

Water Commission Minutes
4/05/2021

Called to Order: 5:30 PM

Present by Zoom: Fran Huntoon, Don Morin, David Sander, Bard Hill, Cody Quattrocci

Absent:

Others Present by Zoom: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Kendall Chamberlin, Water & Sewer; Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin. Assist.; Rod West, Matt Tourville, Bob & Joy Reap and Jack Linn, the meeting was recorded for MMCTV Channel 15

1. Welcome by Bard.

Public Comment-

Jack Linn, asked if there is a procedure where the users of the water system and tenants could vote to decide to spend money that is already bonded? Bard said it is on the agenda and will be discussed. Jack asked to have some numbers included in the minutes providing information on surrounding communities residential and commercial rates. This information showed that Richmond users are billed up to 50% more for the same quantity of water. Jack went on to say that in the past the number of users was the explanation provided for why it is more expensive in Richmond than other communities and now that there more than 20 new users at the creamery rates have not gone down, they have gone up adding that he feels we should not spend more money but back off until our rates compare with other towns.

Bard thought this could be a good topic for the annual meeting. Richmond compared to other towns, cost and permitting and other comparisons in terms of infrastructure, compliance and number of users. Kendall said that Vergennes is just upgrading their systems to Richmond's standards. Don said he has been concerned about what Jack Linn said and thinks that capital construction needs to slow down without additional income.

2. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda. None

3. Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Minutes:

David moved to approve the Minutes of 03/15/2021; Fran seconded. Roll Call Vote: Fran, Cody, David, Don, and Bard voted affirmatively; Motion passed.

Purchase Orders:

David moved to approve PO #4110 to VLCT PACIF in the amount of \$12,182.71; Fran seconded. Roll Call Vote: Fran, Cody, David, Don, and Bard voted affirmatively; Motion passed.

David noted that this is a break-out from the Town's insurance for just Water & Sewer.

Warrants:

David moved to approve the warrant as presented; Fran seconded. Roll Call Vote: Fran, Cody, David, Don, and Bard voted affirmatively; Motion passed.

4. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

a. Review of Draft FY22 Water and Wastewater Budget

Josh reported:

- that this is the first pass at the budget that will be voted on 5/18.
- that the budget is in line with last year's budget
- that income increases are due to certifications and wage increases anticipated
- that there will be a single audit due to federal grant money
- that estimated rates will be available at the next meeting

Discussion included:

- that Don agreed about salary increases with certifications but noted that salaries are up 10% and the rates set at a 4% increase. Bard replied that one line item in expenses may go up faster than revenue overall. Don said revenue with septage has gone up but is concerned that salaries going up and septage may go down. Josh responded that when we look at the wastewater side that will look differently. Don said a 10% increase in salaries is very concerning adding that when septage goes down salaries will stay the same so he would like to know what the other towns pay for salaries. Bard said that we have lost workers to other facilities that pay higher. Kendall said that was true. Bard thought that there should be a deeper dive. Kendall said we lost an apprentice in the last year who was making \$12 per year that went to Burlington and is making \$27 per hour. This will be discussed at the annual meeting.

Josh reported on wastewater:

- that knowing septage is high we kept the numbers at an historic level

Discussion:

- that Bard noted that insurance went down. Kendall said that there are three (3) single guys working now so the cost has gone down.
- that Bard noted surplus money from septage goes into different funds. Fran asked if an analysis of septage receipts could be done for the last five (5) years to be sure we are using good numbers.
- that Don asked about the administrative expense and is concerned why the numbers have gone up from \$14,000 to \$21,000. Josh said the numbers represent the administrative time put into water and wastewater.
- that Bard asked where the surplus goes to, Josh replied surplus money goes into an unassigned account for Water and Sewer, Bard asked to see the fund balances at the next meeting.
- that Jack Linn asked about the funds. Josh replied that the funds represent money in the bank for projects. Kendall said Hinesburg is looking at a \$20,000,000 investment for upgrades to remain in compliance. Josh said some of the money is about to be spent in a few agenda items. Jack Linn felt that we have been upgrading more than other towns, Bard said instead of doing maintenance and

repairs the idea has been to replace what needs to be replaced and that has saved money.

- Bard said this can be looked at again at the next meeting to review fund balances and a 4-5 year trend. Josh said that was possible adding proposed rates should also be available.

b. Consideration of approval of Step III Engineering agreement for the Bridge St. Infrastructure Replacement Project Church St. to Volunteers' Green

Josh reported:

- that this would take care of the last remaining portion of the line replacement
- that the project is estimated at \$400,000 including the engineering.
- that to keep the project moving this needs to be approved

Discussion:

- Don asked how much the project will actually cost, Josh replied there is 75% forgiveness on the \$400,000.
- Don asked about the COVID bill. Bard said there are several bills that have passed and gone onto the legislature adding that when there are new funding sources there are not yet regulations or guidelines for how the money can be spent and that House bill 318 amended how the covid money could be spent. Kathy mentioned that the "Hometown" paper published an article that indicated there is \$410,000 allocated to the Town of Richmond, Bard added that there is additional money that was meant to go to counties, but Vermont does not have county government, Josh added that we are keeping track of what is happening.
- Kendall said that Richmond is in good position to take advantage of the programs.

