



+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

January 12, 2021

Vice Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:10 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 and Finance Director Bruce Stratford, Steve Vail and Moderator Pam Colombie. John Masicotte arrived at 6:14 pm and Bruce Stratford at 6:21 pm after call to order was made.

Public Input-None

Approval of minutes from December 8, 2020: Motion George Closson **to approve the minutes of December 8, 2020.** Second by B. Hester. **Vote:** All in favor-*motion carried They unanimous.*

Barkhamsted Sewer Update: Jim Rollins, I spoke with Rob Colabella and everything is in the ground and done with the exception of the hardware, meters and piping inside the vault and manholes. They have not given an explanation as to why they have stopped working. All the meters have been purchased it is up to them to be installed. B. Hester-it is just two vaults correct? J. Rollins-yes there is one vault near the town line and there are air valves in the manholes one between Oakdale Ave and one somewhere on the Barkhamsted side. The meters must be put in the buildings. Marty has been trying to get in touch with them about sizing the meters. We are on target we are just waiting for them. Bruce is working with their town hall to pull all the details for the billing. J.Masicotte-are they going to start pumping? J. Rollins-no not until they have the meters in, and they also have to do the pressure test.

Sewer plant furnace: J. Rollins-Nothing has happened since the last meeting; the first boiler is running on natural gas. West State was hit by COVID-19, they are back in action. The second boiler is on schedule for next week. Once they get them both running on natural gas, then they will be calibrated to run on the methane.

Step screen: B. Hester-I have done some homework on this. I believe we have 200,000 that has been put aside, the step screen itself is going to cost \$198,000. I talked to the vendor on that and they will hold the price on it. I also have some names of some companies that will install the step screen, they will do it from beginning to end. They will survey the land, they will put in another channel, build the building, pour the pad and do the electrical. But unfortunately, we are looking at another \$150 to \$200,000 on top of the \$200,000. If it is planned out right, I think we can get the ball rolling so they can begin to make it. It is going to take 3 to 4 months to make and it will be coming out of Canada, which might push us close to next year's budget. I would like to make a motion to forgo the bidding process, I would like to order the step screen, we could have this step screen by the end of this year and up and running. B. Stratford-I am reluctant to waive the bid process, it is a substantial expenditure. B-Hester-I can still set up the meeting with this gentleman next week. B-Stratford-you have \$200,000 set aside for the step screen you do not have anything more than that unless you repurpose what you already have allocated. We already postponed Moore Ave pumpstation to next year. There is about \$50,000 left on pump station 8 that is in the budget that will probably not be used. I do not see another \$100,000 that you can repurpose. B. Hester-how about next year, let's say we get this ordered and with the next budget will there be \$150,000. Alex needs help now; I was down there and the rags are backed up. B. Stratford-this year in the sewer fund capital we put up \$63,000 for the vacuum truck, so you have a capital commitment for the vacuum truck for fiscal 2022, so if you were to add another \$150,000 to that, you will be up to \$213,000. You have not adopted that budget yet. You can buy the step screen, but you can't buy anything else, where would you store the step screen while you are waiting for the building? B. Hester-it is going to take 3 to 4 months to make the step screen and to get it here. J-Masicotte-it may be a big project, but it is the result of what everyone is looking for the step screen. J-Rollins-is this Claro Step screen. B-Hester-yes, it is one of the best ones to get. S-Vaill-if you are going to go that way and we don't have the money, wouldn't it be wiser to spend the money we have now in preparation for the step screen. If we have a contractor in to do the work first and then the step screen will come later. B-Hester I talked to a gentleman from RH White he is willing to set up a meeting and look at the site and get everything prepped. I can set this up for some time next week. S. Vaill-can we appropriate another \$150,000 in July. G. Closson-it would be interesting to see where we are going and nail down a closer number for the scope of the project. B. Hester-all plants are having a big problem with the rags because of COVID-19, these are being flushed down the toilets instead of the garbage. B. Stratford-I think if you can set up a meeting with the contractor and get some bid specs together to go out to bid. G-Closson-sounds like this is the step we should make it we can get it coordinated. B-Hester-I will send an email to everyone when I set up this meeting. J-Rollins-keep in mind if you cannot have a quorum that would be considered an unscheduled meeting, we must keep our numbers down to two or less members. B. Stratford-I would like to attend that as well if possible. J. Masicotte-does the step screen company do any financing? B-Hester- I will look into that

