



## Hill Water Works – Commissioners Meeting

**Meeting Minutes**

**\* Draft \***

**Aug. 08th, 2023**

**Regularly Scheduled Meeting** – Commission Meetings are held Monthly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. in the Hill Public Library located at 30 Crescent Street Hill, NH 03243.

**Board Members Present** Charles Estes, Commissioner Chairman, Stephen Thomson, Water Commissioner, Tony Cartier, Water Commissioner.

Charles Estes declared the meeting open at 6:30 p.m.

**Public Attendance** – Joann Irving, Paul Guild, Ellen Guild, Harold Knott, David Thomson, Shaun Bresnahan, Tom Seymour, Mrs. Ann Ford and Mrs. Debra Ford.

**Approval of Previous Minutes** – The amended minutes for June 13th were presented. Steve made a motion to accept the June minutes as amended. Tony seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The first draft of minutes for July 11th was presented. Steve noted a requirement to change a reference citing New Hampshire RSA 38:19 to be changed to 38:20. Upon further review and discussion, more modifications are required. Charlie made a motion to table approval of the July minutes until next meeting and said he would prepare a second draft for the board to preview. Tony seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

A treasure's warrant was prepared with the current invoices to be reviewed. Stephen made a motion to approve the warrant. Tony seconded the motion. The Motion passed unanimously. The Commission shall sign the warrant to have the invoices paid by the treasurer. Aging invoices continue to be received from EJ Prescott. The board had previously motioned not to pay EJ Prescott for this invoiced service. There is no contract with EJ Prescott for the cost of these services. No terms were established in writing or by oral agreement. The invoices will remain unpaid. EJ Prescott has been notified.

The Commissioners also discussed receipt of bank statements with canceled checks. Not included in the canceled checks but was on the treasurer's warrant was the commission's approval to pay Judy Brady for her Services as treasurer. This was a significant issue raised in the selectmen's meeting to the extent that Shaun Bresnahan requested Judy Brady be present and concluded that if the Water Commission did not pay for her services, then the Selectmen would. This has never been an issue. The missing piece of the puzzle was that no invoice was ever created for the treasurer to be paid. Once an invoice was produced to accompany the warrant, the line item was added to the warrant immediately and was approved for payment. The discussion that continued was: Why was there no processed check with the monthly bank statement from either Judy or the Town of Hill for its tax portion? Mr. Bresnahan asserted that this was something the Water Commission had to decide - How this payroll situation was going to be handled. Charlie stated that's not actually the case. The Water Commissioners decided this in the last month's meeting when determining that it was appropriate to pay Water Commission payroll out of the Waterworks account and create a payroll report for the town, paying only to the town the amount of tax that would be the water works responsibility. This separates the Water works payroll from funds raised from taxation. The Hill Water Works payroll is the responsibility of the public works. Charlie stated the problem appears to be that others on the other side, (pointing to the selectmen's office,) didn't agree with the decision the Water Commission made and so it appears the water commission's decision was not acted on. Mr. Bresnahan merely shrugged his shoulders.

The Board was unable to review a billing warrant and meter reading for the August billing period. Charlie reported that he had contacted the Town Clerk's office in the previous week to arrange for use of the water works computer to set up the meter reader. The Billing agent stated the usual meter reading occurs on the second Saturday of each month. "That's just the way its always been." The board discussed that this creates a problem for the commissioners not having a warrant to review at the regularly scheduled monthly meeting. A brief discussion ensued, taking into consideration public comment. A solution was derived whereby the commission proposed to change the meter reading day to the first Saturday of the month to be performed before the water commissioner's regularly scheduled meeting on the second Tuesday of each month. Looking at a calendar and taking into consideration all aspects of impact upon the customer base, it was determined that October 7th would provide the commission the best opportunity to change the meter reading time with the least impact to customer billing. Steven Thomson made a motion to begin reading meters on the first Saturday of each month beginning October 7th and thereafter. Tony seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Old Business-**

A refurbished Dell Computer has been acquired by the Chairman for use in the Water Commissioner 's office established in the Town office building. The Guilds inquired where the computer came from. It was explained that the computer was previously used at the school. For security, the hard drive was wiped and factory settings were reset before installing any software for use by the Water Works. The Commission discussed that the network room downstairs is located further away from the office than initially estimated. Instead of a 25-ft cable, a 50 ft. Telecom cable will be required to connect to the network. The Dell computer does not have a Wi-Fi NetGear so wired connection to the modem is required. The Commission agreed to obtain a length of cable to satisfy this requirement. It was also determined the town I.T. provider would have to be contacted to set up the Hill Water Works User Station in the town Network in order to log on to the network from the Water Works office. The selectman's office will be formally notified of the requirement.

