

1 **Town of Richmond**
2 **Meeting of Water and Sewer Commission**
3 **Minutes of September 18, 2023**
4

5 **Members Present:** Bard Hill, David Sander, Erin Farr, Morgan Wolaver
6

7 **Members Absent:** Jay Furr
8

9 **Staff Present:** Duncan Wardwell, Assistant to the Town Manager; Steve Cote, Water
10 Resources
11

12 **Others Present:** The meeting was recorded for MMCTV, Cara LaBounty, Peter iPhone
13

14 **MMCTV Video:** <https://archive.org/details/RichmondWaterSewer09182023>
15

16 **Call to Order: 6:00 pm**
17

18 **Welcome:** Wolaver
19

20 **Public Comment:** None
21

22 **Additions or Deletions to the Agenda:**
23

24 Hill: I think we could add a brief discussion of wastewater in the swale, it fits under
25 potentially item (c). Is there anything we can do to reduce or mitigate wastewater going
26 into the Esplanade swale?
27

28 Wolaver: I'd like to add a quick comment on the letter to the Northern Border Regional
29 Planning Commission's status report that has to do with the \$150,000 grant for expansion
30 of the water and sewer to the Gateway.
31

32 **Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders**
33

34 **Minutes:**
35

36 *Hill moved to approve the Minutes of 9/5/23 meeting as presented. Sander seconded.*
37 *Roll Call Vote follows discussion.*
38

39 Wolaver: Line 144 should be "for" and not "four". Line 177 should be "The sewer line
40 is a PVC line, it's from Tyler Billingsley's report." Line 260 should be "A negative
41 number means that we bill for less,".
42

43 *Roll Call Vote: Farr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*
44

45 **Warrants:**
46

47 *Hill moved to approve the 9/18/23 Warrants as presented. Farr seconded.*
48 *Roll Call Vote: Farr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*
49

50 **Purchase Orders:** None

51

52 **Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**

53

54 **Consideration of recommending the Selectboard approve the Clean Water State**
55 **Revolving Fund application for 20 Year Wastewater Treatment Facility Evaluation**
56 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/0](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/09/4a_CWSRF_Planning_Loan_Application_Richmond_20_Year_Evaluation_002_1.pdf)
57 [9/4a_CWSRF_Planning_Loan_Application_Richmond_20_Year_Evaluation_002_1.p](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/09/4a_CWSRF_Planning_Loan_Application_Richmond_20_Year_Evaluation_002_1.pdf)
58 [df](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/09/4a_CWSRF_Planning_Loan_Application_Richmond_20_Year_Evaluation_002_1.pdf)

59

60 *Hill moved to recommend that the Selectboard approve the CWSRF loan application for*
61 *the 20 Year Wastewater Treatment Facility Evaluation. Sander seconded.*

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

63

64 **Discussion of billing for water used for flood cleanup**

65

66 Wolaver: We've had several discussions in reference to abating cost of residents that use
67 water for cleaning up for the flood.

68

69 Hill: Do we want to appoint or nominate two Commissioners to work on creating a
70 policy for forgiveness for water and wastewater bills due to unexpected events like leaks
71 floods or other anomalies? The issue with the flooding was not flooding per se, it was
72 actually leaks associated with the plumbing. Leaks caused by a flood versus a leak
73 caused by freezing or breaking seem comparable. There's another legal question about
74 retroactivity. My experience in State government is you can't change things
75 retroactively. I am receptive to the circumstances with the flood, but also conscious of
76 precedent for the Commission and the Selectboard. This Commission has actually

77

78 Farr: I agree with Bard. I know from our own leak, it is a much different story than
79 something that was caught in a day or two. When we can get the new meters, we'll be in
80 a position where we will see if there's something like that happening. Is it bothersome or
81 burdensome? Where do we draw that line?

82

83 Sander: I agree with Bard, we can't change the policy today and make it retroactive to
84 cover the issue. I would be interested in a policy going forward to address those.

85

86 Wolaver: Erin and I could work on it then we could tap into Bard or David's sage
87 advice.

88

89 Hill: I've often searched for what other people have done with water leak abatement
90 policies to find one that looks plausible.