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

B. Stratford-I sent out four documents with notes and I think they are self-explanatory.

Water fund: We are 50% through the year, we have water rent revenues of \$839,536 compared to \$815,000 last year. Total revenues are at \$955,000 compared to \$962,000 last year at this time. Page 2-Water Works account 317 it is at 51% of the budget. I highlighted three accounts that are slightly overspent in the unencumbered balance column. The most significant one is the meter expenses account number 317-859, Marty is proposing a line transfer from transmission and distribution maintenance of \$3,592 as well as \$2,000 from aggregate materials which will put \$5,592 into that account which resolved the current deficit. The emergency repairs account went negative because of \$5,500 of police services for repair working and paving around town. M. Cormier-the meter budget should be fine for the rest of the year, we have done all our buying, we are rebuilding meters as the come in. I have 70 plus meters rebuilt and tested. J-Rollins-what about the MIU's. M. Cormier-we might have to put something into that line item. It is hard to know what we are going to need; it's going to be maintenance stuff. We will always have MIU's coming in, as they age the batteries die and need replacing but certainly not at the rate we been doing it. J-Rollins-so if we had a \$1,000 balance in there do think that would cover the MIU's for the rest of the year. M. Cormier-I would be more comfortable with \$2,000. I could take another \$2,000 from the aggregate line item.

Motion: by J. Lemelin to move \$3,592 from account 317-826-0002-0000-2003-0000 and \$3,000 from account 317-866-0000-0000 to account 317-859-000-0000 with a total of \$6,592. second by G. Closson. **Vote:** All in favor, *motion carried unanimous.*

Water Plant: Is at 41% of their budget, everything looks good there. Administration is at 43%. I will be making a pension contribution this month out of the \$127,000 budget.

Water Commission- Is at 6% of its budget. Total expenditures is at 38% of the budget compared to 38% last year at this time. The budgets are running comparable to last year.

Sewer fund Budget: The current line item we are at \$675,739 compared to \$669,000 what we collected last year. I underlined miscellaneous revenue for septic dumping we did have receipts during the month however those were not deposited until January 4th due to illness in the finance department. Normally the amount would be up to \$75,000, activity still looks good there. This would put it at 65% of the budget for 50% of the year. Related to this there is a couple of septic dumping accounts that are slow payers and I believe there is recommendation from Caitlyn that we start charging interest on past due accounts. The standard practice on tax collector's side is 1.5% a month and 18% a year and I think that would be a reasonable interest charge to be placed.

Motion: by J. Lemelin to charge interest at 1.5% a month and 18% a year for past due septic dumping, second by B. Hester. **Vote:** All in favor, *motion carried unanimous.*

Sanitation Plant Department- Is at 44% budget for the fiscal year, no issues on any line items.

Pumping Station- Is at 38% of its budget, I underlined account 316-826-0003-Collection System Maintenance there is no budget for that account however there is a purchase order to line item 316-826-0000-0000.

*W.P.C.A-*Is at 36% of its budget, I have underlined the Barkhamsted Interlocal Project, this is where we are capturing the expenses for engineering costs and such. We have a negative of \$3,365 spent because we have received a reimbursement from the plaza for some of the work and this is related to the revenue line item 999-878-007, on page 1 which we have already received \$5,000.

Sewer fund: Debt administration is at 23%. Total fund is at 38%, very similar to last year. Activities in the sewer fund are running as expected.

Bank Balance: Sewer fund has \$624,000 and the Water Fund has \$807,000, the savings account balance for the two funds is \$1,147,776. That is split: water fund \$874,030 and sewer fund \$273,746. This is where we reserve the money for our capital projects. If we build the step screen and installed it, it will take up all of that savings. J. Masicotte-technically the sewer fund would get an extra \$63,000 next year from the Vac Truck dumped back into savings seeing we took it out of this. B. Stratford-budget dollars yes. We could replenish this from the operations account. If the operations account started building a cash balance and it will if we implement a rate increase.

