

Town of Richmond Water and Sewer Commission Meeting Minutes of November 7, 2022

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

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Duncan Wardwell, Assistant to the Town Manager; Allen Carpenter, Interim Water Resources Superintendent

Others Present: The meeting was recorded for MMCTV, Allen Knowles, Cara LaBounty, Joy Reap, Martha Nye, Mary Houle, Matt Torrville, Tyler Billingsley, Virginia Clarke

Call to Order: 6:00 pm

Welcome by: Sander

Public Comment:

Sander: I wanted to announce and appreciate Allen Carpenter who has been appointed Interim Water Resources Superintendent. We appreciate Allen Carpenter, along with Operators in Training Stephen Cote and Brad Snow who have been working hard to keep plant operations running smoothly.

Additions or Deletions to the Agenda: None

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Review of monthly water testing results

Wardwell: The packet shows a copy of the water report for October. The daily groundwater system tables are shown. Our goal is to get monthly reports that are a little bit easier to digest. Josh is working with the State to find a better summary report. We do not necessarily want to just publish the data associated with chlorine, fluoride and pH but also illustrate appropriate ranges for Richmond.

Sander: There were a couple of days when the fluorine was below 0.6 mg/l as it took awhile to ramp up to the appropriate level. It has been more consistent as time went on.

Furr: This table also needs to include units for each column. If you look at the free chlorine levels, I wonder if the appropriate upper level is 0.4 or 4 as that is a big difference. As a citizen, I do not know what numbers would be significant.

Hill: We need a key that has the ranges and values like a medical center chart that highlights the values that are out of range.

Wolaver: I think we will have something like that within the next month.

Wardwell: It is good we are collecting the raw data now, then we can massage it for public consumption and indicated levels.

Furr: I don't think it would be hard to highlight the columns that are out of range. We need to be more transparent. It would be great to have it on the website to make it obvious we have nothing to hide.

Consideration of completing engineering plans for Drinking Water State Revolving Fund projects

Wardwell: Tyler Billingsley of East Engineering will provide a summary from the packet.

Billingsley: The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) application from the Spring is funding the remaining distribution main replacements. There are three areas, Bridge St., two sections on Cochran Rd., and Tilden up to Jericho Rd. Our application was well within the fundable range, probably top third. The program would provide 50% forgiveness (\$725,000) with the remaining \$725,000 at 0% interest over 40-year term. Based on ~500 users, it would be an annual payment of ~\$36.25 per customer per year. The timeline is a bit concerning with submitting 90% drawings by January 1, 2023. As of now, it is the deadline, but they are considering sliding that to make it more realistic. If you don't the timeline this year, then you can re-apply next year and should be in about the same fundable range. Then we would schedule a bond vote. If it got approved, then it would go to a construction loan. I think it would be best to bid in the winter with better pricing as your permit is good for two years. It would probably fit better in 2024. It is plausible but not ideal to get the 90% drawings submitted in 6 weeks with many holidays. We should decide soon, like today, if we want to pursue it. It is a good deal. The water mains being replaced are cast iron and AC so they are ticking time bombs. It is unpredictable.

Wolaver: The cast iron on Tilden Ave. is 70 years old. We would hate to dig that up in January.

Hill: The financing is not only 50% forgiveness but also an interest free loan. The 40th year payment is somewhat diminished. On the bond vote, we should just put in a placeholder.

Hill moved to hire East Engineering to complete the 90% engineering phase of the Drinking Water Revolving Loan Projects as presented in an amount not to exceed \$98,773.74. Furr seconded.

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

Discussion of Gateway Wastewater Expansion Project including discussion of previous expansion of the system within the original district

Billingsley: These connections prices are like asking how much a car costs as it varies. There are differences are based on close to the line and whether or not they can re-use their septic tank. If someone knows people who can help construct the lines then that reduces the cost. It can go way or way down. The numbers I present estimated to the

75% percentile. It is a conservative estimate so there might be lower, but it varies for each location.

