

Minutes of the  
Joint Utility Commissions  
7/24/2014 @ 6PM

In attendance: Steve Fitzhugh, Dennis Donahue, Jim Wilson, Chris Bradley, Water & Sewer Superintendent Patrick Demasi and Nanci Allard

- **Appointment of Acting Clerk**

Dennis Donahue motioned to appoint Chris Bradley as acting clerk for the meeting, Jim Wilson seconded, unanimously approved

- **Discussion of Commission Duties, Roles and Responsibilities**

Chris Bradley had been reviewing the new Northfield Charter in relation to existing State Statutes concerning Utilities, and expressed concern that per statutes, the Water and Sewer Commission appears to have hiring and firing authority over the Water & Sewer Superintendent; he felt that this power should be solely the purview of the Town Manager. Discussion ensued, with Steve Fitzhugh suggesting that both utility commissions should have By-Laws developed that would govern their actions, with certain responsibilities being delegated to the Town Manager.

Steve Fitzhugh volunteered to contact VLCT as well as Primer Piper to get input and possible guidance on the development of By Laws for the two Commissions.

A brief discussion followed concerning Purchasing, and the difference between the Electric Commission have advisory responsibilities over both Power Purchasing and Equipment purchasing, but with final authority resting with the Select Board.

A brief discussion then followed concerning Smart metering being on the horizon, with Steve Fitzhugh already having had discussions with GMP on this.

- **Meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission**

Steve Fitzhugh motioned for Chris Bradley to assume the responsibilities of Chair for the Water & Sewer Commission; this was seconded by Jim Wilson; no vote was needed as a majority of the Utility Board has suggested Mr. Bradley; Mr. Bradley agreed to serve in this capacity.

Several topics concerning the Water Department then occurred:

- Superintendent Demasi informed us the board that a hydrant needed to be moved on the common.
- Superintendent Demasi gave an update on the work on Jarvis Lane; everyone was now connected and he is soliciting RFPs for paving.
- The Water department is helping the school with a sprinkler line
- Small Sewer project on Overlook Drive & Stagecoach road; 400' of new line; work will require a 30' easement

- 5,000' of in-place sewer lining replacement was accomplished (in-place curing); this was required due to things like root inclusion
- The GIS system has been regularly updated

At this point in the meeting, Nanci Allard asked to speak about her concerns for utility costs being born by rate-payers instead of taxpayers; for example - when a sidewalk needs to be dug up for a water project, Sewer funds are used to dig, but she feels highway funds should be used to re-install the sidewalk.

Ms. Allard then expressed concern that no one really knows how much it costs to run the utilities due to all the cross-charging.

A discussion then developed about the meeting schedule, and it was generally agreed that initially the Commissions would continue to meet jointly and would look to have their meetings on the 1st Monday of each month, perhaps cutting back later as the work load was better understood. The next meeting was therefore tentatively set for Monday the 4th of August; due to issues with warning this meeting the next (2nd) meeting was scheduled for August 11th at 7PM.

Action item from this meeting were:

- By-Laws
- Surplus use versus adjusting rates
- Next Meeting we will plan on reviewing budgets

A brief discussion occurred about the Select Board recently changing their Sewer Ordinance so that citizens in the 12 & 12A corridor were not required to hook up, and how this had apparently caused further motion on the planning of the sewer expansion in that area to cease. Mr. Demasi thought that was a bad decision by the Select Board; Mr. Bradley countered that despite spending \$350,000 to engineer this project - that was done with no clear understanding on how the estimated \$3.5 Million would be paid for. He indicated that it did not seem possible that just the 150 +/- potential sewer users could shoulder that - and he suggested that because the whole stated intent of the expansion of sewer there (as opposed to anywhere else), was due to "protecting the well field". Therefore, perhaps water users should also help pay for that expansion; Mr. Demasi seemed to object to that thought. Mr. Bradley indicated that this was one of the reasons he wanted to be on the Water & Sewer Commission as he was aware that people like Richard Sutor and Tom McCarney had spent a lot of time examining how such a project could ever be paid for - and had apparently not come to any good answers.

Motion to close the Water & Sewer meeting was made by Dennis Donahue, seconded by Steve Fitzhugh - Water & Sewer adjourned at 7:10

- Meeting of Electric Commission  
Motion made by Chris Bradley, seconded by Jim Wilson to appoint Steve Fitzhugh as Chair - no

vote needed as a majority had made the motion.

Steve Fitzhugh noted that while he is the current Director, an alternate was needed, with Jim Wilson volunteering to take this on. The New Town Manager will take on the role of being acting Director with Steve acting as Primary Delegate.

For New Business, Steve informed those present that:

- Work is/will be done on the NU substation
  - There was a pole fire near Branchwood
  - By-Laws will be needed; Steve is taking the point on this
  - Lien Authority on Electric is here now with the new Charter, and this will be a potentially sticky issue. Steve will be investigating further with Primer Piper.
- **Adjournment**  
Chris Bradley made the motion to adjourn the Joint Meeting at approximately 7:45 with Jim Wilson seconding. Vote unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted



Chris Bradley - Acting Clerk

Subsequently approved at the Joint Meeting of 8/11/2014