Water & Sewer Capital Improvements: The first page recaps the revenue Page 2 has all the expenditure activity. The top line is Pump Station 8 Replacement with a \$200,000 budget we finally made a payment to P&G Pepper, year to date expenditures for this project is at \$148,664, that completes the project. B. Stratford-Jim and Marty are you expecting anything substantial. You will see the unexpended balance is \$51,336. This is where you have \$50,000 in capital budget dollars that could be re-allocated to another project. The next underlined item is the vacuum truck, we paid for the vacuum truck \$207,000. We have \$126,000 budgeted for the next two years. As you can see, we only need \$81,962. We can cut that back \$21,000 each for the next two years. Leaving another \$40,000 which could be allocated to another project. The boilers we have an outstanding PO for that. Moving onto the Water-once again the Vac Truck is in the same situation as the sewer fund. I have underlined Wallens Hill Tank we have engineering cost activity; they are currently over budget based on the amount of money we have allocated. \$31,000 each with expenditures of with \$25,000 budget in each line and another \$6,000 on each line, with outstanding encumbrances with a purchase orders issued that have not been billed. It is all coming out of Lenard. J-Rollins all this relates to the State Revolving Fund. We wrote another purchase order today for test borings. B. Stratford-do we re-allocate some budget dollars from another project we have set up this year. J. Rollins-I would suggest moving money from Upland Ave watermain. I recommend putting another \$25,000 in each of them. J. Lemelin-is the Overlook Rd water main project done, we still have a \$100,000 in that account. B. Stratford-we have \$117,769 unspent, would you rather take it out of there. J. Rollins-yes.

Motion: by J. Lemelin to move \$50,000 from account 322-878-2003-0000 to account 322-878-2101-000-0000 and account 322-878-2102 with a total of \$25,000 to each account, second by G. Closson. **Vote:** All in favor, *motion carried unanimous.*

B. Stratford-is there still more work to be done on Brookside water main. J. Rollins-the paving needs to be looked at, the street department needs to look at it. We may split the cost.

B. Stratford-the line in that section is Replace Water Mains at CCGHT-we are spending money there, it is Environmental Partners money, we do not have a budget there.

Motion: by J. Lemelin to move \$50,000 from account 322-878-2003-0000 to account 322-878-2109-000-0000 second by G. Closson. **Vote:** All in favor, *motion carried unanimous.*

Sewer rates Increase: B. Stratford-I sent a two-page document that showed the statement of revenue for the water & sewer fund for June 30, 2019 and June 30, 2020. The fiscal year 2020 audit was completed in December and the financial report was issued by King & King. They are listed under the Town's website under Finance Department reports. Essentially in the year 2020 the Operating Income for the water fund declined slightly and the operating fund for the sewer also declined. The sewer fund is heading in the right direction however the water fund is not in danger of anything it just was not as it was last year. If you look under operating expenses you will see depreciated expenses for water at 476,924 and sewer 654,286. We must be mindful of setting aside funds for major repairs and replacements in the future. It is not a cash expense right now, but it will be a cash expenditure in the future. The net position for the waterworks improved and the net position for the sewer declined by \$200,000. This is what we are trying to address in the rate increase for the sewer fund. There is a page Comparative Annual Sewer Fees and related date, it compares the Winchester, Torrington, New Hartford, and Norfolk sewer district. Our annual cost for 5,000 gallons is \$530 we are proposing that it be increase to \$691 in a four-year period and that it is half of what customers in New Hartford and Norfolk are paying. Comparatively speaking we are looking at four years that the annual cost of the sewer user would be \$69, which is a \$160 dollar increase over four years which is chart Proposed Rate Increase impact on customers. This shows what the impact would be in year four. This does not consider the fixture fees or the grinder pump. On the sample impact customer page there maybe a 7% increase for Oak St in year and 5.5% increase for Stanton Ave. G. Closson-how long ago was there a review of this made by the systems financial requirements and a rate increase valuated on this basis. B. Stratford-I think the rate increase had to do with a capital recovery fee, which was a \$10 per quarter capital recovery fee. That would have been 2017. I think that rate increase was to build a savings account for the two funds, not to have all the revenue used to fund just operations. It was successful in proving the savings account balance. J. Masicotte-we have had a few rates increases and we have suggested some increases in the past which were put on hold. G. Closson-from my perspective you have done your homework, of course this would have to be presented to public hearing to justify it. I think when you are talking about comparative systems, the amount of users and the cost, also show that and not Torrington where you have a huge system. I think the fixture fee will eventually work its way out when people realize what is going on. What is the next step? J. Masicotte-we would have to set up a public hearing, not sure when we would be able to do this. I am not sure if we could do it on Zoom. J. Masicotte-the

