

Water Commission Annual
Customer Meeting Minutes
5/19/2020

Called to Order: 6:02 PM

Present by Zoom: Fran Huntoon, Don Morin, David Sander, Bard Hill, Katie Mather
Absent: none

Others Present by Zoom: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Kendall Chamberlin, Water & Sewer Superintendent; Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin. Assist.; and Angelica Contis recorded the meeting for MMCTV Channel 15; others present: Christy Witters

1. Welcome by Bard. No comments.

Discussion of Accomplishments of Past Year

Josh reported:

- that the town participated in the Vermont Rural Water Association Apprenticeship Program for the last 6 months and that through Kendall's efforts we were the first in the state to use the program.
- that construction on the Bridge St. waterline replacement project started in early May with an anticipated completion by August, 2020.
- that the Water Rule was amended to give the Water and Wastewater Superintendent more authority to protect the public health.
- that plugs from hydrants on Jericho Rd. and at Middle and Elementary School had been removed
- that the Town took over the water line at the Middle and Elementary School.
- that the Town adopted a Water and Wastewater Service Connection Permitting Policy.
- that the Town adopted a Policy for Providing Water and Wastewater Service to Future Public or Private Land Development Projects or Properties
- that work began on the electronic mapping of the water and wastewater system that can be updated as repairs, improvements and extensions are done.
- that the Town replaced the 2003 work truck with a "new to us" 2007 Ford Ranger Sport 4x4

Discussion of FY21 Budget & Rates

Josh reported:

- that operational spending was increasing by \$980 for Water; and \$6,235 in Wastewater
- that notable Increases included administrative expenses and an allocation for audit expenses that were not allocated to Water and Wastewater budget in prior years
- Notable Decreases included a reduction in general insurance after going out to bid and health insurance decrease that was based on some assumptions in FY20 due to not being fully staffed at the time the budget was created. Josh noted that the FY21 budget is based on actual usage by all four employees.

- that Septage revenue has performed consistently higher than the budgeted \$190,000. This line was increased to keep user rates stable in light of potential economic hardships due to COVID-19
- that there was an overall Water revenue increase of \$980 to cover the same increase in expenses.
- that overall Wastewater revenue increased by \$6,235 to cover the same increase in expenses.

Water Rates

				Change FY20 to FY21	
		FY21	FY20	Dollar Difference	Percentage Difference
Residential					
Fixed Rate		\$111.33	\$116.52	-\$5.19	-4.5%
Metered		\$11.85	\$12.45	-\$0.60	-4.8%
Commercial & Government					
Fixed Rate		\$636.57	\$594.72	\$41.85	7.0%
Metered		\$10.16	\$10.67	-\$0.52	-4.8%
School					
Fixed Rate		\$5,277.83	\$5,615.14	-\$337.31	-6.0%
Metered		\$17.21	\$17.05	\$0.16	0.9%

Wastewater Rates

				Change FY20 to FY21	
		FY21	FY20	Dollar Difference	Percentage Difference
Residential					
Fixed Rate		\$190.66	\$194.64	-\$3.98	-2.0%
Metered		\$20.32	\$20.80	-\$0.49	-2.3%
Commercial & Government					
Fixed Rate		\$577.08	\$562.56	\$14.52	2.6%
Metered		\$17.41	\$17.83	-\$0.42	-2.3%
School					
Fixed Rate		\$4,450.03	\$4,892.44	-\$442.42	-9.0%
Metered		\$14.51	\$14.86	-\$0.35	-2.3%

Discussion of Upcoming Projects and Capital Projects

Josh reported on:

- Waterline replacement on Bridge St. from the railroad to the bridge.
- Looking at the past:

This will summarize the impacts to the Water & Sewer Budget from our capital plans, showing current and projected indebtedness

- 2006 Treatment Plant Upgrades = \$3,740,000 repayment of \$348,378 over 20 years = \$22,220 per year
- 2010 Sewer Lining & Manholes = \$445,999; 50% forgiveness – repay \$222,999 over 20 years @ 2% = \$14,092 per year

- 2011 Jericho Road = \$941,200 total; repay over 20 years at variable rate, decreasing over time = \$68,217 budgeted for FY20
- 2014/15 Water Storage Tank & Chlorine Project
- \$1,575,000 bond repayable over 30 years at -0.7% interest in the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF); \$37,705 per year. This was a negative interest loan but has been restructured to reduce the principal and subsequent payments to achieve the same reduced payback. Final Payment in 2048.
- \$181,000 GAP loan to cover the portion not eligible for the DWSRF program. \$28,322 per year. Final payment in 2025.
- 2016 East Main Street = \$1,275,000 payable over 30 years beginning in 2019; estimated to be \$25,140 per year.
- The Bridge St. waterline replacement project is projected to total around \$670,000 with 50% forgiveness on the bond, payable over 40 years.
- West Main Street / Gateway extension is yet to happen so is impossible to predict at this time. The cost for this will be paid for by customers of the new lines and possibly grants.

Discussion:

Don asked why the Bridge St. construction loan was for 40 years concerned that the improvements would need repair prior to payoff. Josh responded that it had to do with the loan instrument, Kendall added that PVC is so durable now that it has a 100 year reasonable lifespan.

Biobot COVID-19 Study

Josh reported that:

- Richmond is participating in a study with Biobot to measure the concentration of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) in sewage. This study is being conducted to estimate the prevalence of COVID-19 infection in communities
- The May 4, 2020 test results from Richmond show about a 1.5% infection rate. Currently the State is reporting 944 cases or about 0.2% infection rate.
- The difference between the local and State percentages may be explained by the fact that not everyone who has COVID-19 is being tested or is being tested and coming back with a positive test.

Discussion:

Bard noted that in county by county test results Chittenden has high counts in comparison to the rest of the state.

Discussion of appointments for the Water and Sewer Commission

Open Seats on the Water and Sewer Commission

Josh reported:

- that there are 2 one- year terms on the Water and Sewer Commission open that are reserved for customers of the Water and Sewer System that are appointed by the Selectboard
- that Letters of interest are due to the Town Manager by May 27, 2020
- that at the June 15th meeting the board can make the appointments.

Discussion:

- Bard thanked Don for serving on the commission adding that although he is willing to continue he does have some competing interests. If anyone is interested in joining the Commission Bard offered to discuss the time commitment.
- Josh mentioned Kendall's post on FPF honoring his crew for their tireless efforts at keeping water and wastewater running smoothly. Bard agreed thanking the crew and acknowledging that there are tasks that aren't always pleasant. Bard added that it's impressive that our staff deals with all of the challenges and while maintaining a high quality of professionalism.
- Kendall reminded everyone that the rates are retroactive to April 1st. Bard added that it was impressive that the staff was able to control rates and achieve reductions this year.

Vote on Rates and Budgets

Fran moved to approve the budgets and rate structures as presented, Don seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, Fran, Don, Katie, voted unanimously.

Don commended Kendall for the work he does and the way he does it adding that he fears Kendall may retire in a year or two and there should plan in place for that inevitability. Bard added that those concerns are well founded, when someone moves on there are moments of anxiety, but experiences with replacing the Town Manager and Police Chief have proven successful and we've been able to move forward. Kendall responded that all the new operators are under 30 and hopefully they will be the future here in Richmond. Bard hoped Kendall wouldn't retire before he did and that there will be thoughtful conversations that take place prior to Kendall retiring. Kendall replied that he hopes that Richmond will consider hiring someone internally when that time comes.

Adjourn:

Fran moved to adjourn, Katie seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, Fran, Don and Katie voted affirmatively.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40PM