



WATER & SEWER COMMISSION

3 North Main Street . P.O. Box 438 . Assonet, MA 02702
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Minutes of the Water & Sewer Commission meeting 3/30/2021

Meeting held at Freetown Town Hall, Assonet, MA

1:00PM

Meeting called to order by Bob Parker

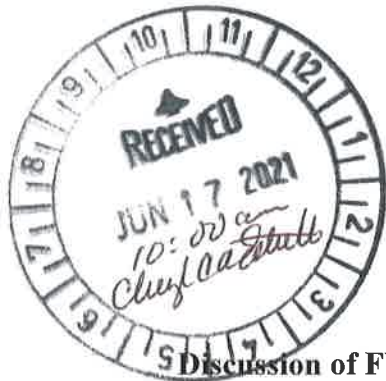
Members present:

Bob Parker; Paul Sadeck; Lee Baumgartner

Staff present:

Steven Chandler; Keven Desmarais

Peter Jankowski, Town Administrator



Discussion of FY2022 Budget

- Peter Jankowski set up meetings to get a sense of each department's budget. Has anything changed from last year?
 - Bob Parker said that other than increases to water rates from Cities of Fall River and New Bedford, not much has changed. We are in the black but not by much.
 - Paul Sadeck mentions that Fall River is charging Freetown for water not billed for after years of underbilling Freetown.
 - Keven Desmarais states that after many years with a bad meter, Fall River replaced the meter which is not accurate. Based on meetings with the City of Fall River, the Freetown Water & Sewer Commission was under the impression that accurate billing would begin once the new meter was installed and going forward.
 - After providing water usage information to Fall River, they found that they had been drastically underbilling and now have demanded Freetown pay the unbilled balance of \$174,857.35.
 - Fall River never notified Freetown of meter issues, historically it was Freetown who let fall river know there was an issue with the meter. Freetown did repairs to the meter over the years. The meter has not been accurate for many years.
 - Paul states that Fall River fixed the meter because per inter-municipal contract allows Freetown to bleed up to 220,000 gals of water per day.
 - The meter has been estimated for many years and officials at Fall River knew about the issue.
 - Bob Parker states the Commissioners will have a meeting with Fall River to straighten this out.
 - Keven states that combining the water and sewer portions of the enterprise fund keeps the FW&SC in the black. Should any infrastructure issue arise there would be no funds in the FW&SC Enterprise Fund to pay for a capital project or emergency; would have to go to the Town to fund.

- Peter mentions that George Grundwald has talked about the sewer line extension and Keven states that the FW&SC had a study conducted in 2019 and the cost would be approximately \$22 million to extend sewer line to the four-corners in Assonet Village from where it now ends on South Main Street. There was also a water study done years ago to help determine if Freetown should continue to purchase water from Fall River or invest in our own water supply [via aquifer]. Funding for any expansions would need to go to Town meeting for approval by residents.
- Keven talks about expanding water line to some streets where residents are interested in town water and it would be paid for with betterments. Keven gives history of water lines installed in Assonet.
- Paul Sadeck asks Peter the determination for insurance coverage for elected officials should they be injured while performing duties out in the field.
 - Peter needs to look into it and will let the Commissioners know; Town Counsel has reservations.
 - If they need to be a “paid” employee, the Commissioners will add in a stipend to the budget.
 - Keven says that individual board members are the ones in the field to determine what they are voting on for their committee needs and it is imperative that they know/see the details. If a board member of a committee trips in a hole when going into a meeting on town property, gets injured, and is out of work then who pays? In the past it was stated that that Board member could sue the town for medical expenses and missed wages. It would be good for people if they do not have to sue the town.
 - Peter states that based on town Counsel email, the Town would have to adopt the Mass State Law statute under workman’s compensation. He recommends the FW&SC create a warrant article to adopt this; someone would have to sponsor this and have the right to put an article on the warrant.
 - Keven says that before we adopt anything it needs to be vetted. Articles are sent to Town Counsel for review. Hopefully, the Selectmen will recognize that this is the right thing to do and will approve the article.
 - Bob says we should put an article in and see what happens.
 - Peter says the Commissioners should get other boards to sign onto it. Peter will get an estimated cost from MIIA.
 - Peter asked Timm McIntosh to get the language for an article to be written to adopt the Mass State Law statute under Workman’s Comp and email it to the Water Department.
 - Keven recommends that the Board of Selectmen be notified of the intent of the FW&SC.
 - Paul recommends putting \$250.00 for each Commissioner in the budget annually, or an amount that is needed in order to qualify to receive insurance coverage.
 - Peter says he does not get involved in the logistics of this.

Notification for Dept Head Meetings

- Bob Parker, department head, was not invited to department head meeting because Lu-Ann sent notice to water dept email. Chandler assumed Bob Parker was included as he has been in the past; he did not notice that Bob was not included will be sure that Lu-Ann has Bob Parker's email address.

Lee Baumgartner motion to adjourn at 1:55PM. Paul Sadeck 2nd. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'S. Chandler', with a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steven Chandler
Senior Clerk
Freetown Water & Sewer Commission