

**RICHMOND WATER AND SEWER
ANNUAL MEETING
June 2, 2014 MINUTES**

Members Present: Ashley Lucht, Chair; David Sander; Bruce Bailey; Bob Fischer

Members Absent: Bard Hill

Others Present: Geoffrey Urbanik, Town Manager, Kendall Chamberlin, Water Resources; Chris Fischer; Linda Parent, Town Clerk; Sheila Bailey; Peter Pochop, Green Mountain Engineering; and Ruth Miller was present from MMCTV to tape the meeting.

Ms. Lucht called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

1. Welcome and Public Comment

Ms. Lucht asked if there were any comments from the public and there were none.

Billing Adjustments

Ms. Lucht said that we were now counting living units, and we may not be 100% accurate. If not, how do we verify and how do we change?

The Manager said there would some circumstances of counting too many or too few units, the wrong classification, and how could we verify or inspect? Perhaps use the lister card?

Ms. Lucht said that if the unit is vacant it should still be charged the base rate. We should define a unit as a 1) livable space and 2) for businesses, a rentable space, vacant or not. We still need the ability to inspect.

Ms. Lucht spoke about multiple uses but not separate spaces or have discussions on churches that have rentable spaces.

Mr. Fischer asked how this was run normally with a mixed commercial and residential unit, such as a home-based business?

Mr. Sander said there was a difference between running a business and working from the home.

Ms. Lucht suggested it could be, if a house was a homestead it would be one unit but if there was a separate unit for a business then a commercial unit would be added, or a separate account.

There was some additional discussion, but it was agreed that this would be continued at a later date.

Estimated Bills

Mr. Chamberlin explained his guidelines of when bills were estimated. This was typically when a quarterly reading was abnormally high or low, and the meter would then be monitored. Sometimes the meters failed and a new meter was put in and the usage had to be estimated, and he used past years for an average for that quarter.

There was some light discussion and it was agreed that this should be formalized into a written policy for the board to approve in July.

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2 Account Classifications
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4 The Manager said that we needed a procedure to handle requests for account reclassification, such
5 as if the initial residential/commercial assignment was wrong according to class, or number of units,
6 or if the classification or units changed during the year. There was some discussion, and the board
7 suggested the following for a policy:
8

- 9 1) Written complaint or request for a change
10 2) Staff must be allowed to investigate and verify the use of the account
11 3) A report would be given to the Water Commission with findings and recommendations, for the
12 board to consider
13

14 Ms. Lucht said we should send a letter to customers regarding the new rates, acknowledging we no
15 longer use the ERU and now use a Base Unit, providing detail on their new rate estimate and
16 classification/assignment.
17

18 Mr. Granda agreed and asked if we should make an arrangement to reach out to any large customers
19 in town? We should invest time up front before people were surprised with billing.
20

21 At 6:30 PM Ms. Lucht left the meeting.
22

23 Superintendents Report
24

25 Mr. Chamberlin noted that the landscaping for the waterline repairs from last winter were completed,
26 and pavement patches were installed where needed. Mr. Chamberlin said that the Board should
27 consider increasing the revenue estimate for the FY2015 budget to \$125,000, from \$100,000, since it
28 appears that septage revenue was somewhat more than we thought. This might revise rates for
29 some.
30

31 Mr. Chamberlin reported that the federal EPA has a new agreement with Vermont and lower
32 phosphorous and nitrogen limits were likely to hit sewage treatment plants. Mr. Chamberlin felt that
33 in most areas, sewer treatment plants were the smallest source of these nutrients into waterways and
34 that the limits were not likely to change the overall loading in large bodies of water. We had
35 undergone a significant upgrade several years ago for phosphorous but the nitrogen may mean more
36 improvements.
37

38 Mr. Chamberlin said that while we had a good month for septage in May, the influent pump had failed
39 and they were running on a spare, and the screening for the septage intake was broken and needed
40 new teeth.
41

42 Mr. Hill asked if there was any update on our income survey, and the Manager said he would check
43 into this.
44

45 Charging public for water use
46

47 Mr. Fischer and Mr. Chamberlin spoke about how certain town functions used water that benefited
48 people not on the water system. For instance, the Fire Department is a large water customer. There
49 is a line in the administration budget for a water-only account that covers water use, but does not
50 cover fixed costs. It is estimated that the Fire Department uses 16,700 gallons of water a month. Mr.
51 Fischer said that this should be examined because the benefit of that water use extends to everyone
52 in Richmond, whether they have a fire or not. It may be fair to impose another fee or higher rate for
53 this account. Mr. Chamberlin stated right now that account was only paying \$250 per month and it
54 should be \$1,000 per month.
55

1 There was additional discussion on this. Mr. Fischer added that if other accounts were expected to
2 “step up” on their higher rates then the town as a whole should also.
3

4 **2. Adjourn**

5
6 Mr. Fischer offered a motion to adjourn at 6:55 pm and was seconded by Mr. Sander. So voted.

DRAFT