

**Town of Richmond
Water and Sewer Commission Meeting
Minutes of June 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; Allen Carpenter, Interim Water Resources Superintendent; Steve Cote, Water Resources

Others Present: The meeting was recorded for MMCTV, Morgan Wolaver, Virginia Clarke, Heidi Bormann, Denise Barnard, Cara LaBounty

Call to Order: 5:30 pm

Welcome: Sander

Public Comment: None

Additions or Deletions to the Agenda:

Hill: The discussion of meeting times.

Sander: The times are dependent on content in the agenda, I do think 5:30 pm is better than 5 pm.

Hill: Let's just shoot for 6 pm. If we feel compelled to start at 5:30 pm, we'd have to pay attention to the start time that works.

Arneson: So maybe it is just a conversation with Jay and David. We've gotten through a lot of very lengthy issues recently.

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Review of Consumer Confidence Report and Public Notice regarding missed asbestos test

Sander: I assume you all saw the notice in the packet (https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/06/3a2_Public_Notice_on_Asbestos_Test_-_Richmond.pdf). We missed the required asbestos test. It was done later and yielded no asbestos in the test.

Arneson: The Consumer Confidence Report is an annual report that comes out at about this time every year that we have to deliver to all the Water customers. Everybody gets a mailed copy, we post it up on the website as well as physical posting locations in Town. It goes over water quality numbers for the last year. The anomaly is the missed asbestos test. This is a test that we are required to do once every 9 years, and we missed it at the

end of year 9. Staff quickly saw that and did the task within a couple of months. This section of the Consumer Confidence Report talks about the violation and said the test was completed in March 2023. The results showed no detectable amount of asbestos. Part of the requirement is to send out a public notice within 12 months to inform customers about the test. The plan is to include this document as well as the Consumer Confidence Report in one mailing to all customers.

Hill: The notice says to share this information with all the other people who drink this water, including, for example, people in apartments.

Arneson: I think we can post in Front Porch Forum and also mail to all physical addresses and online. If you're a landlord, please give the Consumer Confidence Report to your tenants.

Hill: It seems unlikely that asbestos is floating down the river. It seems more likely to be coming from degradation of pipes.

Sander: There are a lot of asbestos veins in northern Vermont, so it could well be floating down the Winooski River. It is important to note that the asbestos cement lines the Village does have used to be the gold standard for water lines. There's been no indication that any of the asbestos has come out of the pipe. That doesn't excuse the fact that we need to do timely testing.

Wolaver: It's interesting that it's only done every 9 years. If it seemed to have been a serious problem, we'd be doing it annually.

Cote: We did the test where the State wanted us to take it, which is the Town Center, which no longer has asbestos pipes in front of it. We had to retake it that's why it ended up being in March.

Barnard: Since we've been putting fluoride back in, have we been testing?

Cote: We are. There is actually a higher level of chlorine in your water than used to be. The State wants it at a higher level. Fluoride and chlorine are monitored every day. Our fluoride levels are pretty constant, the only time there's a real fluctuation is when we have to physically make some new batch of fluoride. We're working on a solution to not have that fluctuation.

Farr: We go over the numbers usually once a month in a meeting. That is something that can be found online too.

LaBounty: I think the question is that they were not coordinating to the level, that they should have been and now they are.

Cote: The chlorine levels were always adequate. The State has changed where they want us to take the sample point from. We have to keep a higher level at that point.

LaBounty: I have heard that the taste is so strong now that it's hard to brush your teeth, it is so strong. It could be where they are in the system. Can they go out and just check

what the level is at a property? The answer might be like they have to do in Essex and other towns to get those charcoal filters on your faucets.

Cote: As it goes down into the distribution system, it does dissipate. We can do a test right in their kitchen.

Arneson: I did take a call from somebody a few weeks ago about just that same question. In 3 minutes, they knew what was up. We are usually at 0.1 mg/l or actually a little higher. A lot of times 0.2, 0.3 mg/l. The highest allowable is 0.4 mg/l

Cote: Stone Corral said it's good and he's using it to make beer.

Wolaver: I noticed an increase in chlorine months ago. I liked it before when it was .01 mg/l. Josh, Steve, Jay, or Bard, we all might give a different answer on Front Porch Forum. I think it's worth tabling at a meeting before responding.

