



+TOWN OF WINCHESTER – CITY OF WINSTED

Town Hall – 338 Main Street

WINSTED, CONNECTICUT 06098

Minutes of Regular Meeting

Water & Sewer Commission

Zoom, Town Hall, 338 Main Street, Winsted

March 9, 2021

Vice Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm. The following members were present: George Closson, Bill Hester, Joe Lemelin, John Masicotte. Also present was Director of Public Works Jim Rollins, Superintendent of Water Works Marty Cormier, Chief Plant Operator Alex Combes, Finance Director Bruce Stratford, Candance Bouchard, Jen Perga, Doug Pfenninger, Guest Tim Abbott from Housatonic Valley Association, and Moderator Pam Colombie.

Public Input-Candace Bouchard-Questions and concerns regarding Facebook allegations regarding dirty water and how they compare to last year. M. Cormier-every complaint is handled in my department, a complaint is answered within 30 minutes. For every complaint that we take, we take samples from the property and we typically bring them to our lab, we do a physical parameter test which tests for color, PH and turbidity. If a bacterial issue was ever mentioned, then I would send it to a State certified lab for a bacterial test. We are mandated by the Department of Public Health to test nine sites, throughout the town, we do twenty samples a month throughout our system. I tested one site and told the resident I would like to submit it to the state, I think that it would show that we have the best water in the state and show that the color and turbidity is good at his location. A lot of people do not understand the chlorine residual, the closer to the filtration plant you are going to have a higher chlorine residual and as you branch out throughout the system it gets less. We handle each complaint individually and each complaint is answered, we may have to flush a line and it might end up being the homeowner's issue, they could have hot water issues. We do not test hot water. We educate them and give them the best water we can. B. Hester-I am close to the plant at my house and my water gets tested, I am on their rotation list so for 20 years. I do have a high chlorine level. One neighbor could be different than the other depending what type of piping they have in their house. C. Bouchard-I was wondering if it could be reported, such as how many complaints were reported, how many were investigated and what were the results. Maybe a month-to-month statistic that could be reported and reviewed on the Town's website, then these calls could be directed there instead of the Facebook interaction. I see that we are sending out a survey for the Watershed but there is no survey of the water quality. If it is the pipes, could you give the

homeowner or landlord a citation or warning that this needs replacement, which would notify them that it's the pipes that's making the water quality an issue. M. Cormier-we do keep records of everything, a water quality question never goes unanswered. J. Rollins-to follow up on your question, we keep paper records of all the calls that come in, if we see an up kick we can always look back, it's kind of laborious however we are in the process of updating to a more audible system we haven't gotten to that point yet. We are doing our data input and setting the system up, within a year we should be utilizing it to track these complaints.

Approval of minutes from February 9, 2021: Motion George Closson **to approve the minutes of February 9, 2021.** Second by B. Hester. **Vote:** All in favor-*motion carried unanimous.*

Tim Abbott-Housatonic Valley Association-Grant Proposal- I would like to thank before I start both Jen and Doug from the Land Trust for all there help and getting us to where we are and Jim who also has been very helpful. About 2 ½ years ago we approach your Town's manager, to see if it might be appealing to tap into some federal funds that would place conservation easements on your watershed. The funds are from Highland Conservation Act. The idea would be that the Highland Conservation act can pay for 50% of the appraised value of the conservation easement. One of the first steps is to make sure you are able to secure Highlands's funding and the second step is to get an appraisal. We put in a no obligation grant request through the State of Ct to the Fish and Wildlife. The conservation value ranked number one in four states. DEEP has an airmark of some funds for this project should you wish to do it. The next step was appraising not just fair market value of the water company land but determining the value of the easement. It required determining what Class the watershed land was, this affects value because highest and best use of Class I & II. This then had to be reviewed by Federal standards. Conservation easements are you still own the property, you give up certain rights and you retain other rights. The value of the rights you give up is determined by figuring out the before and after of the property with and without the easements. The per acre value for 1,341 acres unencumber accept as a water company is 2.2 million dollars or \$1,650 per acre. Then you figure out what the value is after the easements are in place. It drops to \$650 an acre for easement value, some of it is wet and Class I & II and highest and best use is not developed as a water company. The value of the easement is \$885,000. You have greater maintenance needs than that and the funding source can pay you half of that, \$442,500. Question was asked what would you be still able to do and what would be required with a conservation easement. You would still own the water company and still run it as a water company. There is 10 acres of it where you have infrastructure that are outside of the easement restrictions, you would have no limitations on that. You can maintain your two dams and maintain your aqueduct. In addition, the Highlands easement is going to allow you to do forestry activity that protects water quality. You have a federally listed rare species on your property, it's in your aqueduct. After the appraisal you also which was not captured in the appraisal you were awarded National Historical Registry status, which would only limit it in terms of resale. DEEP would hold the easement, so the Federal money goes to the state, the state would pay you and they would retain the easement and you wouldn't be dealing with the wildlife services. Although they can have co-holders and could be a land trust as well. DEEP requires some form of public access. The idea would be to

