



Hill Water Works – Commissioners Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Approved

November 14th, 2023

Regularly Scheduled Meeting – A regularly scheduled Water Commissioner's meeting was held in the Hill Public Library at 6:30 p.m. located at 30 Crescent Street Hill, NH 03243.

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

Public Attendance – David Thomson, Shelly Henry and Joann Irving.

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

Approval of Previous Minutes – Steve made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Motion was seconded by Tony and passed unanimously.

Old Business-

SKR Site Services – Open Invoices require breakdown. Paving sections of Murray Hill Rd is planned for this week. Once complete, Charlie will update Ross Wood at D.O.T.

Some open discussion occurred with Shelly, Joann and David participating in discussion with the Commission. Shelly provided the Commission with the Water Works flash drives as requested. As a result of random questions and comments, it was determined that Commissioners and Charlie, as the Superintendent of the works, only have limited access to the software used by the Water Works opposed to administrator function of the software. It was determined that Shelly has administrator log-in while she professes that she doesn't use the administrator features using her regular log in as the current billing agent. The Water Commissioner's collectively requested that Shelly provide Charlie the administrator :User Names and :Passwords for QuickBooks, Avitar billing software and Sensus Meter Reading Software. Shelly agreed and the meeting moved on.

New Business-

- NOVEMBER Billing Warrant Due Date 12/18/2023 - Radio Reader Failure – Billed Without Usage Hand Held worked. Broken Meter(s) Need Repair?
- The Board reviewed open invoices. Steve made a Motion to prepare a warrant to pay open invoices. Tony seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
- The Commission reviewed September Financial Reports received from the Treasurer. There was question of the reports incompleteness with expenditures and revenues seemingly incomplete. Additional discussion is planned for December and January when the Commission has the full year of reports.

- Hydrant Flushing of the remaining hydrants, after the Mother's day attempt, lead by Shaun Bresnahan and fire fighters, was planned for October. Tools were found to be missing from the Pump House. The Water Works was required to purchase additional tools that the Fire Department would not provide. Chief Moulton made a genuine attempt to support the Water Works meeting with adversity from within his department. Thanks for trying Jamie! Tony expressed a valid concern that hydrant flushing under the current cold conditions of November, potentially spraying water on streets or sidewalks, create a safety concern. By the time the required tools arrived, cold weather prevented flushing in 2023. Hydrant maintenance not completed in May is rescheduled for spring of 2024.
- Policy Regulations Update are scheduled for review in December to take effect in January 2024. Add Superintendent for 2024. Believing the subject will arise as a matter of contention, Charlie read aloud the proposal he emailed to the Selectmen/Interim Water Commissioners on October 20, 2022. The proposal was immediately shot down by Shaun Bresnahan without any genuine consideration and without being brought to the Interim Water Commissioners. The proposal outlines many aspects of the duties Charlie has undertaken as the Superintendent. Charlie outlined that it was never about taking over the Water System or a big paycheck. The duties as Superintendent are currently undefined and without any increase in compensation. It was not planned when accepting the nomination for water commissioner that Charlie would perform all the administrative duties of operating the Water Works. Duties of the Water Commission have evolved over the six months that align very much with the duties Gerard Desrochers was performing for years without the same level of obstruction from the current regime of Town Officials. Resistance to allowing the Water Works to operate and update or upgrade to modern standards is extreme. The commission is committed to upgrade the system to better serve the users of the system. Charlie will continue as Superintendent and compensation will be addressed in the new regulations coming out in January.
- Changes to Billing Services was discussed again. Charlie made a motion that we update the billing service to provide customers more payment possibilities through a Direct Billing process that the Commission has previously reviewed. Stephen expressed concern that this adds a great deal of work for Charlie. The Commissioners offered to help as much as possible to make the transition smoother. Stephen seconded the motion. Tony agreed. The motion passed unanimously. Charlie will draft a "Letter to Customers" to be reviewed at the December meeting. Charlie suggested that changes to the billing procedure take affect in January, 2024. The Water Commission agreed that the new year under the new policy of procedures was a good time to make implemented changes official.
- The Board discussed the possibility of a rate change to include lowering the base rate, with the base rate to include a base usage with a scaled billing for higher consumption of Water. The Board agreed to review usage and rates in December. Charlie to draft the rate proposal.
- Budget Committee request for presentation 01/22/2024. – Charlie presented the letter received from the Budget Committee Chairman containing therein the usual justification from far too many; stating "AS IN YEARS PAST,". In fact the request goes on to state "This format is one that has been used for many years by all departments including the Hill Water Works." The current Commissioners have made clear numerous times that the Water Works will not be managed through the justification of "That's just the way it's always been done." Charlie explained his statements to the budget committee and suggests that the Water Commission present its proposed budget to the municipality pursuant to NH RSA 38:21 which is the law specific to the Commissioners. It is the responsibility of the governing body to present the operating budget to the budget committee and any questions the budget committee has should occur as a result of review of the operating budget presented by the governing body.
 ---> Joann Irving engaged in discussion with the commission that the budget committee can request departments provide information required for the budget committee to make a sound determination related to the budget. The Water Commissioners agree with the New Hampshire Municipal

Associations guidelines that support the Water Works financials should be made to the GOVERNING BODY, and that public works financials should be entirely separate from the operating budget of the Town based. Properly applied, the Water Works financials should not part of the budget committee's process for preparing a recommendation of the operating budget of the Town. NHMA makes abundantly clear that the separation of financials of the public works and town financials generated through taxation. The Commissioners discussed that they will respond to any specific questions the budget committee has after review of the selectmen's presentation of the town's operating budget. However the Water Commission does not agree or approve of the use of the Water Commission financials as part of the town's operating budget when provided to the Governing Body. Audits of the financials of the Water Works and review of the Town audits (for at least the past three years) shows that the Water Works budget has been misused by the governing body as part of the town's operating costs "conflating" the amount to be raised from taxation. It has been outlined and is undeniable.

- Brook Side Cooperative Changes and Request for Report - Charlie reported to the water commissioners that he received a request from Brook Side Cooperative for reports of the previous year's billing. Tony made a motion that we print a report and send it to management. Steve seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Charlie will prepare and send the report as soon as access to the system allows.
- Water Works Funds – The Commissioners reviewed the bank statements for October 31st. Stephen asked about access to bank records. Currently we have no access to banking information. The treasurer is the only one currently with access to banking records or online review of the accounts. The Commissioners discussed the current debt service and capital reserves. Charlie made a motion that we transfer approximately \$12,800 to the emergency repair fund replacing what the interim Commissioners took out to pay for a water main break in January of 2023. Stephen seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Steven made a motion that we provide Franklin Savings Bank with the appropriate documentation to gain access to bank records. Tony seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Charlie will prepare the documentation and take it to Franklin Savings Bank for their records. The commissioner is also discussed the debt service with attention on the account that matures in 2024. Charlie suggested that we review any documentation we obtain regarding this account at the December meeting and consider paying the loan early to save on the interest. Charlie made a motion that we open a capital Improvement fund with \$25,000 to be placed in an interest bearing money market account accessible for any Capital Improvements to the system. Tony seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The Debt Service review of accounts will be placed on the agenda for the December meeting.

Having no other business – The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted - Charles Estes