

Town of Richmond Water and Sewer Commission Meeting Minutes of January 17, 2023

Members Present: Bard Hill, David Sander, Jay Furr, Morgan Wolaver

Members Absent: Erin Farr

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

Call to Order: 6:00 pm

Welcome by: Sander

Public Comment: None

Additions or Deletions to the Agenda: None

Furr: I would like to bring up Heidi Bormann's email asking about the fixed costs and rates for residential and commercial units.

Hill: I talked to her and recommend we put this as a warned agenda item. The overall structure is each customer group pays for their share. Within those groups the base and user fees structure is not the same. It merits review. We have previous PowerPoints and come prepared with a rate structure presentation. The methodology is based on the previous years' worth of use. Each year we find what percentage of total budget is associated with a user group.

Arneson: The last budget presentation probably has most of the information.

Hill: Josh has improved the spreadsheet. We can change the percentages and it will ripple through with cell references.

Sander: We will discuss rates and the Bormann email at the next meeting.

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Review of monthly water data for December 2022

Arneson: The monthly water data for December 2022 is included in the packet. Numbers are highlighted where it is below the recommendations. Chlorine should be at 0.1 or higher, the average for the month was 0.39 at the beginning of process and 0.27 at the end. For flouride, there was only one day when it was below the 0.6 mandate and overall the average was at 0.7. The pH meter is broken and we are waiting on the parts.

Furr: Is the the flouride drop due to when they add a new batch of flouride?

Arneson: A new batch can have the fluoride drop. They have tweaked the mixing process so we are not seeing as much of a drop.

Wolaver: The chlorine is the same thing as they added a bunch of water when mixing.

Carpenter: The chlorine is what was in the line that day because the water pump off that day. When it is running it is higher. The pump cycles because the fluoride was settling out.

Arneson: You are not continually pumping from the well. You are only adding chlorine as you are pumping water into the system.

Hill: Do you read the meter at the same time each day? There is a significant variance in the "gallons" column.

Carpenter: It depends on the usage in Town and how long it runs based on the level of the tank. The "gallons" is from the water house to the system. There is a digital level control that turns it on at 21.5 feet and shuts off at 23.5 feet. It is essentially a pressure reading. The data needs to be in the State format.

Discussion of electronic water meters

Arneson: Allen reached out to EJP regarding electronic meters, how they work and how much they cost. Currently each meter needs to be read by a staff member. Then they manually put everything with Connie at the Town Center which takes a couple of hours. The electronic meters could be put in and then download everything onto a device by driving around and checking the list. It takes like 10-16 hours to read the meters where it would take about an hour to drive around with the electronic meters. It converts directly to the account in NEMRC without having to transcribe manually. The cost of the software and hardware setup is about \$10,000 then a support plan of \$3,600 per year. The cost per meter is about \$380 for residential and \$1,800 for commercial accounts with higher flows. The smart meters are less costly to modify. It would be less than \$380. We do not have an inventory of existing meters. A new house or building pays for the original meter but when it needs to be replaced, the Water Resources Department pays for the meter. I could not find it written anywhere so we can go with practice.

Hill: I have not been charged to replace a meter. Can we quantify the benefit for cost avoided?

Arneson: You are saving about 20 staff hours per quarter. The EJP rep said that when you put meters in like this you actually measure more water.

Sander: If usage went up then would it be flagged before the end of the quarter?

Arneson: There might be meters that do that without having to drive around to check.

Carpenter: The current battery life is about 10 years. They have about the same life-span.

Hill: How smart are the Burlington water meters? Do they send a message and are they wi-fi enabled?

Carpenter: A lot of places did that because they had 2,000 meters and they did it in a five-year period.

Sander: I do not like the perpetual protection plan as we do not know what the cost will be in the future. When does it become obsolete and upgrade to newer technology? I am struck at the cost of replacement. If a meter goes now then the new meter head is complaint with a smart meter?

Carpenter: Yes. Generally, one person can do the whole Town in one day in good weather.

LaBounty: You are sitting on a lot of money as an asset. Use the money to invest in the technology and your system. If you didn't have the money it would be a different story. It goes back to inventory and the true numbers. How many types of meters? What kind of usage?