Furr: When I'm in that situation, I say I'm not an expert and this is only my 2 cents. Here's a number for the Water Department.

Hill: I tend to email it to a person that I think could respond to it.

Cote: I figure that's our job to answer the phone and respond.

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

Arneson: There's a lot that continues to be works in progress.
(https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/06/3b_Water_and_Wastewater_Items_to_be_Repaired_or_Replaced_5-31-23.pdf)

Cote: The 20-year study happened. I was very impressed. The person who designed the system 20 years ago was there. She was told that the building was off limits 20-years ago. She was rather surprised with the condition and the way the plant was being run. She said, it's fixable. The new engineer seems really knowledgeable, and I was very impressed with her. They are putting together an engineering study, what they need and what needs to be fixed, and what needs to be addressed.

The estimation to fix the influent pumps and the screening ahead of them, it's more than the \$60,000 that we talked about. She was talking more like almost 1.7 million to 2 million to fix that problem.

Arneson: Part of that's because they need more room.

Cote: Our head works should have been before our influent pumps. There are some engineering plans that need to be figured out for a different type of screen to go ahead of them. We don't want the rocks going into the new pumps. We were supposed to make some decisions about it this summer, but the price tag was a little more than we were talking about.

Hinesburg went out to bid for a complete upgrade. It was proposed in the bond issue with \$11 million. The bids went out and they all came back almost 6 million over.

Hill: Would it be fair to say it took us about 20 years to arrive at our current state? If you defer maintenance and upgrades for 20 years, if you do nothing then try to bring everything up to speed, it is more expensive.

Cote: Christian, who designed it 20 years ago was a little taken back with essential processes, like the ventilation.

LaBounty: We have a history of not holding the professionals we hire to their contracts. It is a Town-wide history of this. Kendall was here for 38 years running this. I don't know how many of the last 20 years Richmond has been at the highest rate for Water and sewer in the State of Vermont. We are there now, and we're going to stay there. Please hold professionals accountable for the jobs that we hire them for. If the water tower is designed to be too big, if the water tower has cracks coming down, they still have malpractice insurance that's in place for the time period that they did work for you. Start making claims against these insurance companies.

Farr: Is there another way to meter septage but I realized that the influence pump is not part of that

Cote: The septage had a major breakdown in the receiving press. We couldn't put it back together with the stub shaft. We couldn't find one 8 weeks out. Giroux's machined us a new one, so we got it all back together in a few days. It was operable last month. I will say, we had a replacement gear box that was in a box in the back shed. For the last 2 weeks we really haven't taken septage. The meter company that I talked with in New Jersey is a computer system where they have key cards and everything. It's \$68,000. All the billing is computerized.

Sander: Is this a one and done, or do we have to subscribe to the service?

Cote: There is a service. It will take 13 weeks if that is what I put in the email. All the parts and pieces are in stock. The 20-year upgrade will include this type of system because you get a better deal if you're buying a package. You can get the grinder and screen. We've asked them to include that in the price. I'm not sure if you want to spend \$68,000 right now. A \$10,000 price range option will monitor low, and take a reading in the morning, and a reading at night, and we would know the total number of gallons. Most septic receiving stations all come computerized. I think there's only one other place in the State that doesn't have a key card system.

Bormann: I think it's a waste of money to spend \$10,000 on just monitors. If it's universal, then the \$68,000 we do that now, because we want to be charging to cover the cost of where we're at. I fear that if we wait until the 20-year study we have lost all of that revenue that we could have.

Cote: My discussion with the representative from the company was that it'll work with any screen.

Arneson: We should probably talk to Jenny. She can give us specs on the meter system that she thinks would be a best fit for a future upgrade. Then we go out to RFP on those specs. We get some prices, and we move from any other places that receive septic.

Barnard: I wonder if a surrounding town or water department had something that they were really happy with?

Cote: I could call Montpelier. There are not very many towns that take as much septage as we do.

Farr: There are meters that you could put that you could check in the morning and check at the end of the day and know how much you took for the day.

Cote: Phil Laramie recommends the U.S.A. Blue Book, they start \$8,900 to \$10,000.

LaBounty: You've got to measure and bill correctly by what they're bringing for septage.

Cote: If you wanted just to standard flow meter that would check every truckload, that means one of us are going to be at the plant going out every time. That is not cost effective.

