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WATER & SEWER COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 16, 2022

5:30 PM - Remote Participation

Chairman's Introduction to Remote Meeting

Chairman Meader opened the meeting at 5:31 PM and stated that this Open Meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission is being conducted remotely pursuant to Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency, signed into law on July 16, 2022, this meeting will be conducted via remote participation. All members of the Water & Sewer Commission are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely. The Order allows the Water & Sewer Commission to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting. The public is encouraged to follow along using the posted agenda, unless the Chair notes otherwise. Members of the public who wish to view the live stream of this meeting may do so by going to Northborough Remote Meetings on YouTube via the link listed on the agenda. Ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. This meeting will feature public comment.

Chairman Meader confirmed that the following members and persons anticipated on the agenda were remotely present and could be heard.

Water & Sewer Commission:

John Meader, Chairman
Bryant Firmin, Member
David Pepe, Member

Town Staff:

Scott Charpentier, Public Works Director
Tim Davison, Water & Sewer Supervisor
Robert Luke, Public Works Admin

Meeting Business Ground Rules:

Chairman Meader covered the ground rules for effective and clear conduct of the business. He asked members of the Board to mute their phone or computer when not speaking and to speak clearly and in a way that helps generate accurate meeting minutes. The Chair will go through the items on the agenda. Following the presentation, Board members will be offered an opportunity to speak. Members were asked if they wish to speak, to do so through the Chair, taking care to identify themselves.

For Items with Public Comment:

After members have spoken, the Chair will afford public comment as follows:

By Phone Dial *9 to raise your hand and wait to be recognized by the Chair. Please note that part of your phone number will be visible to those viewing the meeting. By Zoom Click "Raise Hand" on the bottom of your screen and wait to be recognized by the Chair. The Chair will ask members of the public who wish to speak to identify their names and addresses only. Once the Chair has a list of all public commentators, the Chair will call on each by name and afford 3 minutes for any comments.

1. Consideration of minutes from the July 19, 2022 regular meeting

A motion was made by Commissioner Firmin to approve the meeting minutes of the July 19, 2022 regular meeting as amended 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.

2. Public Hearing to consider a Water / Sewer Rate Adjustment

At 5:40 PM Chairman Meader opened the public hearing to consider water and sewer rate adjustments. Mr. Meader discussed the Public Hearing process and then introduced Scott Charpentier, Director of Public Works, to give an overview of the process.

Mr. Charpentier gave a brief summary of the water and sewer rate study process and schedule. Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 was impacted substantially by the pandemic which resulted in an FY2022 increase to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) assessment of approximately \$338,000. In addition, the summer of 2021 was very wet which caused lower water use, therefore approximately \$100,000 less in revenue. These two factors resulted in reduced expenditures in FY2022 as well as an approved FY2023 budget which is \$318,000 less than that of FY2022.

Dave Fox from Raftelis Financial Consultants (Natick, MA) gave a brief introduction of himself followed by an overview of the annual rate study process. Mr. Fox described how they typically look at a 5 to 6 year window of the financial forecast for both the water and sewer funds, taking into consideration historical actual expenditures as well as upcoming budget and financial trends, specifically looking at operating expenses, MWRA assessments, existing debt service schedules and financing of capital improvement plans. The final rate study puts together a financial forecast of all those different revenue requirements and to determine what rate adjustments are necessary to support the financial plan and maintain fiscal stability of the enterprise funds. The recommendation for FY2023 is an approximate 12.5% increase on the fixed water service base charge and a 3% increase on the water volumetric charges, and no increase to the sewer volumetric charges or the flat rate sewer service charge.

Mr. Fox noted that the Town was able to use its reserve fund to mitigate the increase in rates to keep a stabilized and maintainable rate increase.

Commissioner Meader commented on the value provided to the Town by performing this annual rate study process and noted that the continued decreases in consumption should level-out at some point. No questions or further comments were voiced by the Commissioners at this time.

Commissioner Meader asked for public comment at this time; the meeting had one attendee but no questions.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Firmin to close the public hearing at 6:08 pm 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.

3. Vote on Water & Sewer Rate Adjustment

Motion by Commissioner Pepe to adopt the water and sewer rates as presented to the Commission tonight at the public hearing and seconded 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.

The new water & sewer volumetric rates and base charges will be effective on the third quarter bills dated February 1, 2023 are as follows:

Water Service Base Charge		
Service Type	Current Rate (per quarter)	New Rate (per quarter)
Residential	\$16.00	\$18.00
Commercial	\$48.00	\$54.00
Industrial	\$73.00	\$82.00
Water		
Usage/quarter	Current Rate (per 1,000 cf)	New Rate (per 1,000 cf)
0 - 2,000 cf	\$51.49	\$53.03
2,001 - 6,000 cf	\$61.71	\$63.56
Over 6,000 cf	\$76.05	\$78.33

OTHER BUSINESS:

Next Meeting: The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 27, 2022 at 5:30 PM in person at Town Hall, Conference Room B.

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Firmin at 6:12 PM with a second by Commssioner 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,
Public Works Administrator

Documents used during meeting:

1. August 16, 2022 Meeting Agenda
2. July 19, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes
3. Final FY 2023 Water and Sewer Rate Study report dated August 8, 2022 from Raftelis Financial Consultants