the Commission should stick to the policy whereby a customer is entitled to one abatement in a 10-year period. Commissioner Creelman said because Mr. Suozzo winterized the pool himself that is the risk he takes and Commissioner Jones encouraged him to get a pool company to do it next time.

Commissioner Smith made a motion to deny the abatement. Commissioner Simon seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Smith yes, Simon yes

- Tim Tracy, Geonautics Mfg., 504 Merrimac Street, Newburyport – Mr. Tracy told the Board that a leaking toilet was discovered after he returned from vacation and it was fixed. Commissioner Smith broke down the usage and reported it was a considerable amount of water loss. Mr. Tracy responded that he did fix the problem and it was during a time when no one was using the toilet. Commissioner Smith said whether it's clean water or not it still goes into the system and gets treated. Commissioner Simon told Mr. Tracy this was an internal plumbing problem and not the City's problem.

Commissioner Creelman made a motion to deny the abatement. Commissioner Simon seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Smith yes, Simon yes

- Robert Manning, 1 Lorum Street, Newburyport – Mr. Manning did not appear before the Commission. The Commission reviewed the original abatement and decided that it was the customer's responsibility for the faulty timer.

Commissioner Smith made a motion to deny the abatement. Commissioner Simon seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Smith yes, Simon yes

2. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Creelman made a motion to approve the minutes.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Smith abstained, Simon yes

3. Business Managers Report

- Mr. Tuccolo addressed the Board and said due to staffing commitments we will no longer deliver packets to the Commissioner's homes. He asked the Board how they wanted to receive the packets and suggested we could email the information and have packets printed out for them to pick up at the Business Office the Friday before each meeting. The Board said that would be fine. Commissioner Jones said he would submit his agenda items no later than the Wednesday before the meeting.
- Ms. Knight requested Anthony Rossi of 9 Doyle Drive be allowed to appear before the Commission at the next meeting to discuss an irrigation abatement that was tabled from February. The Board approved.
- **Meters:** Ms. Knight reported the department requested SRF funding and it is they who determines who gets the \$5 million funding. Environmental Partners are working on a presentation on how to fund the meter replacement and should have something by December 1st. Commissioner Simon asked if the rate payers would pay for the meters. Ms. Knight said there are many possibilities: flat rate meter charge, build it into the rate or bonded debt and that is what Environmental Partners is working on. Commissioner Smith stated the meter charge should go into a separate account. Ms. Knight said it would because we are an enterprise fund but it is a good idea to have an account in a CIP account.
- **Budget:** Ms. Knight reported total expenditures for water was \$2.2 million with 35% expended and sewer was \$2.5 million with 32% expended. Looking at the water and sewer FY 23 & 22 comparisons Ms. Knight reminded the Board that AFSME went up on all salary grades and there also was a payout for the director which affected Purchase of Services. She also noted that chemicals are the outlier on the expense side for Supplies. Commissioner Smith asked if the state bid list consumables were spiking and Ms. Knight said they are going right along with inflation.
- **Aggregate Net Debt Service:** Ms. Knight noted that FY23 Debt Service category is missing a couple of water payments and she is looking into that.
- **Department of Revenue Retained Earnings:** Ms. Knight reported water had \$937,918 in retained earnings and sewer had \$1,516,385.
- Tighe & Bond Contract was presented to the Board. It was something they had already approved with the exception of one task. In a prior meeting the Board agreed to send the contract to the City Solicitor. The City Solicitor came back with an engineering template which was then sent to Tighe & Bond who approved and signed the contract. The Board decided to take a copy of the contract with them, review it and then come into the Business Office to sign after reviewing.

Commissioner Creelman made a motion approve the Business Manager's Report. Commissioner Simon seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Friede yes, Simon yes

4. Old Business

- **Water Resources and Restrictions:** Mr. Tuccolo gave an update on water resources and reported it was up from 78% to 79%. State dropped the drought level to 2. Mr. Cusick said with the colder months, outside water will be dwindling. A determination was made to keep the water restrictions. Commissioner Smith questioned why the department was conducting hydrant flushing when there was a water restriction. Mr. Tuccolo said that the Commission allowed for watering of lawns on certain days, not a full water ban and the department is only flushing 1/3 of the major trunk lines to monitor and control the THMs. The department is not hydrant flushing the entire city. Commissioner Smith requested a copy of Mr. Cusick's pumping reports for the next meeting. Mr. Tuccolo said he would provide that.
- **Amesbury Interconnection:** Mr. Tuccolo said the Mayor sent Amesbury's comments to the department for an internal review. The department will respond and send back to the Mayor.
- **West Newbury Pipestave Water Tank Rehabilitation:** Commissioner Jones received a letter from Robert James, West Newbury Water Department Chairman regarding their request for additional water for this project. Commissioner Jones passed the letter on to Mr. Tuccolo saying he would respond giving them the approval because nothing but the timing has changed.
- **PFAS:** Mr. Tuccolo reported the City is the pilot program for Massachusetts. It is a year long project. If it works there are many benefits to the City and price preference will be one because we are the pilot.
- **Abatement Policy:** Commissioner Jones said he was reviewing the City of Fairhaven and Hamilton. Hamilton has a statement of policy which he likes. Ms. Knight said she would send out our policy as a word document for the Board to update the current policy with their changes.
- **Tour of the Waste Water Treatment Plant:** The Commission requested a site visit. Mr. Tuccolo suggested the next meeting be held at the Waste Water Treatment Plant and the tour can take place afterwards.
- **Staffing:** Commissioner Smith asked about staffing. Mr. Tuccolo said there was one vacancy in Highway, two in Water, one overnight position at the Water Plant and one position in the Business office. One of the challenges is the rates of pay the City/Union has in place. Employees have been known to go to other communities to make more money doing the same job. Also, jobs in the private sector such as Walmart and make \$27 per hour. Mr. Tuccolo said the department has brought people in at the lower grade/rate until they obtain their license then their grade/rate is increased. The staff was much appreciative of the grade bump the union/city voted on and received in August and it proved to motivate the staff.
- **Budgeting:** Mr. Tuccolo said budget discussions will not begin until January. Ms. Knight stated she gets instructions from the Finance Director and a template. Budgeting discussions can start at that time using the current budget.

5. Confirm Next Meeting.

Wednesday, November 16, 2022 at 4:00 pm

6. Warrant and Contract Signing

*Commissioner Jones made a motion to sign the warrants. Commissioner Simon seconded.
Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Simon yes.*

*Commissioner Creelman made a motion to execute the Tighe & Bond contract. Commissioner Simon seconded.
Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Simon yes.*

7. Adjournment

Commission Jones adjourned the meeting at 5:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted By: Karen Bush

DRAFT