LaBounty: These number look more accurate for people who live across the road. Is there going to be an inspection of installation. A friend doing it on the weekends still have to go by the plans and pass installation.

Billingsley: The engineer or licensed designer needs to sign off on the certificate for the State. It is inspection to make sure it does not vary from the plans. Some properties might use a grinder pump station which takes sewage, and the pump has teeth to cut up into bits and discharge. It does not require a septic system in front of it. A step system is a small septic tank that filters the sewage before it gets to a pump. A STEP is a septic tank effluent pump. I would probably go with a STEP, but other people swear by grinders.

Wolaver: If someone buys new then there might be a big difference in price between the two as the STEP requires installation of a septic tank.

Billingsley: Right. It is one tank with a baffle in it. With a grinder pump you would need a pre-cast pump station, no baffles, one tank, with a grinder pump. A STEP is the same tank it just has a baffle in it.

Furr: If have existing septic can you re-use your tank?

Billingsley: Yes, a lot of people on Cochran Rd. did that depending on the condition. If it is 50 years old then it is probably leaky. It is case by case, property to property. They will have to abandon the leach field. They would turn the flow toward the force main along Rt 2.

Wolaver: Normally you would just crush in the tank but with an existing tank I think the leach field is still potentially active.

Hill: The ordinance addresses it. It is a dated ordinance, but you have to disable or decommission that system.

Furr: How much of a ballpark would a septic system cost?

Billingsley: A single family resident depending on the mound would be \$20-\$30,000 per mound. I would hope for under \$30,000 and if they said only \$15,000 I wouldn't trust I would be getting everything.

Furr: The prices of a new septic system compared to the costs of connecting to municipal wastewater system helps visualize the magnitude of these estimates. The numbers are kind of in the same ballpark.

LaBounty: I would look at the ordinance that Bard mentioned again. We had a problem where a resident was connected to both. You should update your ordinance and communicate with everyone about the expectations.

Hill: I am looking at the 1972 ordinance, “any septic tanks, cesspools and similar private sewage facilities shall be abandoned and filled with suitable material.” Essentially, you render it unusable.

(https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/1972_Sewer_Ordinance.pdf).

Sander: My reading is you can leave the leach field static but not a cesspool or a septic tank if it is not being used. We have not more questions on hook-up costs so we will move on to the discussion of expansion of the system within the original district. At the last meeting, the question of the cost of expansion in the original district should be shared by all the current users. The Cochran Rd expansion was used as precedent. The information provided in the packet provide user definitions "Sewer Service Area" is that area of the municipality that is within the existing municipal main service collection lines and manholes. Under 5, A it states any extension of the sewer service area to provide for new users shall be funded in the following way. The proposed users to be served by the expansion pay the entire cost of the expansion and upgrading of the SEWERS and wastewater facility determined necessary and adequate by the BOARD. Our attorney David Rugh provided guidance on this topic.

Furr: We cannot use the piggy bank it has to come from the new users.

Hill: When we are working with ordinances and policies from 1972 or 1992 is the term sewer service area or district. There is evidence of the former Commissioners requesting payment from any users extending into the system. The intent of the ordinance any extension outside of the sewer service area would be paid for by the new customers. Do we know the date of the Cochran Rd extension? I think it was in the FY01 budget.

Houle: I think it was before 2000.

Hill: In 2019 the Commission went on record saying that developers would make required extensions. Legal advice is the Water & Sewer Commission should abide by the language of existing ordinances and policies of which there are one of both.

Furr: We documented our numbers, but we might need to update them. I do not think we could move for a bond vote at this time.

Hill: This is an uphill project when you consider the installation costs we reviewed.

Reap: I thought there was more than one situation than Cochran Rd where the Town paid for the extension?

Hill: I am not aware of the Thompson Rd. situation people mention. There is at least one exception where people did not follow an ordinance. Does that render the ordinance irrelevant?

