

Town of Richmond Water and Sewer Commission Meeting Minutes of January 3, 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

Others Present: The meeting was recorded for MMCTV, Cara LaBounty, John Rankin, Martha Nye, Matt Torrville, Meg Freebern

Call to Order: 6:00 pm

Welcome by: Sander

Public Comment:

Sander: We should be proud to have civil, local government with community engagement in Richmond. On another note, I would like to make a friendly reminder to please use the crosswalk lights. Tonight, I almost hit a pedestrian using the crosswalk on Bridge St. by Big Spruce. The crosswalk lights were not activated, and it is hard to see people even when driving slow.

LaBounty: Please add to your agenda for future discussions to review how you are collecting your meter data. Are there smart meters for upgrades to make the system more efficient?

Furr: We are not using smart meters. The meters are due to be replaced.

Hill: We have talked about this a few times over the last 10 years. We have talked about smart meters and tablets.

Sander: It is important to streamline, and we have talked about a tablet reader. It is an item for a future meeting.

Additions or Deletions to the Agenda: None

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Consideration of rescheduling the first Commission meeting in March 2023

Sander: Town Meeting is going to be held on the first Monday of March which will mean that neither the Selectboard nor the Water and Sewer Commission can hold their regular meeting on that date. The Selectboard has changed their first March meeting to the next Monday, March 13. It may be prudent for the Water and Sewer Commission to follow suit.

*Furr moved to reschedule the first meeting of March 2023 of the Water and Sewer Commission to Monday, March 13, 2023, due to the conflict with Town Meeting on Monday, March 6, 2023. Wolaver seconded
Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion passed.*

Follow up on investigating stormwater connections to the wastewater system

Sander: Included in the packet is a draft letter to all water and sewer customers regarding stormwater connections to the wastewater system. Once this letter is approved by the Commission it can be sent to all users on the system.

Furr: I like the letter but have one change. At 3rd paragraph, I would like to swap the 3rd and 4th sentence so we get to the point that we are not trying to fine you but want to work with you.

Hill: Another suggestion, is the at the top, 2nd line first sentence that we provide a modifier like the “Richmond wastewater system” so it is clear we are talking about the Town.

Sander: That makes sense. Maybe use the Richmond Municipal Wastewater System.

LaBounty: Is this due to existing system that has been in place? Can we calculate a flow comparison or percentage of capacity we are processing? It would be beneficial to see the values of those variations.

Carpenter: We do not know the exact amount but it is significant depending on the amount of rain.

Furr: I thought a year ago, it was estimated about 30% increase in flow.

Hill: Maybe we can just state that. I don’t know if we can chase it down.

Arneson: I think it is important to get the letter out. I do not have any official data. It is mostly anecdotal. I hesitate to put numbers in here and would rather get the word out. I do not want to go with a number and have it be wrong.

LaBounty: It can be an estimate. You will get more buy-in if people think there is a benefit. You do not want to fine people so you need to get buy-in. It might effect your rates if we get this done.

Wolaver: Too much could cause an environmental accident. Is that correct?

Furr: It could surpass the plant’s capability, wreck the plant and cause overflow.

Arneson: It does say that. I could state that during recent rainstorms we have seen as much as 30% increase in flow to the system. Reducing this flow will reduce the cost and the rates. Something like that will help drive it home.

Freebern: I would caution using a number unless you have evidence of the 30%.

Hill: We are quoting the previous Superintendent's public statement.

Arneson: I will add that line in and the 30% estimate. We want to get this out with the bills in January.

Consideration of recommending that the Selectboard approve the bond documents for the waterline replacement project on Tilden Ave., Bridge St. and Cochran Rd.

Sander: Included in the packet are the bond documents for the above-mentioned project. The selectboard is the body that needs to approve these to go to a bond vote. But, since this is a water and sewer project, a recommendation to approve from the Water and Sewer Commission is typically obtained prior to the Selectboard vote. The Water and Sewer users will be paying this bond back if it is approved.

Hill: In the 3rd paragraph of the Necessity Resolution, should it say "not to exceed" an aggregate cost? It isn't consistent in this and the ballot. Or maybe we should say "an estimated" aggregate cost?

Arneson: We could go back to the attorney before the Selectboard votes on it.

Hill: I was looking for internal consistency.