Hill: We need to look at the gold, silver, bronze options. If you want to know if there is a catastrophic leak in the system then we might contemplate a meter on the outflow from the tank.

Carpenter: There is only one line going in and out of the tank.

Furr: If you take 10 gallons out of the ground, 8 of it might go to the tank and 2 might go directly to a consumer.

Arneson: Chlorine is tested at the water house when it goes in. It is also tested at the end point. Allen can start the process of the inventory of meters.

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

Furr: We have a number of data sources and are trying to cross-reference to determine the accounts at each property. There are some weird hiccups in the data where parcels are identified inconsistently. Erin, Josh, Duncan and I will look at a time to get together in a room to collaborate on this effort.

Arneson: We are looking at the data from NEMRC and the E911 from CCRPC for residential and commercial. The parcel IDs were added to the E911 data. A pivot-table summarizes how many residential and commercial units are at each parcel. The NEMRC data says this property has 2 fixed residential costs and 1 fixed commercial cost.

LaBounty: NEMRC also has the assessors data which has the number of units are in a property.

Hill: I think look at the data and see what it will take for a reasonable timeframe.

Furr: Hopefully, we can do it now and maintain the data.

Hill: We should also contemplate a maintenance plan that is hooked up with permitting. There is something knowable in construction permits. Allen and Steve Cote have both taken the classes on this inventory.

Discussion of water service line inventory

Arneson: This is a mandate by the State to do a waterline service inventory to see what they are made of to make sure there is not lead. It may be necessary to hire an engineer to help with the inventory.

Carpenter: The inventory wants to know if there is lead. If you have a galvanized service then it has to be replaced if it were ever in connection with lead. Galvanized lines in the system for people's houses will have to be replaced. If you cannot 100% say it was then you are supposed to mark as might contain lead. It is mainly customer service but also interior house plumbing and other categories.

Furr: The Vermont website (<https://dec.vermont.gov/water/drinking-water/water-quality-monitoring/lead-copper-rule-revision>) says we need a complete inventory of all service connections served. We have to have this by October 16, 2024.

Hill: It is not just the public service line but also the private service line. This inspection inventory includes the things we never were responsible for.

Furr: The diagram on the website shows "A service line is comprised of several parts between the distribution main and premise plumbing, and these parts may be made of different materials:

- Connector from a distribution main. This may be or include a lead gooseneck/pigtail. and is less than 2 feet in length.
- System-owned portion of the line (in blue below).
- Curb stop / shutoff valve.
- Customer-owned segment of the line (in green below)
- Connector into the building. This can include a lead pipe segment.
- Water meter.

Hill: I don't think people know the customer portion of their service line.

Carpenter: We have a book with some of this data already. There are a couple of galvanized services on Rt. 2. They have been on the list.

Hill: Give the age of the buildings in the Village, I think there are a lot more old line than we think there are. I think my supply line is the original.

Furr: The inventory is a multiple tab spreadsheet. It is a lot of data to collect.

Hill: This will have to be turned into a workplan with possible contractor costs. How will we know if it is buried in the ground if it is not part of an existing inventory.

Arneson: We can reach out to other superintendents to see how they are handling it.

Carpenter: It is supposed to be updated every single year.

Hill: The replacement permits need to be linked to the inventory. There are some process questions.

Review of FY23 Q2 quarterly financials

Furr: Can we put the budget status as the first item on the next agenda?

Sander: Ok by me.

Update on process for hiring Water and Wastewater Superintendent

Furr: Morgan, Josh and I interviewed three candidates including Interim Water and Wastewater Superintendent Allen Carpenter. One candidate would have been amazing, but their current employer made an offer we couldn't top. The second candidate's employer made a benefits package we couldn't match. Allen is making some performance improvements and is on good track. Right now, we do not have a candidate to hire.

Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Minutes

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

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

Warrants

Furr moved to approve the warrants of 1/17/23 as presented. Wolaver seconded.

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

Purchase Orders: None

Discuss Items for Next Agenda

*2nd Quarter Financials

*Discussion of Rates, Equivalent Units and Usage

*Commercial and Residential Units Data

Adjournment

Furr moved to adjourn. Wolaver seconded.

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

Meeting adjourned at: 6:58 pm

Chat file from Zoom: None