site something that runs close to Rugg Brook Rd, maybe with mutual agreement you can come up with a walking trail that avoids everything you want people to avoid. In addition to paying 50% of the appraised value Highlands Conservation Act also covers 50% of the considerable cost the DEEP incurs covering the easement. Whatever baseline report is needed to document the current condition of the property. There is no way that you could be paid more than \$885,000, that is the appraised value at full fair market value. I have \$442,500 from one federal funding source. I do not know if I can raise the remainder. If you do see this conservation easement working for you with the parameters described, it should not affect your operations except for the public access. It will ensure conservation of your water company. The Highlands money goes away in a couple years, if this is of interest, I am fully in to help make it work for you.

Discussion: J. Rollins-what is the understanding of the state requirements for public access.

T. Abbott-the Highlands Conservation Act does not require a public access but DEEP does. So it's not a Federal requirement it's a State requirement, they know they need to be flexible with this one because of the sensitivity of the Water Company's drinking source, although the State has experience in protecting Water Company land and also because you have the rare species on the property, which is covered by the endangered species act. It's basically finding a walking trail to avoid sensitive areas. Map of area shared. J. Perga- Tim where I lived there was organized hikes where you could go on the land, is this an option or does it have to be opened all the time. T. Abbott-it would be a negotiation with DEEP. C. Bouchard-all the Mad River Basin maps are being developed by Winsted Trails and possibly the YMCA, the basin on the map is highlight in one of those areas. T. Abbott-the other negotiating part you have is this would be the largest acreage that the conservation act has done. G. Closson-the trail act is that limited to a certain time of year. T. Abbott-it would have to be agreed to on where the public access is. DEEP wants to show that there is public access that the public can enjoy. I think there are creative ways to approach it. What other information can I provide you to help with this decision. J. Rollins-what type of easement agreement would have to go before the Town, is it us making a recommendation or not to the Board of Selectmen, the Public, Land Use, Water Co. One other thing the committee should consider, is the benefit of having public access. J. Rollins-I was curious about, what type of maintenance requirements are there on a trail. T. Abbott-you could have an agreement with the land trusts that are interested in helping you and depending on what you agree upon for Public Access. There is no requirement from DEEP other than you have the trail. J. Rollins-would they consider hunting as a public access. T. Abbott-they like hunting and like be able to offer it, we can bring DEEP into this. G. Closson-I think the threshold we have to cross is if we are interested in this kind of money and additional details of a conservation easement and time to evaluate what has been presented to us. J. Perga-through Winsted Trails and Winchester Land Trust, there are people who are willing to volunteer to be in charge of a trail and also your hunting idea might be a really good solution in keeping the problem people of the land. J. Perga-I wanted to follow up with one question for Tim-the species that are endangered is that a concern and maybe it might be another source of money because this is being protected. T. Abbott-the Fish and Wild services clearly do care about any federally listed threatened or endangered species. It is not a problem for your Water Co and there might be some habitat restoration money or other sources to help with that. I will investigate this.

C. Bouchard-the YMCA is also partnering with DEEP, DEEP is also speaking with Winsted Trails, YMCA for their fit program. There was a lot of design work done on the Mad River Basin for entertainment beyond trails. It is being used for cross country skiing, hiking, skidoos. They are probably on the trails that have been identified. I agree with Jim about the hunters. T. Abbott-I will follow up with Jim with additional materials.

Barkhamsted Sewer Update: Jim Rollins-pressure test was done today, and they couldn't achieve pressure. They are going to retry tomorrow or Monday. They think a valve was not connected properly. J. Masicotte-when will the manhole meter go in. J. Rollins-that will go in after the pressure test is done.

Report from Finance Director: B. Stratford- provided copies of the budget reports, bank statements

Water Fund- we are at 67% of the fiscal year, \$1,315,147 compared to \$1,306,916 last year at this time. We are a running slightly ahead in terms of revenues. Current water rents are at 1,177,004 compared to last year 1,145,000. We are running a little behind on past due water rents.