91

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

93 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/0](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/09/4c_Water_and_Wastewater_Items_to_be_Repaired_or_Replaced_9-12-23.pdf)
94 [9/4c_Water_and_Wastewater_Items_to_be_Repaired_or_Replaced_9-12-23.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/09/4c_Water_and_Wastewater_Items_to_be_Repaired_or_Replaced_9-12-23.pdf)

95

96 Cote: The big burning problem lately has been the press for dewatering. The new
97 engineer who's taking over the 20-year evaluation reached out and leveraged to have an
98 expert down to us within a day. They helped us get it sort of running. On Monday (9/25),

99 we are going to be trained on it, get it fixed and evaluate what we need to spend to fix it.
100 Operating the press is a one-person job, modifying and changing things to make sure it's
101 running all the time and running very efficiently. It is a one-person job, and the press is
102 20-years old with a lot of things that are wrong with it. If it's running right, you can leave
103 it at night and just let it run. I was here at like 10 o'clock because there were problems.

104
105 We received our second backwash pump for the filter on September 11. Both filter tanks
106 will have two brand new backwash pumps on them. We're going to take off one to get
107 rebuilt for the spare to have on the shelf.

108
109 Wolaver: We have two people operating three- or four-persons plant so thank you very
110 much, Steve and Brad.

111
112 Hill: This sort of priority list illustrates the real time nature of the until other things pop
113 up and become the priority.

114
115 Cote: We have done a ton of cleaning and can almost see the lab now. We send a lot of
116 stuff out to have tests done, but we have the materials to do the test.

117
118 Hill: What could we possibly do to reduce the risk of flood infiltration backing up and
119 spilling potential wastewater into the swale?

120
121 Cote: The amount of water that was spilled out of the wastewater system into that swale
122 is minute. It was an inch diameter hole in the cover, that we use to pull the cover off.
123 The manholes in the park, the covers come off and discharge. If those are sealed, it's just
124 going to discharge in the street. As soon as the flood went down, everything's been
125 working properly. There's no backup, there's no breaks. The swale is between Esplanade
126 and Church St, Jericho Settlers Farm now is at the end of it. Josh has a video when Pete
127 and I visited that shows it's running backwards into the swale from Jericho Settlers Farm.

128
129 Hill: That stormwater issue is a topic for the Selectboard. The wastewater question is
130 there any sense in changing the manhole cover there or sealing it.

131
132 Cote: I don't think the amount that was discharged there was the issue. We could seal it
133 but it's going to leak out somewhere else uphill and then run down. The issue is there's
134 no drainage for that swale as Esplanade cuts it off from draining into Volunteers Green. I
135 believe that originally somewhere in the stormwater systems in the 1900s there was a
136 pipe that discharged into Volunteers Green from the swale.

137
138 Hill: That's worth looking at. Several people have noted to me that swale appears to be
139 the remainder of a former river tributary.

140
141 Cote: This side of it there is a retaining wall that has been installed somewhere along the
142 line, which has ended it. Esplanade seals it from draining into Volunteers Green where I
143 think it naturally did drain. I have a picture of a 12-inch clay tile that is in the bottom of
144 it, obviously part of a drainage system now open again but pretty full. It's about a 12-
145 inch pipe went somewhere connected to either Bridge Street and then went to the river or
146 through Esplanade and into Volunteers Green into the river. Pete is aware of that.

147

148 Hill: Where does the water come from? Stormwater is one issue, wastewater is another.

149

150 Cote: There are two manholes both to the Church Street side and both on the upper side
151 of the swale. Both are operating at 100%. One of them just takes a couple of the houses
152 and diverts it towards the other one. The other one is actually one of the systems that
153 goes all the way up to Burnett Ct into the schools and is the main artery down to the
154 sewer plant. That one is the one that was overflowing and that one is 100% operation. I
155 wasn't even made aware of that until almost a month after there was a discharge there. I
156 can't clean or do anything in a month. The only time that there would be overflows
157 would be in a flood event. You don't want levels in your manholes. When we were going
158 around with the engineers doing the 20-year upgrade those manholes were 100%.
159 There's no blockage, no debris, they are newer manholes.

160

161 Hill: It seems obvious to say that one of the root causes here is stormwater going into the
162 wastewater system.

163

164 Cote: There is also infiltration because in Volunteers Green there are seven manholes
165 that were underwater. The ones in Volunteers Green are already about two feet high.

166

167 Wolaver: We would have to engineer a system such that the manholes were the same
168 height as Rt. 2 to avoid overflows. The system really was not designed to act as a big
169 reservoir for catastrophic environmental events.

