

Town of Richmond
Special Meeting of Water and Sewer Commission
Minutes of July 5, 2023

Members Present: Bard Hill, David Sander, Erin Farr, Jay Furr, Morgan Wolaver

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Duncan Wardwell, Assistant to the Town Manager; Steve Cote, Water Resources

Others Present: The meeting was recorded for MMCTV, Angela Cote, Cara LaBounty Carolyn Marshall, Denise Barnard, Heidi Bormann, Janet Morris, Mary Houle

MMCTV Video: <https://archive.org/details/richmond-water-sewer-07052023>

Call to Order: 6:00 pm

Welcome: Sander

Public Comment:

Sander: Thank you to everybody who helped to volunteer and put our Fourth of July festivities together yesterday.

Hill: I'd also like to thank the First Responders who responded to Bolton yesterday.

Additions or Deletions to the Agenda: None

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Reorganization of the Commission

Furr moved to appoint Morgan Wolaver as Chair of the Water and Sewer Commission. Hill seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander in favor. Wolaver abstains. Motion approved.

Furr moved to appoint Erin Farr as Vice Chair for the Water and Sewer Commission. Wolaver seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Farr abstains. Motion approved.

Review of list of water and wastewater items to be repaired or replaced

Timestamp: 0:05

Water and Wastewater Items to be Repaired or Replaced 6-27-23.pdf

[https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/06/3b Water and Wastewater Items to be Repaired or Replaced 6-27-23.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/06/3b_Water_and_Wastewater_Items_to_be_Repaired_or_Replaced_6-27-23.pdf)

Arneson: We've highlighted the ones in green to try to draw people's attention to the accomplishments in the last couple of weeks.

Cote, S: We seem to be back on track, but we've had some other issues that came along. On Friday, the mixer for our anoxic chamber failed. They got overwhelmed with sludge in the chamber. We got all three working. The decision was made by our contract operator that we needed to drain the anoxic chamber. For some reason, the valve that shuts the drain to the anoxic chamber failed. There was no way to stop the anoxic chamber from draining back into the wet well. We still have a failed valve in the system, but we're operating. Both of our influent pumps failed. One of them literally had a rag ball in it that was over a five-gallon pail. That just goes to show we need the screening in front.

Hill: What's the source of these?

Cote, S: It comes down the system. As far as I know, the Town doesn't have stormwater connected anymore. That's not to say that private individuals don't have stormwater connected.

Hill: If one came through, it would suggest that we are at risk for another one. It's coming from somewhere else other than a toilet or sink. There are pipes that don't go through traps that lead to the treatment plant.

Arneson: That's going to be part of the waterline surveys, to look at those private connections. It's going to be separate work by the same engineer to figure out who's still connected.

Hill: They opened up a manhole cover from the house next to mine, and there was a line that goes somewhere up the hill.

Cote, S: That is part of the engineering study. They're GPSing each manhole and getting the inlets and outlets. They're going to put it onto a map and figure out where the connections are and which way it flows. There's a Y-pipe in that manhole.

Hill: I will only observe it seems odd that we have something coming down from Browns Ct, we don't know where it's going. We have a line that's on Tilden Ave going up towards Browns Ct and we don't know where that goes either.

Cote, S: I believe we bring in Vermont Rural Water and we scope them and find out where they go. I'm more appalled at a rock or a piece of steel. Phil Laramie has said he has taken red bricks out of those influent pumps before.

Barnard: In front of Bridge Street Hair, the storm drain holes are pretty huge. After a big rain, my husband and I go out and we have to sweep the sidewalk because there's so much trash. It fills up at least three-quarters of a garbage can.

Wolaver: It is so bad at the bottom of Tilden Ave and Millet St.

Sander: We do know that after a storm, the volume at the treatment plant goes way up.

Bormann: Standard procedure is both of those auger systems are usually running at the same time. Why would it not be running at the same time?

Cote, S: Even though the distribution auger was broken, the decision was made we could still run the plant. I was not in favor of it.

Arneson: We had a discussion with the whole team over there, plus Nate Fredericks, who's the contracted operator. If we didn't de-water and run the press, then we could harm the bugs that are in the plant. Then there'll be other issues. We tried to run it as little as we could, knowing it was going to put stress on that gearbox.

Bormann: We all did get storm runoff information months ago. I know you guys came over within a week or so. Is it 90% for the other properties.

Arneson: We haven't gotten many calls and we haven't had staff time to go out and do the inspections. The Waterline Service Inventory is coming up and they're going to inspect to see the stormwater connected. I think by having the engineers do that, we will have a really good inventory of exactly what's connected.

Cote, S: Almost 90% of the buildings I enter in Richmond, there is a sump pump to the sewer system. There is a house on Cochran Rd with a two-inch water main coming in. Apparently, it was a telecom building that put in fire suppression. We don't have any record of it being disconnected. I am hoping it's been disconnected. There was a sump pump that hooked directly into that.

Farr: It seems like some of this conversation connects to the waterline inventory.

Hill: I suggest a future agenda item for an ordinance with financial penalties for putting stormwater into the wastewater system. What we're looking at here is actually a cost to the entire system.

Cote, S: We started this list discussion in March 2023.

Sander: Can you think of any possible source for that piece of wood other than storm runoff?

Cote, S: It could have been floating in the system for a while. Flushable wipes do not break down.

LaBounty: I think you're going to have to educate your system users on no longer using certain products.

Arneson: We can add a flyer into the bills on Friday. We can do a Front Porch Forum post that helped a couple of years ago. Continuing reminders are necessary. Nate Fredericks actually sent me an industry standard. We'll probably just copy that in Wastewater.

Hill: Can we include an image of what you pulled out? Once people flush it, they don't think about it.

Cote, S: I have been personally dealing with the Giroux's for over four years. They know me, when I bring something in that needs to be done, they will drop whatever they're doing, and get it done. The auger was something we couldn't wait on. We needed it. They had it within an hour and a half, they had it ready for us to put back.

Update on gateway sewer expansion

Timestamp: 0:31

Arneson: Vermont Water will be scoping the line tomorrow. If it passes the scoping test it proceeds to a pressure test. Then we'll have some information about the health of that line.

Hill: It's not the Town and it's not the Water Sewer Commission paying for this or liable for any damage resulting. It is the Reaps

Arneson: There is an agreement between the school, the Reaps, the Town, and Vermont Rural Water Association. It makes it clear that any expenses that might come to this are the Reaps.

Wolaver: We will get an update next meeting.

Consideration of recommending that the Selectboard approve a loan agreement for a water service line inventory

Timestamp: 0:32

Loan Agreement Water Service Line Inventory.pdf

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/06/3d_Loan_Agreement_Water_Service_Line_Inventory.pdf

Arneson: This is going to be 100% forgiven, it's ~\$43,000.

Furr moved to recommend that the Selectboard approve the loan agreement with the Vermont State Revolving Fund in the amount of \$43,300.00 for the water service line inventory, noting that this loan will be 100% subsidized and no payments will be made from the Town. Farr seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.

Barnard: The service line inventory, do we have a start date and an end date?

Arneson: It's a couple of stages, they can do some stages where they don't have to actually visit each individual home. I think it's a couple of months of work on that.

Cote, S: They came down and they went through all the paperwork already. That's already been done. Hinesburg sent out mailers, then you go down and take a picture of where your water line comes in and you email it to the QR code.

Arneson: They know they're not going to get everything, they try to streamline that process.

Cote, S: They took all of the information that Trudi did in 2007.

Arneson: I haven't talked to them about what the product is going to look like, but presumably a list of properties that are connected to their sump pump or stormwater.

Update on water tank mixer bids

Timestamp: 0:37

Water Tank Mixer Bid Tab.pdf

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/06/3e_Water_Tank_Mixer_Bid_Tab.pdf

Arneson: We received two bids. They're quite a bit different. We've not had time to go through those in detail to see exactly the differences. It might be the Liquid Engineering bid at a larger mixer. We'll have to look in and find out if they did and if so, why?

Cote, S: Liquid Engineering replaced the one mixer in October that we had. I believe it was like \$18,000 for that one. We'll dive in and get some more details and come back with a recommendation.

Hill: We can carry it forward to the next meeting.

Cote, S: The reservoir has to have mixers to keep the water all moving, otherwise it just stagnates. And then it's required by the State to have it cleaned every so many years.

Follow up on efflorescence concerns on the water tank

Timestamp: 0:39

Arneson: We had the 2020 report and there were continued concerns about efflorescence. So, we asked Tyler Billingsley to take a look. He is concerned as he looks at it. He says there's more than just sort of seeping. There's actually more water than he thought was going to be there. So, he recommend we had a diver in there to get a closer look to see what's actually going on in the inside. He says this is probably going to move up on our priority list as far as repairs that are a little bit more imminent than we had hoped.

Hill: Kudos to Don Morin for not letting go of this over the last three or four years. When we come back to this, we should be talking about liability as well. How old is the tank? This is a 100-year project that has substantial issues after 10 years. If this requires substantial repair, we need to be dodging substantial lawsuit. I'm agnostic about who we sue, because I know I've paid someone to engineer and construct it and they're all licensed and insured.

Cote, S: When I was talking with Tyler today, he felt that 100-year tank certainly should have had epoxy coated rebar.

Hill: That's something for us to be aware of when we get into what is potentially expensive repairs or remediation.

Arneson: We have at least one recent dive video.

Cote, S: He would like the diver to physically look at the structure on the inside to see if there are cracks evident.

Arneson: The cleaning comes with the diver. It might add an extra couple hours or something I imagine.

Wolover: They might consider doing some ultrasonic type of inspection. We might want to ask about it instead of just doing a video. If there's something delivered through the wall, they might be able to pick up pockets.

Hill: Last I knew, there were engineers who specialize in concrete cement structures. That's what we need.

Discussion of structure of meeting minutes

Timestamp: 0:45

Selectboard WS Minutes Proposal.pdf

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/07/3g_Selectboard_WS_Minutes_Proposal.pdf

Arneson: Duncan does the minutes for this commission as well as the Selectboard. They've evolved into more of a transcript of the meeting rather than a summary. It does take quite a bit of time to go through and make sure that everything is accurate with that level of detail. He's proposing to try to shift to more of a summary style where he would capture the main comments, the main points of the discussion, and then provide the motions that are necessary. I think it will certainly free up some time to do a few other things.

Farr: I always read the minutes because we're supposed to read them. My instant reaction is there's a lot going on in the Water and Sewer Department, and this might not be the time to start synopsis.

Hill: We're talking about the statutory obligations or are we doing something more. I'm fine with meeting the minimal statutory obligations, particularly, now that it's recorded. If you want to watch it, you can watch it at double speed. We do have a full public record of everything everybody said and a recording. I will say it is really tedious to do these detailed minutes of who said what, and it generally is not an expectation under State statute.

Arneson: The State minimum is literally who was their time, date, place motions and agenda items. We would still provide more than that, it would be a summary of the conversation and some of the key points.

Houle: The statutory obligation is motions, whether they passed or not. Beyond that is at the good graces of whoever's doing the recording.

Barnard: As a water user, I think in depth minutes are owed to the users for what has happened for the last 2-3-4 years and the mess that we're in now. I think it needs to continue a little longer, to be more accountable and to show the public and the users that you are taking this seriously.

LaBounty: My question is when discussion has occurred and potentially incorrect information was provided, are the videos legally part of the record? Or is it strictly the meeting minutes that are actually approved. If you do not make the video part of the legal record, then I do not agree with reducing what you're doing. If you are allowed to adopt video as legal record, then I 100% support potentially scaling down. As somebody who has been said that I've said something incorrectly in a public meeting, which I did not, I like the legal record.

Hill: My observation of the legislature is they post videos, and they keep them on their website for years. I don't know why they do that if it's a legal requirement.

Wolaver: I guess the challenge really is we don't have the time to go back and read verbatim or listen verbatim to videos.

Arneson: We can find out.

Update on search for Water and Wastewater Superintendent

Timestamp: 0:51

Arneson: We brought in a previous candidate to meet with Water Wastewater staff. We also had another person reach out who was a new candidate. We had our first interview with him last week, and he'll be coming in next week to meet Water Wastewater staff. I'm hopeful that next week we can make a decision on one of these individuals and move forward with a new Water Wastewater superintendent.

Follow up on the 10% for Vermont loan program

Timestamp: 0:52

Arneson: They are going to be meeting in mid-July to see whether or not they will do a second round. It's contingent on the amount that gets loaned out in the first round.

Cote, A: The wastewater and stormwater separation and the ongoing water lines, that's kind of like a long-range, mid-range thing. I encourage you to put a grate in, that's got to happen tomorrow. Your study is months from now. You need to prevent this now. Put the grate in front of your influent pumps. That should happen now.

Arneson: There's a lot more to that to just put it in. I think that was more of a 20-year study redesign.

Hill: We can put it on the list and discuss it as a future agenda item.

Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Timestamp: 0:55

Warrants:

*Furr moved to approve the warrants of 7/5/23 as presented. Farr seconded.
Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*

Minutes:

*Furr moved to approve the Minutes of 6/20/23 meeting as presented. Sander seconded.
Roll Call Vote follows discussion.*

Farr: There was a mistake on the first motion for the water meters, Jay Furr made the motion and not me.

*Furr moved to incorporate those changes. Farr seconded.
Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*

Purchase Orders:

*Furr moved to approve PO# 4608 to M&T Bank/Wilmington Trust for Water Tank revolving loan not to exceed \$37,704.86. Farr seconded.
Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*

*Furr moved to approve PO# 4639 to Simpleroute for Upgrade to Microsoft 365 and IT Security Upgrades not to exceed \$11,741.57 total (or \$3,943.27 for Water and Wastewater portion). Farr seconded.
Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*

*Hill moved to approve PO# 4646 to Simpleroute for FY24 IT Services not to exceed \$22,440.00 (or \$550 per month for Water and Wastewater portion). Sander seconded.
Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*

Discuss Items for Next Agenda: Not formally discussed at meeting.

Adjournment

*Furr moved to adjourn. Farr seconded.
Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*

Meeting adjourned at: 6:53 pm

Chat file from Zoom: None