LaBounty: The Town Garage is at the end of Thompson Rd so that is not the same situation.

Reap: For years now, we have been told one thing and then another. This is upsetting, you have set a precedent, and we have spoken with our lawyer. It is the last thing we want to do as you tell us one thing and another.

Hill: I do not feel irresponsible. From my perspective, new users would pay for the extension. I apologize for our recent history, but we have not gone back and forth.

Reap: I am frustrated and good to understand your stance.

Hill: We are following our legal advice. I appreciate how challenging it is. The real challenge is an uphill lift.

Reap: We offered to pay for the extension to our property. They said we could use the easement if there were no other way to do it which seems to be the case. We have not been looking for a handout. They stopped it because you were interested in going into the Gateway.

Hill: We should consider putting this on a future agenda with the Land Trust included in the discussion.

Sander: There is still a lot here to discuss.

Discussion of process to track expenses related to projects

Sander: NEMRC, the accounting system that the Town uses, is somewhat limited in this capacity. Currently, Connie Bona is splitting the legal bills into subcategories in NEMRC with one category being for the Gateway. While this will allow for a detailed report to be produced which will show all legal fees associated with the Gateway, it will not allow for a report that will show fees related to the Gateway from other vendors on the same report. Another way to approach this issue is to create a budget line for all Gateway fees. Then all fees from all vendors (legal, engineering, etc.) could be billed to this line. In this scenario fees that are recorded to this budget line would not show up in other budget lines, such as general legal and general engineering. We could make this change for FY23 and forward.

LaBounty: I still question this. There is a sold work around. NEMRC can track things better than explained. The spreadsheet in the packet is not up to date, accurate or a total. The engineering cost totals should still exist in their accounting system.

Furr: There is a lot of work to tag things in the past. It is hard to find an expense in 2013 and accurately tag it.

Hill: It becomes our obligation to do it. We owe it to ourselves and our customers and taxpayers to produce an end-to-end accounting. Moving forward, we should call the software developer to help create a system where we can track an expense like this.

LaBounty: I think it is a win-win if you get it all figured out. It will show how much money you spent investigating a project or category. Thank you for getting this far as historically it has not been done.

Update on Sewer pipe in Jonesville

Sander: VTrans indicated that they did not encounter this pipe during their work on Rt. 2. The existence of the pipe came up as we were researching a waterline that VTrans found in this area. Town Clerk Linda Parent had been in touch with Joe Handy, the owner of the apartments that this pipe appears to serve. Parent indicated that Handy stated he does not know where the pipe is located but does know where a clean out for the pipe is located on his property. Parent indicated that neighbors in the area said the pipe goes from the apartment building under Rt. 2 into a septic tank and then empties into the river. Josh referred this matter to the Agency of Natural Resources. They replied to say it has been sent to their enforcement office and they will proceed with any investigation they would like to conduct.

LaBounty: I think the Water & Sewer Commission should help the developer, the State of Vermont and anyone else to replace the discharge with an actual system.

Hill: "No septic tank or cesspool shall be permitted to discharge to any natural outlet." It is in our ordinance to investigate this as our problem. It might be time for us to revisit many of our ordinances.

Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Minutes

Hill moved to approve the Minutes of 10/17/22 as presented. seconded. Wolaver seconded.

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

Warrants

Wolaver moved to approve the warrants of 11/7/22 as presented. Hill seconded.

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

Discuss Items for Next Agenda

- *Gateway Expansion options
- *Billing system and number of units
- *Jonesville sewage line
- *Private Reap line extension

Adjournment

Furr moved to adjourn. Wolaver seconded

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:05 pm

Chat file from Zoom:

00:35:16	Joy Reap:	With pretreatment \$40k
00:35:58	Jay Furr:	the cost of a new septic is \$40K?
00:46:53	Joy Reap:	With pretreatment