budget that was presented with the four blue lines on top, does that include the \$100 for the grinder pumps? B. Stratford-it does not, that would have to be a separate line item. M. Cormier-Perch Rock Trail would not, and it depends on what number you are at on E. Wakefield Blvd. J-Rollins-1,500 is average. J. Masicotte-can we put something together for the public hearing that would specify the average increase using the average of 1550 cubic feet per month and per year. B. Stratford-we would have two sections one with a grinder pump and one without, fixtured fee and then meter. J. Masicotte-show the increase in base rate for four years with the average use of 1550 cf. B. Stratford-I will present this at the next meeting. J. Masicotte-when do you think the earliest public hearing meeting would be? B. Strafford-possibly March, it must be a 30-day notice, you would have to publish the proposed rates with the notice. We would have to build a package for the public and present to you the presentation from staff with visual aids and charts. If you like this rate structure, we can build a presentation showing the impact. G. Closson-if we can also show what the implication is if we do not increase the rates. B. Hester-maybe includes some pictures of the sewer plant showing things are wearing out and deteriorating. G. Closson-if we don't build a process to take care of this, we would have to put it in some kind of bonding package and then the implications what the rates are going to be to support this, we are better off doing it gradually. J. Rollins-as we are discussing the whole plan and not just the individual rates. We have been talking in the office about some of the things that take up a lot of our time. Caitlyn has been doing a lot of work looking at other departments water and sewer to see how they invoice and what they invoice for that we don't. One of the things that a lot of time is spent on is real estate closing final reads, the realtors always wait until the last minute to request this information. We were thinking for a regular closing read would be \$25 fee and an urgent or same day read would be a \$50 fee. There are other towns that do this, Bristol has across the board a \$75 fee. Other towns have septic dumping license, so when a vendor comes in, you can pay when you dump with a fab or a card, you would pay a license fee to us, say \$100 to be a vendor and then \$10 for every fab, it makes it easier for people to pay their dumping. Several towns charge for dumping of RV tanks. The other one affects the collector more than us, is a bounced fee charge or a 10% late fee or a flat rate for late fee. There is a lot of places that we are putting time an effort in. We need to make it harder for them to be delinquent. Caitlyn is working on a more thorough spreadsheet. J. Masicotte-I thought we had discussed the meter reading charge. J. Rollins-now would be the time to go from discussion to action. B. Hester-I look at it as added income because of the time being taken up, especially these last-minute readings, same as the sewer dumping, I have some ideas on that as well.

Cost for pumps on Morgan Dr/Lakeview Rd-J. Rollins-I have not look at it. M. Cormier- I spoke with Eric today he is going to get back to me and put something together. C. Closson-I spoke with some our neighbors, someone had to do a raise system on Morgan. It would be good to get the neighborhood interested in, if we could come up with something more realistic, I think the neighborhood would be in agreement with that. S. Vaill-years ago we talked about where the old chlorinator was and the whole system could be gravity and connecting on the Wakefield Blvd, has this been check into. M. Cormier-we have gravity right by the beach, that would be quite a way to go. G. Closson- I would appreciate any time spent on it the neighborhood is on board with it.

Carey Ave sewer project by homeowners: J. Rollins-I have heard nothing back from the public.

Crystal Lake Emergency Plan: J. Rollins-purchase orders for that project have been issued, work will get underway as time allows.

*Sewer Plant Generator, frozen valve in Portable Water Pump, Internet update, broken PVC pipe-*J. Rollins- sewer plant generator-everything is lined up, all parts are in and ready. Alex needs to set up appointment with vendor. J. Rollins-no movement on this, mostly likely due to COVID-19, Alex will continue to move forward. S. Vaill-a representative is supposed to come out and talk to him about that valve. J. Rollins-he said he should have some follow up next week. J. Rollins-broken pv pipe is schedule for when they are done with the boilers. J-Rollins-last year we did a new vfd on one of the sludge pumps, Alex has another one scheduled.

Bill adjustments: J. Rollins-there was a sewer blockage on a lateral on private property. M. Cormier we got a call from Clayton Webb for a customer at 12 Adam St, who had a blocked lateral, and they were having a hard time getting the water out of the lateral. We will camera the line one the blockage is cleared to let them know what cause the blockage. Mr. Webb was not able to clear the obstruction. I sent two of my guys out there and they decided to go down the main to make sure there was no problem there. We could see where 12 Adam St lateral came into the main, Mr. Webb's snake had not reached the main, therefore that tells up the blockage was in the yard. It was explained to the homeowner and Mr. Webb, they need to clear the line by having a root cutter come, after that we can get a look at it. We never got called back for re-inspection. The next conversation I had was a gentleman from Roto Rooter informing me that they would have to get out into the road. They were digging up the lateral and found a blockage. The blockage was near the curb but on the homeowner's property. Had we located that for him. knowing it was so close to my equipment I probably would have excavated that ourselves and done the repair and there would have been no cost to the homeowner. I would have repaired the short piece on his property which was only a couple of feet and repair all the way out to our main. When I went to inspect it that what Roto Rooter ended up doing. The excavation was quite excessive which I feel was unnecessary. The homeowner dropped off a packet, looking to get some assistance. The problem I have with this is we did not get that second call. He got a bill for \$9,849.81 from Roto Rooter. The only think I would advise us to do is whatever the cost to fix by me, which I have not worked up a number yet. J. Masicotte-if you could work up some numbers on what it would have cost us to repair and send out that packet for the next meeting. B. Strafford-can you verify this was not a system problem and was a usage problem from the homeowner. M. Cormier-at some point in the house they replaced the sewer lateral which was plastic throughout the entire yard, they started encroaching the curb line and a piece of cast iron was left in there, it went to plastic, to cast iron out to my clay in the street. They never ventured far enough to find the cast iron. J. Rollins-we will put packet together and present next month.

