

WATER AND SEWER BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
November 19, 2024

In-Person: Noah Bond, Heather McElroy, Bruce Webster, Michael Strait, Bob Schnopp

Attending Virtually: Joel Cope

Call Meeting to Order: Heather McElroy called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Updates to the Agenda: None

Public Comment: Bob Schnopp addressed the Board regarding the outstanding water bill associated with his property. He sold the property, and it was later put up for tax sale. Mr. Schnopp re-purchased it and found that the previous owner, who had abandoned the property, had not paid water bills for a significant period of time. The account is over \$3700 in arrears. Heather McElroy told Mr. Schnopp that the Board would investigate the issue and contact him with updates.

Wastewater Treatment Facility Project Update: Mike Strait discussed a letter from Hoyle Tanner, advising the Board to reject the one bid it received for the WWTF repairs and updates. This bid came in over \$2million higher than anticipated. Mike said the Town is going back through the bid process, working to identify areas that can be scaled back to encourage more bidders.

Bruce Webster made a motion to reject the bid from Kingsbury Companies. Seconded by Heather McElroy. All in favor, so carried.

Water Treatment Facility Project Update: Mike Strait updated the Board on the water treatment facility project, saying that he is pursuing different funding sources, including a grant through the Vermont Bond Bank. This would provide up to \$250,000 (with no match from the Town). The application is due December 5, 2024, and the Town should know if they were awarded the grant by January 2025. This would cover the cost of relining the reservoirs. Mike says this part of the project cannot wait as it is leaking at a rate of over 30,000 gallons/day.

Muni-Billing Update: Noah Bond updated the Board on ongoing issues with Muni-Billing. These include inaccurate bills and a marked shortage in overall billing. Mike Strait added that some customers were only billed for debt service when they should have been charged the minimum fee, while other meters were not read. Noah told the Board his next steps are to correct and add past due charges, ensure all meters are read, review meter data before printing bills, and continue to work with H2O Innovations to address these and other inconsistencies/errors.

Bruce Webster made a motion to move 28 Cross Street from one unit to two units (to account for both the business and the residential space), effective next quarter. Seconded by Heather McElroy. All in favor; so carried.

Budget Report: Mike Strait presented the Board a preliminary draft of the 2025 budget. He notes that the system needs to be “tightened up” in anticipation of the \$8million loan repayment (with an annual payment of approximately \$200,000). He will work with Ashley Lucht (consultant with Quantified Ventures) on rate recommendations. Mike mentioned that high usage customers should see increases that are commensurate with their use. All customers will see increases. Heather McElroy said that the Board/Town Manager needs to communicate these changes clearly and in a timely manner so customers can prepare. Mike Strait will continue refining the budget and discuss with the Board at the next meeting.

Other Business: Noah Bond told the Board that there is a damaged fire hydrant on Pleasant Street. The parts needed to get back into operation are back ordered. He will keep the Board updated. Mike Strait also told the Board that the generator at the South treatment plant is being repaired.

Approve Minutes of Previous Meeting: Bruce Webster moved to approve the minutes of the October 15, 2024 meeting. Seconded by Heather McElroy, all in favor, so carried.

Executive Session: Bruce Webster made a motion to enter executive session at 6:22pm for water account shut-offs. Seconded by Heather McElory, all in favor, so carried.

Adjourn: