

**RICHMOND WATER AND SEWER
COMMISSION MEETING
February 25, 2015 MINUTES**

Members Present: Bard Hill, Chair; Chris Granda; Bruce Bailey; Robert Fischer

Members Absent: David Sander

Others Present: Geoffrey Urbanik, Town Manager, Kendall Chamberlin, Water Resources; Connie Doherty, Finance Assitant; Sharon Dwire; Wendall Dwire; Bill & Julie Eschholz; Tim Ramon; Elizabeth Wright; Peter Pochop, Green Mountain Engineering; and Ruth Miller was present from MMCTV to tape the meeting.

Mr. Hill called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Welcome and Public Comment

Ms. Hill asked if there was any public comment but there was none.

Frozen Water Pipes and Call for Action

The Manager explained that since last week, the water system managers have called for residents to trickle water from a faucet to help keep water mains open, as well as service lines free from ice. The unusually cold Winter has caused a number of freeze ups in town, and the system has been spreading the word to give people the suggestion of trickling water. Since then, the freezing problem has gotten worse and the system needs residents to continue trickling water, probably through the end of March, since more and more service lines are being frozen and if they can be thawed, must continue a trickle of water until the ground thaws.

There being a cost to the system users to use this much water (as much as 200 gallons per day, for more than a month) users have asked for some sort of credit to recognize their contribution to the overall health of the water system. This was what was the topic of discussion – should we recognize this effort through a reward, and if so, how to implement it?

Mr. Bailey agreed we needed a “cap” on rates for this quarter, and not a rebate or a credit. He suggested charging users no more than they were at the last quarter.

Mr. Fischer asked if using the last quarter’s numbers wasn’t a good idea? There was a discussion on how that could be implemented through the computerized billing system. Mr. Fischer asked how much this would affect the budget. The Manager said that it was lost revenue but that this was one of the slowest quarters and it probably would not have a negative impact on expected revenues.

Mr. Granda asked how this would be achieved? We needed to understand it to be simple and apply to everyone. Ms. Doherty suggested that the change needed to be a flow rate adjustment or a “credit rate” but it would have to be flat and apply to everyone equally, which would create a “winner/loser” system unless bills were manually adjusted one by one, which was time consuming.

There was quite a bit of discussion on these points. Those members of the public attending agreed that something should be done and that the reasoning made sense. Some asked how long they should trickle their water, and Mr. Hill said that they should take the temperature of the water and if it was 40 degrees or colder, they should keep trickling water until the temperature approached 40 degrees. This could be some time.

1 There was some agreement to cap rates at the value of the 2nd quarter billing, providing that people
2 exceeded that. If they used less, then they would be charged accordingly. There was discussion on
3 how to get the word out, using Front Porch Forum, the website and a flyer passed out at Town
4 Meeting.

5
6 Mr. Hill offered a motion to make a rate adjustment for the 3rd quarter billing, in order to encourage
7 people to run their taps to avoid freeze ups, to cap the fees charged to no more than what was
8 charged for the 2nd quarter, using manual or automated adjustment as necessary. Mr. Granda
9 seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

10
11 There was a brief discussion on how to avoid freeze-ups in the future. Mr. Granda was curious to
12 know if increasing the salinity of the water would work.

13
14 It was agreed that there would be no Water Commission meeting on March 2nd, but members would
15 attend the discussion on the West Main bond question.

16
17 **Adjourn**

18
19 Mr. Fischer offered a motion to adjourn at 6:05 pm and was seconded by Mr. Bailey. So voted.

