

**WATER & SEWER COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES – FEBRUARY 6, 2024**

5:30 PM – Conference Room B – Town Hall, 63 Main Street Northborough, MA 01532

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Meader
Bryant Firmin
David Pepe

ALSO PRESENT: Scott Charpentier, Public Works Director
Tim Davison, Water & Sewer Operations Manager
Robert Luke, Administrative Assistant
Lisa Maselli, Select Board Liaison

Commissioner Meader opened the meeting at 5:33 PM.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST 22, 2023 PUBLIC HEARING

A motion was made by Commissioner Pepe to approve the meeting minutes of the August 22, 2023 Public Hearing as written with a second by Commissioner Firmin. Vote was taken by roll call, Commissioner Firmin “aye,” Commissioner Pepe “aye,” Commissioner Meader “aye.” The vote was unanimous with three votes in favor.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL ADJUSTMENT FOR 10 FAIRWAY DRIVE DUE TO INACCURATE METER RECORDINGS

Mr. Charpentier began with a recap of the meter issues facing certain residents of Fairway Drive. He noted that this will be the third bill adjustment for residents of the street and stated that he believes the issue lies somewhere within the construction of the homes, whereby some form of undulation in the meter is causing them to record positive flow incorrectly. The installation of a check valve seems to stop this inaccurate flow reading as it has done with both 5 Fairway Drive and 13 Fairway Drive previously. The resident installed a check valve at 10 Fairway Drive on September 9, 2023, which immediately halted the undulation. As in the past, Mr. Charpentier stated that we used their average daily water use as a baseline to calculate the requested adjustment for the period in question. Using 17 cubic feet per day as an average, the overage was calculated to be 9,349 cubic feet for a total credit of \$1,608.96 in water and sewer charges. Commissioner Meader inquired if the Town performed a manual read versus Beacon. Mr. Charpentier explained

that one of our technicians went to the home and confirmed that the meter was reporting the readings. The meter was pulled and bench-tested and found to be over 95% accurate.

A motion was made by Commissioner Firmin to approve the bill adjustment for 10 Fairway Drive for 9,349 cubic feet (\$1,608.96) due to inaccurate meter recordings with a second by Commissioner Pepe. Vote was taken by roll call, Commissioner Firmin “aye,” Commissioner Pepe “aye,” Commissioner Meader “aye.” The vote was unanimous with three votes in favor.

CONSIDERATION OF GROUNDWATER OVERLAY DISTRICT PROPOSED BYLAW CHANGES

Mr. Charpentier explained that the Planning Board has proposed bylaw changes, specifically to the Groundwater Protection Overlay District. He then summarized the rationale as it relates to the Water & Sewer Commission. The changes affect the Downtown Business District and Downtown Neighborhood in that the mandatory minimum lot size increase for multifamily use is proposed to be eliminated for parcels served by an on-site sewer disposal system. The entire area is served by Town water and sewer which renders this bylaw provision minimally applicable with limited benefit to groundwater protection.

The Commissioners discussed the proposed changes and Commissioner Meader inquired if Mr. Charpentier could prepare a summary memo that the Commission met and discussed the bylaw changes. The memo would be submitted to the Planning Board in anticipation of their scheduled February 20, 2024, Public Hearing. A motion was made by Commissioner Pepe that the Water & Sewer Commission does not object to the Planning Board’s proposed changes to the Groundwater Protection Overlay District with a second by Commissioner Firmin. Vote was taken by roll call, Commissioner Firmin “aye,” Commissioner Pepe “aye,” Commissioner Meader “aye.” The vote was unanimous with three votes in favor.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Charpentier gave an update on the former water supply reservoir dam removal project. The Town received a \$52,000 earmark from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to support additional permitting needs associated with the dam removal. We are now required to complete an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), a long and involved process that has now been published and we are awaiting comments from Shrewsbury and Boylston.

Mr. Charpentier also discussed a Federal earmark for just under \$500,000 from Senator Markey’s office that is dedicated specifically to Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA).

Mr. Charpentier explained that the Town had a lightning strike at the Assabet Storage Tank in October, 2023. This damaged some hardware which is now in the process of being repaired or replaced. Commissioners Meader and Pepe inquired about the possibility of additional grounding but Mr. Charpentier noted that the site was already properly grounded and this was not something that could have been avoided by additional preparedness.

Mr. Charpentier gave a brief update on the status of the Marlborough litigation. The Special Master has issued their report and the Town is still awaiting a status conference with the judge. Commissioner Firmin asked how the Town sits financially with regard to the potential back payment due to Marlborough. Mr. Charpentier noted the Town has adequate resources for the payment but noted there is not yet clarity on the interest portion of said payment.

Commissioner Meader inquired about the parcel at 432 Whitney Street and if there was any interest in utilizing it for possible neighborhood or regional subsurface discharge. Mr. Charpentier stated that the Department of Public Works (DPW) has no interest nor need for this parcel.

Commissioner Meader asked about the proposed King Street project with regard to the possibility of municipal sewer being extended to the area. Mr. Charpentier noted that the developer has not officially approached the Town about extending sewer up the street but noted that his parcel is adjacent to the collection area and thus it was a possibility. Another extension under consideration is down Lawrence Street to serve Motel 6. Commissioner Meader asked about the broader implication of expanding municipal sewer beyond the defined area and if a policy discussion by the Commission is warranted. Director Charpentier suggested a discussion as an agenda item for the March 2024 meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission.

Select Board member Lisa Maselli had questions about the potential expansion of municipal sewer on Belmont Street as well as questions about maintenance, ownership and rights for some of the other dams in town (which are not under the control or responsibility of the Water & Sewer Commission). Mr. Charpentier outlined typical dam operations.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be in-person on Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at 5:30 PM

ADJOURN

A motion was made by Commissioner Firmin to adjourn at 6:43 p.m. with a second by Commissioner Pepe. Vote was taken by roll call, Commissioner Firmin “aye,” Commissioner Pepe “aye,” Commissioner Meader “aye.” The vote was unanimous with three votes in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Luke
Administrative Assistant

Documents used during meeting:

1. February 6, 2024 meeting agenda
2. August 22, 2023 Public Hearing minutes
3. Memorandum of proposed bill adjustment for 10 Fairway Drive
4. Draft changes to the Zoning Board bylaw, Groundwater Protection Overlay District
5. Zoning map of downtown area