Barnard: The auditors went crazy over how we did our gas with Town employees. Why haven't the auditors seen this in the report.

LaBounty: Because the numbers match. We're billing you for 2,000 gallons. The honor system ain't working.

Bormann: I want to get back to dates with Jenny so for the next meeting we figure out if it's \$68,000, or maybe it's \$40,000 or \$80,000.

LaBounty: It's about creating the scope of the RFP. It's not about the system. Josh said it has to go to RFP.

Arneson: As soon as we get the specs from Jenny, we can put together the RFP. We might need more than 5 days to get back specs from people. That may not be in 2 weeks.

Cote: We need a dumpster onsite. They would like us to have a minimum of 3 dumpsters onsite at one time so they can start the tank cleaning. They have to suck it out, and then they have to put it in the dumpsters, and then it has to drive for 3 weeks before Casella will pick it up and take it away. They are 22 feet long, 8 feet wide and 4.5 feet tall. We don't have any place physically to put those dumpsters. In front of the plant, to the side of the parking area, we will have to create a containment center which would mean a liner with a border around it. Then they would have to make a physical ramp to back their truck up into to dump into these dumpsters. It has not been done in the last 10 years, 5 years minimum. There's a tremendous amount of material. It has to have access to the sewer system. Casella is that only place that we can get rid of this stuff.

Farr: I don't believe they're spreading on our fields anymore.

Cote: This material is destined for a landfill.

Farr: I will give you Ashley's contact information, and you should ask him.

Cote: The reason that we came up with 3 dumpsters is that is the number of dumpsters that we would use to empty our first septage tank. There was no place in the State that would take it because it is a side stream.

Arneson: What's the cost of constructing this whole new facility. Would they let us take it to Burlington?

Cote: They had originally contacted Middlebury, but the amount of material that we have, Middlebury isn't going to do it.

Arneson: We can continue to talk through some options and come back with a better plan.

Cote: We already cleaned the 2 clarifiers, we have cleaned the fish tank, and we should have that ready and operable to switch over, and we'll be draining our other aeration tank. Jill thinks we can process that material back through our plant the same way we did the fish tank. It's the septage that we can't do that way. We don't have any space that trucks could maneuver around at the plant.

Hill: I think of Montpelier and Waterbury and picture the fields that are next to theirs. Basically, you need a space to drop these things that drains into their system.

Cote: They physically back the truck over the dumpster and open the back. You could build a retaining wall where those 3 trees are and extend the parking lot out so that they could actually backup to the edge of the retaining wall. It is just this one-time thing.

Bormann: When are we planning on doing the house meters?

Arneson: We have a meeting this week for all of us to sit down and review your suggestions on the bids. We should be able to come back to the next meeting with the recommendation. We will get a good price comparison on all 4 bids. We're looking at the wireless readout.

Cote: We kind of feel the best is the Neptune system. It's the system that Shelburne and Champlain Water District use. One of the options is it can also transmit through the radio. It's an integrated system that seems to work. The other reason for justifying that system was they have been very responsive. We have been given some leftover meters from Shelburne. They're 5 to 7 years old meters that we currently have been installing here.

Carpenter: I believe it's 100 bucks, a new meter. If you get 10 years of life from those meters that read to a tenth of a gallon, you get 10 years out of them. They'll work on both EJP and your other ones. They're more accurate than the AMCO ones you got in there.

Hill: I think we're lost in the weeds about this. There's a meeting on June 7 and it would be a follow-up thereafter.

Farr: If you have a meeting on the 7th, I think you should call EJP and say please don't reprogram our meters. As Bard said, we need to work on time.

Discussion of options for establishing authority to transfer water allocation

Arneson: This goes back to Dan Noyes' request to transfer his sewer and water allocation to the current market. There's guidance in the sewer ordinance that the Commission would have the authority to grant that transfer. There is no such guidance, or it's basically silent in the water rule. We could go back to the ordinance, they're from the seventies and nineties but that's months, if not a year. We could adopt a rule that would basically be an amendment to the water system rule that the Commission could draft and adopt. That would give the Commission authority in a policy or a rule to do the transfer. We wouldn't have the same authority as an ordinance, but it's probably a quicker way to get there. Another option was to amend the current sewer rule and the allocation section to add water. I think that's a little less clean because it's a sewer document. I'd rather take the sewer part out of the sewer document, change sewer to water, make that an amendment for water.