J. Rollins-we had another one today, which was a real estate transaction, and someone left a hose running and the new owner was not aware of it. R. Roy-it was a new owner that I contacted because we did not get a reading, therefore I called the new owner to see if she could take a picture of her meter and send to me. During the conversation she indicated that they found a hose running in the back yard. The average usage for that household is around 1500 cf, the

current reads usage was 13,346 cf. M. Cormier-the average cf is around 2700. M. Cormier-we are trying to set up a format, if there is an adjustment request it is done online, then I would do an investigation with the office and then have a proposal for the commission. What we usually do for an adjustment we would go back for previous quarters take the averages then use that number. This one would be 1491 cf there bill would be 256.89, a little higher than their average bill. We could also take the total amount used and split it in half. B. Hester-they are also paying for it in the sewer bill as well. J. Rollins-so maybe we should forgive the sewer bill and charge for the water. M. Cormier-if you give us permission, I think Jim and I can make this one, I would like to get back to her. Current balance is \$1080.00, if you were to take the average it would be \$256.89, if we used the mean method for the adjustment it would be 674.00. We are working on a proposed bill adjustment which will be presented to the commission.

Director's Report

- J. Rollins-develop a rubric for the bill adjustments which we just spoke about.
- J. Rollins-Barkhamsted Interlocal-Don Stein and I spoke a couple of days ago and he is going to touch base with Kevin Nelligan to start the first draft of the water agreement
- J. Rollins-we talked about Holmes Dr
- J. Rollins-we are working on updating the website.
- J. Rollins-there was some discussion regarding the wipes, we added a link that was posted.
- J. Rollins-was honored again with the Fluoridation Award, updated to website.
- J. Rollins-Rhonda and Caitlyn were looking today at the GEMS software and where we can add a date a field to help us track the zero usage in a more efficient manner, they want to code the vacant sites and a few others.

Old Business:

Sewer plant bridge repair: J. Masicotte-that will be 2022.

State revolving fund: J. Rollins-all three preliminary reports have been submitted, one for Crystal Lake Tank, one for the Wallens Hill Tank and one for the water mains.

Dam Repair through USDA funding: J. Rollins-same historic stuff, the next step is to sit with Lenard, we need to draw a flow chart map, so we know where it impacts us. We need to revisit the stream flow requirements. B. Hester-when you sit down with Lenard also mention you can sign up for SAM which is another government agency, you must have that in place before you can get any government money. I can send you the link to someone I speak with all the time.

Water regulations update: J. Rollins-we have not looked at that.

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:

B. Hester-I have investigated the septic receiving, I can get someone out there to demonstrate a flow meter for our septic receiving. We would have to add a pipe. It is a pipe that would come up from where the septic is received, the flow meter would be attached so they could measure the flow. It would be an ultrasonic flow meter temporarily. You can put a transmitter on it, so it transmitted to a computer and reads whatever goes in. We are doing an average a month of 178,900 gallons in the septic receiving, that is 122 dumps a month. Alex's holding take is 25,000 gallons. *J. Rollins*-how big in diameter is that pipe. *B. Hester*-might be six inches at the bottom but probably 3 inches to dump off the trucks. *S. Vaill*-I also spoke with Rhonda about looking into something like the gas pumps that we have at the town garage. If we could connect so they are using their own charge card. *B. Hester*-there is a treatment plant in the state of CT, I will send it to Rhonda.

J. Lemelin-do we have an update on Santoro's? *B. Stratford*-they have made some payments, but they are still way behind. The Town Manager wants to close them down. He has asked Kevin Nelligan to contact Santoro's attorney to give them an ultimatum. They were supposed to be making certain level of payments which they are not doing.

Adjournment: *J. Lemelin*-made a motion to adjourn meeting at 8:27 pm, seconded by *G. Closson*. **Vote**: *all in favor-motion carried unanimous*.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted,

Rhonda Roy

Minute Secretary