Arneson: I think we can hand write it in and bring it up at the Selectboard.

Hill: I think we should move it forward tonight.

Wolaver moved to recommend that the Selectboard adopt the Necessity Resolution and the Declaration of Official Intent for the waterline replacement project on Tilden Avenue, and portions of Cochran Road and Bridge St. Furr seconded.

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

Update on wastewater overflow incident

Sander: On Friday, December 23, the Richmond wastewater system experienced a wastewater overflow at the manhole south of the Bridge St. bridge. The incident was caught early and was stopped within about an hour. The proper steps have been taken to report the incident to the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Watershed Management Division. The overflow did run into a storm drain and ultimately into the river.

Initially it was thought that the incident was caused by a check valve not operating correctly in the pump station that is designed to send wastewater to the wastewater treatment facility. Upon further investigation with a technician on December 29 it was determined that a solenoid failed. The solenoid is designed to create a vacuum which when sealed allows for an air compressor to create pressure to send the wastewater back to the treatment facility. The solenoid failed because the line that it is located in became flooded and this then allowed for wastewater to flow back into the manhole and created

the overflow. The solenoid began operating again correctly once the line was free of wastewater.

As a precaution, P&P Septic was called to pump the line every few hours overnight on December 23 into the morning of December 24. Staff examined the station in the morning of December 24, and it was operating correctly, and P&P was called off.

The pump technician examined the pump station on December 29 and will return the week of January 3 – 6 to replace worn parts of the system to help prevent a future incident from occurring.

Farr: How often could a solenoid fail like this?

Carpenter: It could happen when you have a massive power outage. Anything electronic can have blip.

Arneson: The power went off which exacerbated it. The increased flow from the rain that day was filling the pipe up. The technician is able to replace the solenoid and a few other parts. It is operating correctly now. Some parts have a lead time of about 6 weeks.

Carpenter: One switch cost \$1,550 and it is a 6-8 week lead time.

Sander: We should revisit spare parts and anticipate what we should have on hand. I would suggest taking the existing switch that we are replacing and holding it as a spare.

Carpenter: The existing switch is an old mercury switch. It is a pump station that dates to the Korean War so that is hard to find.

LaBounty: It is great that you are getting the stormwater letter out as it appears to be an issue on both sides of the river.

Farr: Thanks to Allen, your Department, and the Road Commission for doing a great job during the holiday.

Follow up on confirming the number of residential and commercial accounts at each property

Sander: Included in the packet is the data from Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) on commercial and residential units in the water and sewer district. I also included an email from Melanie Needle from CCRPC which explains some of the nuances of the data.

Josh asked Finance Director Connie Bona to create a list from NEMRC so we could see what we have on file for each property. This list only provides parcel ID numbers and not physical addresses. We have a request into NEMRC to help us create a report that will show addresses for each parcel so we can better compare the NEMRC data with the data from CCRPC. If NEMRC is unable to help with such a report, we can manually create physical addresses from the parcel ID's but it would be time consuming.

Josh has not spent a lot of time with this data yet, but it seems that the e911 data may be best for businesses. It seems like there are some discrepancies between the CCRPC data and e911 data for residential. Once we have the data from our system, we can compare all three lists and see which properties are consistent on all three lists and then look more into properties that have discrepancies. Connie can probably pull the data from our system fairly quickly, but she is off until Wednesday. Josh will try to get that from her this week so we can begin comparisons.

Arneson: We do have a report from NEMRC that actually has addresses and fixed costs for water and sewer. I sent that out to the Commission and added to the packet. We can use some spreadsheet tricks to merge the data to compare. We have a few good lists to work with.

Hill: This is a work in progress on the task.

Furr: If there is a listed P.O. Box, you can find the parcel id location on the far right column (https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Water_Sewer_Commission/Meetings/3e2_Esite_Businesses_HousingUnits_WaterSewerServiceArea.xlsx). Somebody could be listed four times because of different services.

Farr: For the business ones that is an important cross-reference.

Arneson: I can figure out the best way to compare them. We can some tables to merge things.

Hill: Is there a unique identifier across all three data sets?

Farr: I think it would be the address.

Hill: We will have to do some work to match up the data with a unique identifier.

Farr: The e911 data does not have the codes for account numbers.

Hill: We have taken the most important first step. Over time, we will get a single data set and then clean it up.

