

**Joint Meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission
And the Electric Utility Commission
Meeting Minutes, October 2, 2023**

Roll Call: Steve Fitzhugh, Dennis Donahue, Charlie Morse, John Stevens. Others present: Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Utility Superintendent Jim Russo.

The meeting started at 6:30 PM.

Minutes from Previous Meeting

Motion by Steve Fitzhugh, second by John Stevens to approve the minutes of the August 7, 2023, meeting. Steve noted that on page two, it should be revised to say on the adjoining Town “property “. **The motion as amended was approved 3-0-1.**

Meeting of Water and Sewer Commission

FY 22/23 Year Budget Water/Sewer Budget Reports

Jeff noted that the Water Department ended FY 22/23 with revenues exceeding budget estimates by 3% (\$29,816) which was due primarily to better-than-expected water utility sales and increased interest income. The water expenditures were 5% (\$41,189) below budgeted amounts and was due primarily to lower wages and benefit costs from not hiring a fourth employee.

The Sewer Department FY 22/23 Budget revenue amounts are skewed in that a portion of the ARPA CSO project revenue is included as a source of revenue. The sewer revenues minus the ARPA funds show that sewer revenues exceeded estimates by nearly \$40,000 and was due primarily to better-than-expected sewer utility sales and increased interest income. The sewer expenditures exceeded the budgeted amount by 1% (\$10,973) due primarily to chemical costs from price increases and the need to use more chemicals to address the State of Vermont’s concern about copper and phosphorus.

Project Updates

Jeff plans to have the engineer (Dufrene Group) present the completed engineering plans for the Main Street Water Line and Cheny Farm Tank Replacement Project to the Utility Commission and Select Board in early November to discuss next steps in the process which is project funding and construction. The project is a phased project with the Main Street water line Phase I and the water lines to the tanks and the tank replacement Phase II. The State of Vermont is offering 50% funding for the Main Street water line replacement portion based in part on the project containing lead elements. In addition, the State of Vermont is likely to require the municipality to replace the water line within the next several years based on the lead issue.

Jeff stated he hired the Dufrene Group to begin work on the Route 12 and 12A sewer line expansion project, which involves completing the project plans which were developed to 60% in 2010. Because the project plans are over ten years old and the proposed lines are not connecting to a growth center, the State is requiring a new planning/project justification study to determine if project construction qualifies for State funding. Because the proposed project will serve areas with failed septic systems and protect the wellfield, the State will fund 50% of the planning study.

Jeff stated that he hired Aldrich and Elliott engineers to perform the State mandated 20-year sewer plant evaluation which must be completed by December 2024. The engineer will review/inspect the entire sewer system, including the manholes, sewer lines and the plant to identify any system deficiencies. The engineer will prepare a final report for State review. The State will then prepare a new sewer plant operating permit mandating required plant and system upgrades. The State is funding 50% of the evaluation. At the October 24 Board meeting, the Board will be asked to approve submission of a loan application which is required to obtain 50% funding.

Electric Commission

FY 22/23 Year End Budget Report

The FY 22/23-year end Electric Budget report shows revenues exceeding estimates by 3% (\$129,724) and was due primarily to a \$48,208 increase in interest income and dividends, and Norwich sales exceeding estimates by 10% (\$101,891). The Electric Department expenditures were below budgeted amount by 1.2%.

Projects Update

Steve Fitzhugh noted that there is an important upcoming AMI (smart meter) project kickoff meeting on October 11 from 9 am to 4 PM in Swanton. This will be an important meeting and an opportunity for discussion and questions regarding AMI. VPPSA is still working on finalizing the State funding for the project.

Next, Steve stated that GMP has developed three options for the line realignment project on the Dog River Park. First, is to leave the poles in the current location in the floodplain and develop a backup plan to ensure that Norwich is properly served if there is an issue with the poles in the current location. The second option is to relocate the poles out of the floodplain to the east side of the river. However, the poles would still be in a wetland. The third option is relocating the poles to the Electric Department's existing easement within the Fright Yard Way property. The issue with this option is that is within the middle of the property and the current easement does not cover the entire property.

Motion by Dennis Donahue second by John Stevens to adjourn the Joint Meeting of the Electric and the Water/Sewer Commission. **Motion passed 3-0-1.**

Jeff Schulz, Town Manager