Water Works: Dept 317-We are 61% of the fiscal year, I have underlined some items, negative numbers in the unencumbered budget at the top one has to do with the intern hired last summer asking for contribution from the commission towards that cost with remainder being funded by the McCarthy scholarship fund. Overall, the department looks in good shape.

Crysal Lake Water Plant: Is at 56% of the budget, everything looks good there. Administration is at 65%. \$74,000 was made for the pension contribution.

Water Commission- Is at 55% of its budget and most of that has to do with the transfer we sent to Fund 123-Capital Improvements.

Sewer fund Budget: We are about 65% for the fiscal year. We are slightly head on sewer rent collections. Sewer rents are \$955,921 compared to last year of \$942,000. Miscellaneous septic dumping not a lot of activity in the winter, but I wanted to let you know there was no Russ Septic dumps. A. Combes-is he current? B. Stratford-yes he is paid in full. Total revenue is \$1,189,718 compared to last year \$1,183,725.

Sanitation Plant Department-Department 315- Is at 60% budget for the fiscal year, no issues on any line items. A. Combes-the generator line item is solely from Hurricane Isaias in August. Training and education-myself and Wade both took exams and passed. Applause for those two accomplishments.

Pumping Station- Is at 48% of its budget. There is an outstanding purchase order in account 826-003 which is generating a negative unencumbered balance.

W.P.C.A-Is at 63% of its budget, the big disbursement there is the pension fund.

Sewer fund: Debt administration is at 26%. The only thing we are paying is a monthly payment to the Clean Water Act note. The total fund is at 55% of its budget.

Bank Balance: Sewer fund has \$410,714 and the Water Fund has \$532,052, the savings account balance for the two funds is \$1,148,184. That is split: water fund \$874,341 and sewer fund \$273,842. All of the February collections will be transferred in March.

Water & Sewer Capital Improvements: The first page shows the appropriations that are coming from the respective funds into the Capital Improvement Fund. Page 2 gives you the activity on the various projects the only activity that appeared this month was \$32,500 for the Sanitation Boiler. It was budgeted for \$65,000 and it looks like half of the payment was made. Is there another invoice coming in for that? A. Combes-yes, the project is complete. The second boiler is running currently and running great. As I have mentioned before the vacuum truck carries an unencumbered balance because the budget for the second payment on that truck will come in next year's budget and the following years budget. The third line up from the bottom-replace water mains at CCGHT we appropriated \$50,000 in this year's budget for engineering plans.

Sewer plant furnace: A. Combes-second furnace has been installed and is in operation.

Step screen: B. Hester-pending information from Joe Levine. I emailed him last week and he said he would get back to me this week. I have not heard anything.

Sewer rates Increase: B. Stratford-this is a document-Comparative Annual Sewer Fees-these are based on systems of similar size. There are two worksheets, the first is annual cost based on 5,000 gallons per month. This is coming from the most recent report from Bond and Tighe this was issued for 2021 rates. This is in descending cost order. What I don't have data on, I think it would be useful to compare these rates if we had the nature and size of their systems. Some systems are gravity fed and others have pump stations. So, the cost structure behind maintaining the entire infrastructure varies. I don't have that data complete yet. I saw that most of these rates for other towns are fixed annual fees and not based on usage. J. Rollins-there is many different structures. Caitlyn has putting together information on the hidden costs that don't show up in these rates. We don't have extra fees for anything, and other towns do. We want to capture, maybe not system by system but get an idea where other towns are gaining revenue, so it doesn't show quite so much on the annual cost. B. Hester-I have emailed the gentlemen from East Windsor-population wise they are a little be smaller, but I did gather information from them, there plant size is about the same 2.5 million gallons, miles of sewer there is only a 3 miles difference and they have one extra pumping station. However, the have factories. They have a residential fee which is \$404 an industrial and commercial which also \$404. Then it is 50,000 gallons per year use, so they are charged extra. The rate structure is going to be so different. B. Hester-there is a Listserv for all the wastewater plants in the State of CT, I am going to take the list that we have here and email the plants that are the closest and see what they come back with. I will include Caitlyn in the email. G. Closson-we need to educate our users in regards for this increase over the next four years. B.-Strafford is there any other considerations we want before we take this to the public. J. Rollins-yes, let us hold until we can talk it over.

Cost for pumps on Morgan Dr/Lakeview Rd-J. Rollins-no update-waiting on Eric Hess, he will get us material cost and a scope of the project.