David moved to approve the Step III Engineering Services Agreement with Green Mountain Engineering in the amount of \$45,900 and to appoint Josh Arneson as the duly authorized representative; Fran seconded. Roll Call Vote: Fran, Cody, David, Don, and Bard voted affirmatively; Motion passed.

c. Update on West Main St. waterline replacement project to start early to mid-April

Josh reported:

- that Baker and Millet streets will be under construction sometime mid-April
- that Green Mountain Engineering are the engineers and J. Hutchins the contractor
- that 2-way traffic will remain open with sidewalks will having a flagger to get around construction
- that residents should be prepared for unexpected outages
- that construction should last 4 weeks
- that updates will be posted on the town website, Front Porch Forum and the VT alert system will also be used adding that residents can sign up on the town website.

Kendall reported:

- that the water line being replaced is pre 1950 and the last of the cast iron pipes
- that the project will be more expensive if we do not do it during the Route 2 rebuild

d. Superintendent's Report

Kendall reported:

- that they have been busy flushing hydrants
- that the valves for the project have all been located
- that a temporary water line will be installed for a resident who must have water
- that the town may participate in phosphorus study at no cost
- that there is work being done to map district boundaries as well as the proposed expansion
- that he and Josh will be talking about the class action law-suit for PFAS

Discussion included:

- that staffing is good right now

e. Discussion of expansion of sewer system into the Gateway District

1) Discussion of bond vote and a vote to expand the Water and Sewer District

Bard reported:

- that the Town voted and approved a bond by a narrow margin 5 years ago
- that after discussion with the Town attorney bond votes are not forever
- that the Water & Sewer Commission does not have authority to borrow money
- that it was recommended that there be a new bond vote
- that how to vote on the proposed district has been confirmed and that it is a vote of the residents of the old and new districts adding that you need to be a registered voter of the town to vote and it is not a matter of who owns the property but who resides at the property and is a user of the system.

Discussion included:

- that Jack Linn asked if for expansion of the water system only the registered voters of that district would vote, Bard said it would be both districts. Jack Linn said that landlords who do not reside in the district do not get a vote. Bard said that is correct. The question is whether you need to be a registered voter to vote. Josh said Linda was looking at it.
- that Jack Linn asked if he has two (2) residents, and they do not have meters who gets to vote. Bard said it is not necessarily the customer but whether you are a resident.
- that Don asked who votes on the bond. Bard said the entire town votes on the bond adding the Water Sewer district expansion would be voted on by the residents in both the current and proposed district.
- that Rod West thought that in the past expanding into a new area required a 50% vote of the proposed district, not a majority of both combined. Josh will ask the attorney that question and have the answer for the next meeting.
- that Bard noted there is not a vote for the Mobil station because there is no resident and the residents of the mobile home park can vote but not the owner of the park. Bard noted that this information is different than that was considered five (5) or six (6) years ago.
- that Bard said if the district passes your property by state statute you are required to use the system. Kendall said that is correct.

2) Discussion on whether to include the section between the chiropractor and the Mobil Station in Phase II

Bard reported:

- that the Mobil station is the end of phase II.
- that the new owner of the Mobil station is considering putting a septic line under the interstate and build a septic system on the other side. They are potentially interested in hooking up to the proposed expansion and after the Mobil station it gets more complicated.
- that phase one is to the Reap property
- that the definition of phase II would need to be amended to include the Mobil Station.

Discussion:

- that Fran said if everything falls into place and we build Phase II to the station would they have to hook into the system. Bard said yes and he has had discussions with the owner.
- that Bard said the mobile home park is interested in expanding the park and if the park were connected to a public line there would be no problem with him doing that
- that Don felt having the mobile home park would make the expansion more affordable.
- that the board agreed that Phase I would be to the Reap's, Phase II to the Mobil station, Phase III to the mobile home park
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3) Follow up on definition of failing septic systems

This topic was not discussed.

4) Continued discussion on funding options including Bond Bank, USDA, CWSRF, and COVID relief funds

Bard reported:

- that if we have failing systems certain funds are available
- that the USDA is interested in mobile home parks that are owned by individuals
- that CWSRF is looking for job opportunities
- that if new federal money is coming to VT that will be looked into

Discussion included:

- that Kendall said having our project ready will be important regardless of the funding source.
- that Josh said we applied 2 years ago to CWSRF and were denied, he was not certain that we would be in a different position now adding that the application would be due May 15 and asked if the commission wished to submit for Phase 1 which we have most of the information for or include Phase II and III? Bard said that even if the Mobil Station has more employee's he did not think it would make a difference. He thought submitting for just Phase 1 would be best, the other commission members felt that was reasonable.

- that Jack Linn asked if the capital costs of the expansion would be borne by all the district users or just the new users. Bard said that the new users pay for the extension over a period of time and for their own hook up to the system.
- that Joy Reap said that they had some help that was free to fill out the applications. Josh said Joy sent him some contacts and he would be checking it out.
- that Rod West said that he felt there would be economic gain for the area with Phase 3 because it borders the only industrial area in Richmond.

5) Review of project planning timeline

This topic was not discussed.

6) Consideration of applying for a Northern Border Regional Commission grant

This topic was not discussed.

7) Other topics related to the expansion of the sewer system

This topic was not discussed.

5. Discuss Items for Next Agenda and Adjourn

Item 3

Item 6

Item 5

Who is eligible to serve on the Commission?

6. Adjourn

David moved to adjourn; Fran seconded. Roll call vote: Fran, Don, David, Cody, and Bard voted affirmatively. The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.