Update on Chittenden County Solid Waste District Biosolids Management Agreement

Sander: CSWD goes out to bid for disposal of biosolids from wastewater treatment facilities in Chittenden County. The current agreement with Casella (included in the packet) expires on January 31, 2024. CSWD meet with all participating Wastewater Treatment Facilities to discuss the process to go back out to bid. There was concern that the only other bidder may be Englobe which is located in Canada. If the District contracted with Englobe there is concern about potentially running into issues if the border closes again (perhaps due to a pandemic) and also if PFAS regulations tighten in Canada which could restrict biosolids from Vermont that would be too high in PFAS content. Josh Tyler from CSWD is reaching out to Englobe to see what the potential is

that they would bid. Tyler is also reaching out the Casella to see what rates they would provide if we decided to extend the contract without going out to bid. Do we have any updated PFAS information?

Arneson: I am not sure how PFAS will play into it and at what levels will be accepted. There is concern from Englobe about a provincial or national law that will lower the level.

Sander: PFAS is becoming an issue.

Carpenter: It also depends on the State of Vermont as it could impact wastewater and sludge. We have to do more PFAS testing for water too.

Wolaver: A concern is if it comes down to one bidder then it will be a significant price increase.

Hill: We are not bidding by ourselves as we are part of the Municipal Waste District.

Wolaver: Maine is shipping its stuff to Vermont. I do not understand the restrictions through the EPA on what you can dump or additional processing for compliance. There is no facility in Maine for the bio-solids.

Sander: I think we sent ours to New York and Maine was sending it to Vermont or through Vermont to New York.

Update on next steps for the Gateway project

Sander: This project has stalled after we looked at including the potential for some funding from the Community Recovery and Revitalization Program and the cost of the bond payback was still prohibitive. We did not apply for that grant because there did not appear to be an appetite to do so at the meeting where it was discussed.

The Selectboard did briefly discuss the possibility of using ARPA funds to help pay for this project. It seems as though that the only way this project would be fundable as a public project would be with a large influx of funding from a source such as ARPA. Another option is to work with the Reaps for a private service to their property from the public portion of the system by the school.

Furr: I was able to talk to Joy Reap and they are prepared to run a line. They have given us adequate time to figure it out and have been polite for 8 years. It cannot connect to the school's line. It has to be a line straight from Jericho Rd and it cannot be expanded and nobody else can tie onto it. If we do end up running a line along Rt. 2, then the Reaps will not help pay for it because they will already be customers.

Hill: Other customers on Rt. 2 really want a line but the business model does not work. It is also timing for the Reaps who have been delayed due to a couple of factors.

Furr: We have no right to tell the Reaps not to run a line. We should apologize for taking so long.

Hill: The history is long and tortured. We cannot figure out a way to make this work. This is giving the Reaps a green light within the constraints of the regulations and arrangements with the school. All the other property owners in the Gateway can do their own or shared leach fields. There is no public water or sewer system that is going to serve those other properties in any near term.

Update on process for hiring Water and Wastewater Superintendent Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Sander: Commissioners Jay Furr, Morgan Wolaver, and Josh interviewed three candidates on Tuesday, December 20. Josh is still in the process of finalizing the choice and an offer for a candidate. Josh hopes to have an announcement soon.

Furr: We were impressed with the candidates and Josh is in negotiations with one now.

Arneson: We are working through the process and nothing to announce just yet.

Minutes

Hill moved to approve the Minutes of 12/19/22 as presented. Furr seconded.

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

Warrants

Furr: You will notice the 3 large expenditures associated with the water leak and the P&P Septic pumping. These expenses were not foreseeable, but we did have the money for it.

Arneson: We also replaced the hydrant up near the Highway Department that was not operating properly.

Sander: We do have placeholders for these types of expenses.

Hill: The frequency of these unexpected events has gone down over time due to the replacement of the oldest and leakiest lines. This is the same waterline that is due for replacement.

Furr moved to approve the warrants of 1/3/23 as presented. Wolaver seconded.

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

Purchase Orders

None

Discuss Items for Next Agenda

*Metered data collection

*Updates on number of commercial & residential accounts

*Reap progress and process

Adjournment

Furr moved to adjourn. Wolaver seconded.

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

Meeting adjourned at 6:59 pm

Chat file from Zoom: None