Carey Ave sewer project by homeowners: J. Rollins-still no word back from homeowners.

Crystal Lake Emergency Plan: J. Rollins-making process, data has been submitted to Lenard Engineering.

Sewer Plant Generator, frozen valve in Portable Water Pump, Internet update, broken PVC pipe-A. Combes-the sewer plant generator we had West State put on a second fuel tank to avoid the issues we had during the hurricane. We had one 330-gallon tank and the generator was using 19 gallons and hour. Another aspect of the generator Trevor Electric installed another bucket that we can run secondary treatment under emergency power. A. Combes-the frozen valve-I contacted Millenium Power from Springfield; they came back with a quote of \$9500. I am in a holding pattern at this point. The actuator itself is \$5700 and does include electrical work to tie it in. In the event the effluent water system goes off, the actuator is tied to a pressure gage and when it senses a drop in pressure, the valve opens and now you are using non-potable water to push chlorine so we can disinfect in an emergency situation. It is stuck closed because we had the effluent water system go down and we have no push water for chlorine solution. A. Combes-the broken PV pipe, I have been in contact with Fran Delaney at West State, they want to start, I have to figure out how to shut down out and input, so we are not getting any back water coming in, this is on my list. A. Combes-The VFD was installed by Trevor last week, the pump is running flawlessly. J. Masicotte-frozen valve-sounds this is a major problem and should be fixed. B. Stratford-you have in the 315-827-0000-line, maintenance of structures \$20,000 budget with only \$5,000 spent, leaving you about \$15,000, do have other things planned for this account. A. Combes-this account could be used. Commission agrees to have frozen valve repaired.

GEMS software: J. Rollins-it continues to be difficult to use for tracking our zero reads. R. Roy-we have not had time to move forward with it, we have reached out to see if a certain report could be created and it was over \$1,000. J. Rollins-Bruce do you have a status on GEMS, if it is going to be our software then we will spend the money. B. Stratford-GEMS works for us in a lot of ways however there are some short comings. I could ask Cindy Rines to possibly review the reporting side and possibly help with exporting what you need. She could meet with you, Rhonda and Caitlyn.

Update on Santoro's: B. Stratford-Santoro's has been regular payments of \$4,000 a month since September. In November he started making \$10,000 monthly payments which he has made for four months in a row. He is working off the old water and sewer bills from grand list of 2018. He currently owes about \$60,000; his account is currently with the marshal and this is how we have been able to collect the money. If he continues at this rate it would take him nine months to get current adding into the May and August billings. Discussion: J. Lemelin-my issue is I have gone by and there are some other vans that do not bare the Santoro name. Is there anyway we can shut him off if he misses a payment? B. Stratford-that would shut down his business. J. Rollins-if his balance is getting less every month, I say we let him stay open. J. Lemelin-if he does miss a payment, I think we should do something about it. J. Rollins-how much is his bill each quarter. B. Stratford-about \$10,000. G. Closson-his operation has been hugely impacted by the Covid epidemic. Commission agrees to allow the \$10,000 monthly payments.

Bill adjustments: None

Director's Report

- J. Rollins- I sent out the notifications to the Police Department, Town of Norfolk, our Town's website, and a press release that we are going into our watershed inspection period. Those just went out today and he watershed inspections as soon as the snow is gone.
- J. Rollins-the interns we had from the McCarthy scholarship took there first water test today.
- **State revolving fund:** J. Rollins-we need to be on top of the schedule involved in the funding of this. This has to be secured by a Town sponsored bond. The bond must be part of the budgeting referendum. We need a motion to authorize the Town Manager to push that forward into the budget and bonding schedule. B. Stratford-the DWSRF documented would be submitted to the selectmen. The water and sewer commission authorized staff to file for water system improvements. There are three distinct projects. The timing on them slightly different, the first project is the most urgent and it involves replacing water mains on various streets. The total of the cost for the engineer's report is 1.2 million, the DWSRF has approved the project for funding for a 20 year note at 2% with possible 25%-50% loan forgiveness. The project start date is this July. In order for the Town to be authorized to enter into this contract we have to get referendum approval. The other two projects are extended out to July of 2022. J. Rollins-I thought they were all going simultaneously. M. Cormier-I think Bruce is right in that it is probably going to take most of the summer to get the remaining of the engineering done. Its not a project we want to start in the winter, maybe some tree clearing. J. Rollins-I have been talking with Bart and I think he wanted to make sure we push this whole package through. B. Stratford-the Town Manager must sign all three of the submittals and I think Bart was only ready to do the water main submission in the near term. J. Rollins-correct, but we need to make sure all of this is on the referendum for the budget, so it does not have to be done next year. B. Stratford-the total borrowing authority is \$5,692,331. J. Masicotte-this needs to be increased to include the \$167,000 contingency from page 1. B. Stratford-I will change according, this will be an excess of six million dollars. B. Hester-to redo some of the 6-inch lines on Greenwoods Ave and Thibault, I think is probably an engineering thing, but I think it should be brought to light, if we make it an 8-inch you are looking at better fire protection especially on the downtown area with those bigger buildings. It is not so much the pressure it is the volume, With the 6-inch pipe you are not going to get as much volume, that will boost the price up a little bit. M. Cormier-we knocked it down because there is 12-inches on Elm St and there is 8-inch right on the corner of Gay, its larger diameter pipe. There is plenty of water around the corner. B. Stratford-some of the amounts are still changing and the question is, I thought Bart was furthest along on the first project. We had just gotten preliminary engineering reports on the two storage tanks last month and they were double of what we originally thought. The question is will the DWSRF be able to fund those in the amounts that we are now looking at. It all depends on how much we can get from DWSRF or we

