

**Joint Meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission
And the Electric Utility Commission
Meeting Minutes, December 7, 2020**

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

Approval of Minutes from the November 2, 2020 Meeting

Motion by Charlie Morse, seconded by Dennis Donahue, to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2020 meeting. **Motion passed 4-0.**

Approval of Minutes from the November 18, 2020 Meeting

Motion by Dennis Donahue, seconded by Charlie Morse, to approve the minutes of the November 18, 2020 meeting. **Motion passed 4-0.**

Meeting of the Electric Commission

Budget Status

Jeff Schulz presented an Electric Utility budget status report for the period ending November, 30 noting that the total revenues received thus far are on target at 41% of estimate. Jeff added that the energy sales revenue, which represent 90% of the over-all budget, are slightly ahead of the estimate at 42% received. The total electric expenses are under budget at 28%. The power purchase costs, which represent 77% of the expenses, are under budget at 27%.

Charlie Morse asked if the Electric Utility had a policy regarding a maximum allowable surplus. Steve Fitzhugh responded that there is no surplus policy.

Other Business

Construction on the Bone Hill Solar project should be underway within the next few weeks with the developer, Encore, planning to get conduit in the ground in December, weather permitting. The cost of the conduit is approximately \$8,000.

Meeting of Water and Sewer Commission

Main Street Stormwater Project

Jeff stated that the South Main Street Stormwater elimination and Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Abatement project is on the Utility Commission's agenda because the Town is nearing the decision point on whether to bond the project and construct. Project funding thus far (planning and engineering) has been split equally between the Town and Utility. The State is funding 50% of the planning and engineering costs. The Commission is being asked to consider whether the

construction costs should continue to be split between the Town and the Sewer Utility. There is no established policy for the funding of this type of project as it is unique, and understandably, there are differing opinions as to which entity should fund the project.

The Vermont Department Environmental Conservation (DEC) has issued an order that Northfield (similar to other VT communities) eliminate its last CSO. In addition, DEC is pressuring Northfield to significantly reduce its phosphorus load release from the Northfield Sewer Plant to improve water quality flows to Lake Champlain. Northfield has eliminated several of its CSOs and has reduced the amount of stormwater into the plant. The South Main Street Project will allow Northfield to eliminate its last CSO and further reduce stormwater flows into the plant. The entire stormwater project as shown on the attached plans is estimated to cost \$2,100,000. In order to reduce the amount of project and bonding costs, I have recommended that the Town consider having a contractor perform just the improvements on South Main Street and the Town Highway and Utility Departments perform the side street work as time allows (with Slate Ave. as the priority section). The advantage of this approach is that it lowers the project estimated bonding amount, allows for the elimination of the CSO and eliminates a large amount of stormwater from the sewage treatment plant. The estimated bonding cost for this approach is approximately \$650,000. The State is subsidizing 40% of that estimated \$650,00 cost.

Charlie Morse stated that the sewer utility customers should pay a portion of the project costs, however, the Town Highway should fund a greater portion of the project because the stormwater is coming from the streets. Charlie also noted the need to ensure that the project is completed prior to the repaving of Main Street. John Stevens stated that there will be some residents outside the Village that feel they should not fund the project because they will not benefit. However, John added that the project cost should be split between the town and sewer utility. Dennis agreed and asked how much stormwater flows into the sewer plant. Steve asked what are the potential fines the State could impose if the Town misses its permit thresholds for phosphorus. The Commission suggested that they receive additional information on the amount of stormwater flows into the impact of stormwater on the on the sewer and highway.

Sewer Ordinance

Jeff stated that at the last meeting the Commission agreed to amend the sewer ordinance such that in Section 6.32 the term sewer be changed to house connection. That change will limit the homeowner's maintenance responsibility for a sewer service line to within their property versus from the house to the sewer main in the street. Jeff added that he amended the ordinance and provided a copy to the Commission. Jeff noted, however, that after further thought and consideration regarding this change, a concern arose regarding the implementation and enforcement of the new ordinance because the Sewer Department could be forced

into determining where a sewer issue might be located; which could result in the Sewer Department having to do exploratory work on private property in situations where the sewer issue is likely not a Town issue. The Commission concluded that the likelihood of there being a sewer service line issue in the street is very low, and if there is a sewer service line issue in the street, it is likely a Town issue. Accordingly, the Commission recommended not amending the ordinance, but rather a policy to address the issue. Also, the policy should include a release for the property owner to sign.

Other Business

John Stevens asked that the Main Street Stormwater plans be revised to include cleans-out for the proposed stormwater detention basins.

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

Jeff Schulz, Town Manager