

Minutes of 4/9/24 Sewer Commission meeting– via Zoom (Video Conference)

Attendees: Chair- John Reynolds, Vice-Chair- Brett Ramsden, Clerk- Mike Nault, Member Mike Mackin, DPW Director- Bill Bernard, Business Manager-Paula Bertram, Minutes Clerk- Jane Ranley

Absent: Dave MacDonald

John opened the meeting at 6:05pm. and did a roll call of attendees. The Commission began the meeting by saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT- Mike N. announced he will be resigning from the Commission in May and he thanked everyone, in particular Dave MacDonald who started all this. All the Commissioners and the Sewer Business Manager replied that they will miss Mike.

ANNOUNCEMENTS – none

CURRENT BUSINESS -

Minutes of 3/12/24 –

Motion: Mike N.

Second: Brett R.

To approve the minutes for 3/12/24.

Roll Call Vote: Mike N.-aye, Brett-aye, Mike M.-aye, and John-aye.

Q3 Commitment for \$255,498.52-

Motion: Brett R.

Second: Mike M.

To accept the 3rd quarter Commitment for \$255,498.52.

Roll Call Vote: Mike N.-aye, Brett-aye, Mike M.-aye, and John-aye.

PUBLIC HEARING – Change to the Sewer Use Regulations, Article 7 Section 4 #1 to increase the minimum residential connection charge from \$2,250 to \$3,900 – John opened the public hearing and read the notice published in the Ledger on 3/29/24, noting that the minimum residential connection charge will increase from \$2,250 to \$3,900. This increase is a direct result of Leominster increasing the connection fee in the new IMA. There were no public comments. The Commissioners agreed that this needs to be implemented and Paula stated the increase will go into effect on 7/1/24.

Motion: Brett R.

Second: Mike N.

To increase the connection fee from \$2,250 to \$3,900 as written.

Roll Call Vote: Mike N.-aye, Brett-aye, Mike M.-aye, and John-aye.

Motion: Mike M.

Second: Mike N.

To close the public hearing.

Roll Call Vote: Mike N.-aye, Brett-aye, Mike M.-aye, and John-aye.

CURRENT BUSINESS:

Engineering Services – John noted they had received 5 expensive quotes from Wright Pierce. Bill sent 2 emails to Wright Pierce. The first email was for writing the specs for the manhole repair contract. He asked for some canned specs that they could rework, which would cut the price way down. The second email, Bill asked them to cut down the scope of work for the pump replacements, which would drop the cost for the quote. Paula noted that they have gotten the prices but now need help with the energy calculations.

Public Notification- System Clogs- John stated they are getting more and more clogs from flushing wipes, which is costing the Sewer Department more money. He has discussed with Paula about making a presentation at the Select Board and Commissioners agreed. Mike M. suggested adding it to Facebook pages and Paula replied it was added to the DPW page already. She will contact Tara to add it to the Website. Mike M. also suggested getting it published in the Lunenburg Ledger. Paula noted that she designed an insert in color to add to the May bills.

Business Manager Report -- Sewer System Update- Paula sent Robert's report to the Commissioners and she noted he is still doing a great job. Clogs are a major issue and hopefully getting the message out to the public will help with that. Paula noted that they installed the Spill Sense unit a couple of weeks ago at the manhole near Stone Farm, but unfortunately it is not transmitting. She obtained a new antenna and they are waiting for details on how to obtain data manually. She, Bill, and Robert will install the new antenna and try to obtain data on Friday.

--Budget Status – Paula reported that receipts are \$963,750.32 and there is a substantial amount of outstanding accounts, which is why she wants to get the demands out. Their expenditures are \$1,750,649.89. A big chunk of income will be from the tax bills which will hopefully be able to go out next week. The Betterments are forecasted at \$367,782, with interest at \$115,628. Paula added that if those amounts do come in, they will be okay.

