

**Joint Meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission
And the Electric Utility Commission
Meeting Minutes, October 4, 2021**

Roll Call: Steve Fitzhugh, Dennis Donahue, John Stevens, Charlie Morse. Others present: Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Patrick Demasi, Utility Superintendent. The meeting started at 6:30 PM.

Approval of Minutes of June 7, 2021

Charlie Morse noted that the date regarding the tier 3 credits should be 2023, and not. 202.

Motion by Charlie Morse, seconded by Dennis Donahue, to approve the minutes (as amended) of the June 7, 2021 meeting. **Motion approved with 4-0.**

Meeting of the Electric Commission

FY 21/22 Electric Budget

Jeff Schulz noted that attached is a revised FY 21/22 Electric Budget (current year budget) which includes an increase of \$144,740 from the budget the Commission approved in June. The budget increase is due to an increase in the purchased power cost numbers the Town had previously received. No other changes were made to the budget. The new expenditure amount should not have a significant impact on the budget. Steve Fitzhugh noted that the power purchase costs fluctuate throughout the year and that changed amount should not significantly affect the overall budget. As a result, the Commission did not see a need to change the previously adopted budget.

FY 20/21 Electric Budget Year End Financials

Jeff Schulz presented the FY 20/21 Electric Budget End financials noting that electric energy sales revenue exceeds estimates by 2.1% and the overall electric revenues exceed estimates by 2.3%. Jeff added that the Norwich energy sales were down 10%. However, the residential sales exceed estimates by 7%. The total electric department expenditures were 2.3% below the budgeted amount for the year.

Update on Renewable Energy Projects

Steve Fitzhugh presented an update on the Bone Hill Solar Project noting that the project is delayed due to the difficulty in getting steel for the racking, however, the conduit and the transformers are in place.

Next, Steve noted that he has been working on getting a price for NED utility pole testing, and may be able get GMP's discounted price versus the price NED would have to pay by going directly through Osmose Pole Inspection Services.

Meeting of Water and Sewer Commission

FY 20/21 Water/Sewer Year Financials

Jeff Schulz presented the FY20/21 Water and Sewer Year End Financials for the period ending June 30, 2021, noting that the total water budget actual revenues were 7% below estimates. The nonresidential revenues were 30% below estimates. However, the residential revenues exceed estimates by 7%.

The sewer budget actual revenues also were 7% below estimates. The nonresidential revenues were 23% below estimates. However, the residential revenues exceed estimates by 7.4%. The sewer expenses were 8% over budget.

South Main Street Stormwater and Combined Sewer Overflow Abatement Project

Jeff noted that the Engineers from the Dufrene Group have completed the 90 percent complete plans for the Main St. Stormwater and CSO Abatement Project. The overall project is divided into three elements: the larger project consisting of the replacement of stormwater lines on South Main Street, stormwater line replacement on Slate Ave and the stormwater line and catch basin work on Sherman Ave. The project is divided into three elements because of different funding sources, CSO benefits and the entity performing the construction. The South Main Street work is primarily CSO related, will be performed by a contractor, and it is anticipated/hoped that the State will fund either a sufficient portion or the entire project. The Slate Ave project, which was recently completed by Town Staff, is CSO related and was paid for using Town and Sewer funds.

We have submitted the 90 percent plans to DEC for their final comments. As discussed previously, DEC strongly encouraged Northfield to submit near complete plans to DEC in anticipation of the announcement of the availability of a significant amount of ARPA funds, separate from the direct ARPA funds to towns, for clean water and CSO abatement projects.

American Recovery Plan Act

Jeff Schulz presented a summary of the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA), which is an Act in which the federal government has approved funds to offset the impact of COVID on municipalities. Northfield will be receiving \$1,920,000 in ARRA funding. Thus far, Northfield has received 50% of the funds, with the remainder to be received July, 2022. Towns have until 12/31/2024 to obligate the funds and December 31, 2026 to spend the funds.

The following is the general allowed use of the funds.

To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality.

To respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers.

For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency.

To make necessary investments in water, sewer, stormwater/clean water projects or broadband infrastructure.

Other Business

Jeff Schulz noted that the Water and Sewer Department installed 450 feet of new stormwater lines and three new catches basins on Summer Street with the primarily goal of collecting stormwater from the hill sides and other areas above Summer Street and diverting the stormwater away from the sewage treatment plant. The stormwater will be directed via the storm lines to the lower flood plain/wetland areas of the Dog River Park. The stormwater will be treated through natural measures on-site which is an accepted treatment process. The new storm lines and basins will be outside of the paved portion of the road. The estimated project cost is \$4,500 and will result in the removal of an estimated 1.2 million gallons of stormwater from the sewer plan; which will further reduce treatment facility costs and assist the Sewer Department in complying with the DEC's recent permit requirements of lower (unrealistic) phosphorous load release requirements.

The State of Vermont performed an inspection of the Northfield Sewer Plant and found the plant to be in good working order and no violations. The State inspects the plant every three years and the next visit will likely include preliminary discussions of required major plant upgrades.

Motion by Steve Fitzhugh, second by Dennis Donahue to adjourn the Joint Meeting of the Electric and the Water/Sewer Commission. **Motion passed 4-0.**

Jeff Schulz, Town Manager