170

171 Farr: Is the swale conversation coming up because the water is staying in the swale?

172

173 Cote: Since I've been here in the spring, the swale fills up naturally like the low spot in
174 the field. This year, we had the flood and it really filled up. The water table is so high,
175 and it didn't dry up. I know that mosquitoes have been terrible and it's a problem for
176 people. The issue is it's all privately owned.

177

178 Hill: There are several issues, but the issue is it's in the floodplain. This is a low point in
179 the floodplain, it's now orphaned or isolated. We also know that the Town's authority on
180 privately owned flooding rarely exists. We know that drainage associated with farms is
181 not the Town's purview, it is literally a different department. If the Town's not culpable
182 per se then what is the role of solving standing stormwater infiltration on private land.
183 Historically, the responsibility is zero, because there are stormwater problems in various
184 parts of the Town. The Town has tended to take responsibility for public property and
185 roads, but not for private property. If you seal them with a bunch of old lines, you get
186 head building up from up the hill and be prone to blow outs or leaks that are a bigger
187 problem.

188

189 **Review of monthly water data for August**

190 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/0](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/09/4d_Monthly_Water_Report_for_August_2023.pdf)
191 [9/4d_Monthly_Water_Report_for_August_2023.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/2023/09/4d_Monthly_Water_Report_for_August_2023.pdf)

192

193 Wolaver: A couple points were out of spec.

194

195 Cote: The fluoride is low on days that we have to mix it. We're trying to figure out a
196 better way. If we had a bigger water house, we could mix two containers and be able to
197 switch.

198

199 Wolver: Chlorine was only one day.

200

201 Cote: I think that was an issue with the check valve in the system was plugged.

202

203 **Update on contracting for water meters**

204

205 Wardwell: The Town attorney and Zenner are reviewing some of the details on the
206 contract.

207

208 **Update on Gateway sewer expansion**

209

210 Hill: The Richmond Land Trust set up a subcommittee of Jeremy Hoff, Gary Bresser and
211 Wright Preston to work on an easement with the Town. There was an email today where
212 they wanted to include the Reaps in that conversation. The Reaps at the bottom of the
213 hill and other Gateway property owners who are interested. There's the school to deal
214 with an easement, either replacing a line or extending a sewage line and taking it over.
215 Then there's the State folks who approved the easement. It's a bunch of other parties, I'm
216 not entirely clear why we involve the Reaps or any of the other parties in an initial
217 meeting. The Richmond Land Trust wanted to, but I still am not clear why.

218

219 Wolver: It very much sounds like the that the school wants the Town to take the line
220 over and the Town would like the possibility of extending the line.

221

222 Hill: I'm sure the Richmond Land Trust has an interest in development generally, but I'm
223 not sure how that specifically relates to this easement for the Town. What is going in the
224 Gateway is not our job, that's Zoning, Planning, permitting. We ultimately will bump
225 into capacity.

226

227 Farr: What percentage of our capacity are we using right now?

228

229 Cote: About two thirds capacity.

230

231 Hill: Where max is somewhere around 80-90%.

232

233 **Update on staffing**

234

235 Cote: We've interviewed one gentleman. I had a guy come in this morning and he took a
236 tour of the plant and seemed interested. I really want to contact you Vermont Technical
237 College and some of the high schools to see if we can get an intern or something.

238

239 Wardwell: I did reach out to Vermont Technical College to throw out those different
240 opportunities.

241

242 **Northern Borders Regional Commission**

243

244

245 Wolaver: Josh is working on a letter to advise them that we're still interested in that
246 \$150,000 which would go towards the installation of the water-sewer line out to the
247 Gateway.

248

249 **Anything we can do to reduce or mitigate wastewater going into the Esplanade**
250 **swale?**

251

252 The swale was discussed at the end of the **Review of list of water and wastewater items**
253 **to be repaired or replaced.**

254

255 **Discuss Items for Next Agenda:**

256

*Staffing

257

*Gateway

258

*Repairs

259

*Policy of billing for water used for flood cleanup

260

*MS365 Transition and Town Cell Phone Authenticator App

261

262 **Adjournment**

263

264 *Farr moved to adjourn. Hill seconded.*

265

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

266

267 Meeting adjourned at: 6:59 pm

268

269 **Chat file from Zoom: None**

270