The board received notification from Pump Systems Inc., of a 5% increase in billing for services. This increase equals approximately \$20 per week or \$80 monthly. Stephen made a motion to approve the cost increase. Tony seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Charlie and Stephen met with Dale Thayer at the pump house to discuss Pump House protocols and to receive the sample bottles for the lead and copper testing required in August. Charlie reported to the board that he had arranged for distribution and pick up of the water bottles in a timely manner that would allow for the samples be tested within a 24-hour period. This should be done by August 10th. Additionally, after a conversation with John Benham at PSI, it was agreed that PSI would become the water usage provider using their pin and Hill Water Works user ID, established with DES by Charlie, in order for PSI to supply DES with the accurate gallons of usage quarterly. PSI offered to do this at no additional cost. Tony made a motion that we approve the offered service. Steve seconded and the motion passed unanimously. No motion is required for distribution of sample bottles. Tony Cartier will assist in obtaining water samples from town locations.

Stephen requested an update on the meter reading process and warrant preparation. This moves the board into new business.

**New Business** – To the public present, it was explained that we have performed two meter readings since the new water Commissioners have taken over. Charlie explained that in order to accurately assess the information and data provided, the commission really needs to have three meter readings and three billing warrants to compile a factual comparison before preparing a report. As stated in order to have a median you must have a left, right and center <or> a top, bottom and median. Without three points of data, the commissioners have incomplete and inaccurate information to form a consensus. The Water Commission has identified at this point that the billing warrants for the last numerous months, to possibly more than a year, have been inaccurate. This was apparently over-looked by the interim water commissioners since June of 2022. The warrants do not depict an actual amount of usage based on the physical meter reading but were signed and billed nevertheless. The flat rate to customers was set to a rate sufficient to cover all estimated annual expenses.

Charlie explained that after review of the very first warrant he noticed gallons of usage was always a number rounded to 1,000 for example 2,100, 3,400, 4,700 and 2,900, Etc. There were never any exact gallons consumed such as 3,482 gals or other for billing as specified in the 2022 regulations. This prompted review of the second meter reading which resulted in exactly the same finding. The usage billed does not match the usage metered. Charlie contacted Avitar software support who responded they have never seen nor even heard of this ever before. Next was the comment that high usage from the Meter Reading means there are leaks in the system. However as explained by the Commissioners, METERED usage means the water has passed through the meter. High metered usage would indicate leaking inside the basement or home. LOW metered usage or lower than monthly average is a better indication of a possible leak before reaching the meter. The metered billing usage issue must be addressed before the Commission can begin to isolate potential problem meters.

**Public Comments** - Questions arose related to the initial report of Charlie's son Anthony being hired as an employee for the Water Works. It was established at the previous meeting that although the board had approved hiring Anthony, because he is currently only 15, he cannot be employed by a public utility. Charlie advised those present that Anthony was not formally hired by the water works or the Town of Hill. There were no documents submitted and he was not paid for services. Anthony rode with Charlie during the meter reading process in July but he is not a Town of Hill employee. Paul Guild asked If the position could be posted. Charlie said Yes. Stephen commented that it has been posted many times and for over two years previously, no one besides Lisa showed any interest in doing it. Lisa resigned in June when it was firmly established that the position was no longer supervised by the Selectmen. Harold Knott commented that getting a young person involved in working and having a job was a great thing for everyone involved. Charlie stated The Water Commission is responsible for the meter reading. There currently is no meter reader so the Commission is accountable. Charlie will continue to do it until someone is hired. Charlie stated that it's quite likely that his teen age son will still be riding with him during the meter reading process which takes a couple hours once a month. Joann Irving requested that Charlie assure her that he takes full responsibility and liability for his son Anthony to which Charlie said absolutely... of course! He is my son. Of course I take full responsibility for him. The regulations outline the water commission's authorities on services and access to properties. Anthony turns 16 on Sept 7<sup>th</sup> and will be eligible for employment of this position at that time.

Before closing - Tom Seymour made a statement objecting to an excerpt in previous minutes regarding a response from Charlie about his opinion that hiring Tom's wife as the administrative assistant was a considerably different conflict of interest than Charlie proposing hiring his teenage son as a meter reader. The previous minutes detail that Charlie and Shaun Bresnahan had a difference of opinion to which Shaun said "Agree to Disagree" and the discussion ended. Tom objected to Charlie's opinion of conflict of interest and took this opportunity to verbalize his disapproval of the comment. Tom's statement outlined the manner by which other Selectmen hired Tom Seymour's wife. Tom's view shared was that there is no conflict of interest because, as Tom's asserts, he recused himself from anything related to business involving his wife's employment, pay or duties as the administrative assistant. Shaun Bresnahan commented that he echoes Tom's assertion and claims that as a Selectman, that is exactly what he saw during Tom's time as a Selectman. After asserting his comments and requesting they be included in the minutes, Charlie proposed that Mr. Seymour draft his remarks and provide them within 5 days of the meeting. Tom said he would. \*\* During the draft of the minutes, Mr. Seymour provided a letter he requested be included with the minutes. The comments and narrative of the letter go well beyond the remarks in the meeting that outline an allegation of False Statement claim. The letter elaborates upon the point that was made during the meeting. Therefore the letter will not be included. Mr. Seymour will likely provide it to anyone who requests a copy.

Having no other business on the Agenda, Stephen Thomson made a motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Charles Estes, Chairman, Hill Water Works - August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023./Revised Aug 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023.