have to finance the remainder through other kinds of debt. J. Rollins-it is our understanding the DWSRF is going to fund the whole thing and at least a minimum of 25% loan forgiveness. The faster we move on this the closer we can get to the 50% loan forgiveness. B. Stratford-the timeline is critical it works backwards from the referendum date of memorial weekend Saturday. We must give notice of a special town meeting at least 30 days prior to the referendum and at this meeting these projects would have to be presented to the public. This is your opportunity to get approval from the public on the projects. The selectmen have to approve this process, the latest date being Monday April 13, 2021, P&Z has to approve it before we go to referendum. I have the commission approving these projects at next month's meeting. Do we have the documents to put this through to P&Z. If you want to get a referendum done for the Town's budget, we need to start moving quickly. P. Colombie-do you need that P&Z approval by April 15th, you would need approval at the April 12th meeting. B. Stratford-bond council says P&Z must approve the project before it can be started, it may not have to be before the referendum. P. Colombie-you need it for the referendum because it affects the vote. G. Closson-are meeting is the 12th unless we call a special meeting. J. Masicotte-so we need to increase it to 6 million for the request. Do the amounts have to be specific for each project. B. Stratford-what you end up with is the loan amount and you would get forgiveness of that note, you do not get any cash, it means your debt services in the future would be half of what you budgeted. You could roll it into your capital or operating budget. J. Masicotte-would it be wise to add a fourth line for contingencies and put \$220,000 which could be used on either one of these projects. B. Stratford-I think might be a possibility. I think you would make the language that shall the electors authorize the Town in the amount of 6 million dollars to do these three projects. B. Stratford-I have to verify these numbers with Bart. You are authorizing the Town Manager to sign the next document that goes to DWSRF that includes on how the financing is going to happen. B. Stratford-Bart wanted to get the water main document in first to see how it worked before he submitted the other two. J. Rollins-yes he wants to get that document into the SRF for the approval process so we can use it as a template for the other two however, we would like to get the commitment of all three in the current budget.

Motion: Bill Hester to allow Town Manger to sign the watermain DWSRF documents in order to move forward-Project # SFY-20-44, part one financial assistant application-Second by G. Closson. **Vote:** All in favor-*motion carried unanimous.*

Old Business:

Sewer plant bridge repair: still on schedule for 2022.

Dam Repair through USDA funding: J. Rollins-no update.

Water regulations update: J. Rollins-we have not looked at that. B. Hester-how is this supposed to work, can we make the motion to use this pipe? J. Rollins-it isn't just this one item, we were going to update other material.

Tree Harvesting: J. Rollins-We have not looked at that.

MIU's Installed-J. Rollins-program still on hold due to COVID-19.

New Business:

J. Lemelin-wanted to let Alex know we did open it up to Russ, he can't dump over \$2500 a month without paying.

B. Hester-just to let everyone the New Hartford water and sewer plants have recently been approved by the town to sell those assets. They sold for 8 million and are going to pay back debt services.

Adjournment: B. Hester-made a motion to adjourn meeting at 8:05 pm, seconded by G. Closson.

Vote: *all in favor-motion carried unanimous.*

Minutes Respectfully Submitted,

Rhonda Roy

Minute Secretary