

**WATER & SEWER COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES – APRIL 28, 2020**

2 PM – Remote Participation, Town Hall 63 Main Street Northborough MA

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Meader
Bryant Firmin, Absent
David Pepe

ALSO PRESENT: Julianne Hirsh, Board of Selectmen (BOS) Liaison
Scott Charpentier, Public Works Director
Tim Davison, Water & Sewer Supervisor
Sarah Jean, Administrative Assistant

Commissioner Meader opened the meeting at 2:07 PM and read the following statement: Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission will be conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance by members of the public will be permitted and the meeting record will be posted the next day.

1. Consideration of minutes from the January 21, 2020 regular meeting

Motion by roll call to approve the meeting minutes of the January 21, 2020 regular meeting as written, Commissioner Firmin “absent”, Commissioner Pepe “aye”, Commissioner Meader “aye”; the vote by roll call was two votes in favor, with one absent.

2. Water / Sewer Bill Adjustment – 279 Davis Street

Mr. Charpentier and the Commission reviewed the information pertaining to a sewer bill adjustment request for account number 2809 located at 279 Davis Street due to catastrophic damage done to the pool liner during the 2019-2020 winter season.

Mr. Charpentier reviewed request and is recommending approval of a sewer abatement in the amount of 3,609 cubic feet totaling \$416.29 as the in-kind pool liner replacement will be 20’ X 40’ X 4’6” average depth which equates to approximately 27,000 gallons of water (3,609 cubic feet) per the pool contractor’s estimate and Town confirmation. The Commission discussed the information presented. Mr. Charpentier indicated that this will all be contingent upon receiving a copy of the invoice from the pool company once the work has been completed and confirmation of water use records for the days specified on the invoice.

Based on past precedence, a motion to approve the request for a sewer abatement of \$416.29 (3,609 cf / 27,000 gallons) as this is an exceptional case that was not caused by customer action or choice.

Motion was done by roll call Commissioner Firmin “absent”, Commissioner Pepe “aye”, Commissioner Meader “aye”; the vote by roll call was two votes in favor, with one absent.

3. Discussion and vote on Quarter 4 Utility Bill interest in parallel with that which is offered by Chapter 53, Sections 10 & 11 of the Acts of 2020 on tax bills

Mr. Charpentier informed the Commissioners that the Governor has issued relief from interest on certain municipal tax and other bills paid by June 30, 2020. Mr. Charpentier indicated that at a recent BOS Meeting, the town adopted this local option and he was asked if the Water/Sewer Commission would consider doing the same for the upcoming Quarter 4 utility bills.

Mr. Charpentier indicated that the interest collected in June of 2019 totaled \$1,021.00 for the Water Enterprise Fund and \$937.00 for the Sewer Enterprise Fund. Mr. Charpentier is recommending the Commission approve this interest waiver to parallel the tax interest waiver to provide some relief to the residents. The Q4 bills are dated May 1, 2020 and have a due date of June 1, 2020. Adopting the local option to waive interest on certain municipal tax and other bills will now allow them to be interest free if paid by June 30, 2020.

Motion to approve the local option on the 4th Quarter Utility Bill interest in parallel with the tax bills was done by roll call Commissioner Firmin “absent”, Commissioner Pepe “aye”, Commissioner Meader “aye”; the vote by roll call was two votes in favor, with one absent.

4. COVID-19 Department Update

Mr. Charpentier and the Commission discussed the Department of Public Works response to COVID-19. Mr. Charpentier stated that he initiated the continuity of operations plan (COOP) as soon as the stay at home order began. The COOP plan ensures that critical functions continue and requires a separation of critical staff.

Mr. Charpentier stated that all staff are available and working. Highway/Water & Sewer personnel have been broken down in to teams. These teams are reporting to work for one week and on call the next week. When staff are reporting they are following all safety protocols; maintaining social distancing the best they can, wearing masks and gloves when necessary and disinfecting equipment at the end of the week to ensure no cross-contamination. Staff are no longer entering homes, final readings are now being done remotely.

Mr. Charpentier asked Mr. Davison to offer his thoughts on this. He stated that it’s been lonely working but that it has worked out great, the transition has been pretty smooth.

Mr. Charpentier had a few employees reach out RE: the disposable masks being uncomfortable and cumbersome. Mr. Charpentier reached out to Liz Tretiak, the new Senior Center Director, and there was a volunteer who made 50 double lined cotton pocketed masks for staff.

As for office staff, there is to be no more than one person per office, staff is disinfecting at shift change and working from home when not in the office. Mr. Charpentier reports that the customers have been good and patient with requests.

As for the FY2021 budget, Mr. Charpentier reports that he's in a holding pattern like everyone else. He has a FY2021 pre-pandemic budget that was previously presented. We have prepared several reduced budget scenarios to address project fiscal shortfalls due to the pandemic but are waiting for State budget information on the general fund side and use/revenue projections on the enterprise side.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Charpentier reported that the contract for the Forbes Road Waste Water Pump Station Generator Replacement was awarded to Systems Electrical. The project is moving forward and shop drawings have been submitted and approved. Mr. Charpentier stated that they are a quality contractor and that we are familiar with them as they did the work on the lights at the Melican Middle School.

Mr. Charpentier indicated that the water garage project is also moving forward and the intent is continue progress on this project.

Mr. Charpentier indicated that the water storage tank project is shovel ready and the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) project is in good shape also. Mr. Charpentier reports that the Federal Government may offer some stimulus money through grants such as the State Revolving Fund (SRF) Loan Program. The SRF could be used to improve water and waste water infrastructure.

Mr. Charpentier reports that there is no change with regards to the City of Marlborough Intermunicipal Agreement at this time.

Mr. Charpentier reports that he is in the process of preparing a grant application for the Municipal Vulnerability Program (MVP) Grant for a water system vulnerability assessment and emergency response plan, both unfunded mandates. Completion of these tasks will put the town in good position for future grant funding rounds.

Julianne Hirsh inquired as to if we were seeing an increase in water/sewer usage? Mr. Charpentier replied yes there has been a slight increase, we are seeing an increase and reports what we are lacking on the commercial side we are making up for on the residential side.

Next Meeting: The next regular meeting will be scheduled as the need arises. Mr. Charpentier noted that we will need to start thinking about the process for the Fiscal Year 2021 Water & Sewer Rate Study.

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn at 2:40 PM; Motion was done by roll call Commissioner Firmin “absent”, Commissioner Pepe “aye”, Commissioner Meader “aye;” the vote by roll call was two votes in favor, with one absent.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Jean
Administrative Assistant
Department of Public Works

Documents used during meeting:

1. April 28, 2020 Meeting Agenda
2. January 21, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes
3. Memo RE: sewer abatement account 2809 / 279 Davis Street