APPOINTMENTS – The ReBoot – Payment Agreement Non-compliance – Joshua Champlain and Lawrence

Lagoy -- Paula stated they had signed a payment agreement with The ReBoot, dated 12/13/23, and required a payment of \$600/week, along with future bills paid before the due date. She added that the last payment was received on 2/20/24 and the February bill was not paid as required. The current balance due is \$14,541.23. Since 12/19/23, they have paid \$6,000. The Select Board approved the liquor license, with the contingency that they appear before the Select Board on 5/21/24 for a license status review, to assure that they have been compliant with the Sewer Department Agreement. Heather requested that Paula let her know what the Commission decides relative to the outstanding balance so they can take action at the 5/21 meeting. Joshua stated that they are in the midst of an active 93A case against the landlords (Silver Linings Investment), which means that they have not met the terms of their lease. When they reviewed their lease, they discovered that sewer was not their responsibility, so they stopped paying the bills. Paula noted that they were required to get a statement from their landlords, stating they were aware of the issue but she has not received that yet. She has sent correspondence to the landlords at all the addresses she could find but everything was returned. Joshua said they are having the same problem. He added that a Constable came looking for 50 Massachusetts Ave. LLC (Bootlegger) who owed \$250K to the state for unemployment. The Commission discussed placing a lien and Paula noted The ReBoot is paid through 2023, but any balance as of 6/30/24 will go on the tax bills. Joshua confirmed the landlords pay the property taxes. The Commission discussed the issue and Joshua agreed to bring a check for \$2,000 to cover the May bill of \$920.95 plus some of balance. The Commission agreed it was a good faith measure and will keep the discussion on the agenda for the next 2 meetings. They discussed whether to void the old agreement or make an amendment. (*John lost his signal and was unable to rejoin the meeting. Brett started chairing the meeting.*) Paula stated that they can continue to the next meeting and Joshua will bring the \$2,000 check to the office. The Commission did not take a vote. Joshua will contact his attorney for an updated address for the landlords.

Business Manager Report --(con't)

--Grease Traps- Paula reported that Kindred Spirits and Bad Larrys are late with their March reports. Mr. Wernick (Bad Larrys) said he was getting a new plumber and the new trap was due to install on 3/8. External traps – The ReBoot is overdue for pumping their interceptor and Paula will discuss this with Joshua. They missed pumpings in June and December.

--Possible Grant Funding – Paula and Bill attended a meeting with the Green Communities Chair, Unitol and the State Grant program. They will need to determine if they will see energy savings with the new pumps and have a chart to fill out to show that. Paula has reached out to Wright Pierce for assistance with this. The new pumps will be \$205K without freight, which will be substantial. The maximum grant is \$225K. The key is whether there are savings with the new ones.

--Demands/Transfer to Delinquent – Paula reported that Munis has not been working but they finally were able to get \$41,491.04 transferred to tax bills. She still cannot run Demands. She was unable to send the Q2 Demands which was a loss of \$4,500 or the Q3 Demands for a loss of \$3,790. The Delinquency rate is very bad – out of 988 Q3 bills sent out, there are still 379 still not paid. Bill added that the problem is not with the Sewer Department – it is due to the issues with Munis. Paula noted that the Tax Office was also having significant problems but were finally able to print out tax bills.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Mike Mackin thanked Mike Nault for all his work on the Commission.

UPCOMING SCHEDULED SEWER COMMISSION ACTIVITIES:

April 30, 2024 @ 6pm – Regular Meeting, Remote Participation

May 4, 2024 @9am – Town Meeting

May 14, 2024 @ 6pm – Regular Meeting, Remote Participation

May 28, 2024 @ 6pm – Regular Meeting, Remote Participation

Motion: Mike M.

Second: Mike N.

To adjourn at 7pm.

Roll Call Vote: Mike M.-aye, Mike N.-aye, and Brett-aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane L. Ranley

Minutes Clerk