Farr: Would it be a case-by-case thing? Or would people just be able to transfer their allocations?

Arneson: They would have to come to the Commission. It has to be the same owner. If you own two properties, you can transfer with Commission approval. It would have to be the owner on behalf of the tenant requesting the allocation. He might have to look through a separate process with the State and the transfer allocation. It's a few \$1,000 for transfer of the allocation that he's looking for. It's a one-time fee for a few dollars per gallon of allocation. His thought right now is the replacement for the market is going to use less water than the current market. It might be worth that process to see what other ordinances are out there that we can kind of borrow from.

Hill: It would strike me as a worthwhile project when the dust is settled.

Barnard: I'm just curious if there's a subcontractor out there that does this already.

Update on Gateway Expansion Project

Furr: We met with the Reaps today with Joy, Bard, Josh and I. They're going to be able to do the scoping and the pressure test on the same day. They understand that it's on them, if something blows up, it's not really our issue. They did ask if we got anything further from the Land Trust on exactly what the proposed I mean. Two months ago, they said they looked favorably on the amendment to the easement. I sent an email to get an update.

Hill: Also moving forward on what it would look like between a modification of the Northern Border Regional Council or Commission. What would it take to modify or amend that approved grant application for a different app of the same problem.

Arneson: The scoping is less risky than the pressure test. The scoping study has less chance that something will go wrong. We're involved as a Town because we have the relationship with the Vermont Rural Water Association and they're willing to provide that study for free of charge. If you could do that for the school, that would be great. We're working on an agreement that says if they lose any equipment in the sewer pipe, then we'll pay to excavate and get that out of there. We're going to have a document that states that's the school's responsibility or the Reaps. Once we have that in place, they can do a scoping study. If they proceed to the pressure test, since the Town wouldn't be involved in that at all, it's a private line hired by the school with the Reaps. If they blow that up, that's on them. The Town isn't involved as a third party bringing in a contract or anything. The school's interest is that maybe the Town would take it over at some point if this project continues to move forward. They also don't know exactly where the pipe is, this will help them locate it.

Barnard: On Wednesday, July 6, are those campuses going to be used and will they have water?

Cote: I was told that was an appropriate date.

Hill: It's not this group's decision. It's a decision between the school and the Reaps.

Consideration of recommending applicants for the customer seats on the Water and Sewer Commission to the Selectboard

Sander: We have 2 open seats, and we have 2 willing candidates, Erin and Morgan.

Hill moved to recommend to the Selectboard that Morgan Wolaver and Erin Farr be appointed to one year terms on the Water and Sewer Commission filling seats reserved for Customers. Seconded by Furr.

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

Update on "10% in Vermont" program

Arneson: We don't have that level of detail yet in any projects that we would be proposing for this loan. It does sound like there's going to be a second round for the loan probably in the fall. Then we might have a chance to have a project more to fruition.

Discussion of water tank efflorescence - TABLED

Discussion of next Water and Sewer meeting dates

Furr: We want to move the meeting from Monday, Juneteenth to the next day.

Sander: The motion would be to move our Monday meeting to Tuesday the 20th.

Furr moved to move the Water & Sewer Commission meeting from Monday, Jun 19th to Tuesday, June 20th. Wolaver seconded.

Wolaver: I have something happening the next day. I also don't want to sound like I'm being biased.

Hill: My suggestion is to follow the lead of the Selectboard because it works for 5 of us to have it the same night.

Furr: I withdraw the motion.

Arneson: We've rescheduled meetings before.

Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Minutes:

Furr moved to approve the Minutes of 5/16/23 Annual Meeting as presented. Farr seconded.

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

Furr moved to approve the Minutes of 5/15/23 as presented. Farr seconded.

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

Purchase Orders:

Hill moved to amend PO# 4353 to add \$3,758.31 to Various Chemical Suppliers for sodium aluminide and polymers. Furr seconded.

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

Warrants:

Furr moved to approve the warrants of 6/5/23 as presented. Farr seconded.

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

Discuss Items for Next Agenda

*Tank Effervescence

*Meters

*Septage Metering

*June 15 State inspection

*10% of Vermont Loan

Adjournment

Wolaver moved to adjourn. Hill seconded.

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

Meeting adjourned at: 6:57 pm

Chat file from Zoom: None