PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION       MEETING MINUTES

The Public Works Commission met at 7:15 p.m. on Wednesday, May 8, 2019, at 141 Keyes Road, Concord, Massachusetts. Pursuant to Chapter 303 of the Acts of 1975, notice of the above meeting was duly filed with the Town Clerk, Town House, Monument Square, Concord, Massachusetts.

PRESENT:

Commissioners:
K.C. Winslow
Andrew Boardman
Peter W. Wallis

Absent:
Steven Ng
James Terry

Staff:
Richard K. Reine, M.S.C.E., CA Public Works and Engineering Director
Alan Cathcart, Water/Sewer Superintendent
Robert Hill, Management Analyst
Anna R. Trout, Administrative & Special Projects Coordinator

Other:
Terri Ackerman (Select Board Observer)
Robert Hilsinger (League of Women Voters Observer)
Thomas Bierbaum (VOA Concord Assisted Living Inc.)
Mark E. Beaudry (Meridian Associates)
Janice Weldon (Meridian Associates)
Peter Mulin (Sr. Living Residences)
Chris Dowd (Sr. Living Residences)

A: ACTION ITEMS

A-1 through A-4 - The meeting was convened at 7:15 p.m. by Commissioner Winslow.

The regular and executive session meeting minutes from April 17, 2019, were approved. The executive session minutes are not to be published at this time. The next two PWC meetings were scheduled for Wednesday, June 12 and July 10 at 7:15 P.M. at 141 Keyes Road.

D: DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

D-1: Review PWC Calendar Draft
Director Reine mentioned that there currently are not any items on the agenda for a June meeting. The commissioners will be informed if that meeting will take place as scheduled.

**D-2: Water/Sewer Rate Public Hearing**

Commissioner Wallis **MOVED** and Commissioner Boardman **SECONDED**, and it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** as follows:

To open the Public Hearing for the FY20 Water/Sewer Rates.

Director Reine explained that the commissioners were provided with a memo which details the water and sewer rate changes and also provides background on how the water and sewer rates are calculated. The water and sewer funds are full cost accounting enterprise funds primarily supported by user fees. The water fund uses a conservation block structure whereas the sewer fund is a uniform rate structure which is calculated based on metered winter/spring flow to eliminate the potential impact of outdoor irrigation on sewer use.

We have developed a ten-year proforma for both the water and sewer enterprise funds which allows CPW to project rates for a ten-year time frame based on known operational and capital expenditures. The proposed rate structure is detailed in the memorandum to the Public Works Commission dated May 1, 2019, with step 1 water rates increasing by approximately 5%. Two thirds of our customer base will be impacted by the Step 1 increase only. Step 2 rates are for water use over 12 units in a one-month period and is proposed to increase by approximately 5%, which represents 110% of the base rate. Step 3 rates are for water use over 24 units in a one-month period and is proposed to increase by approximately 5% representing 165% of the base rate.

General Service or Commercial customer water rates are proposed to increase by approximately 5% for both the less than 25 units per month and over 25 units per month steps. We also propose to maintain the senior and needs based discount program which provides a 50% discount for Step 1 water use. We typically see somewhere in the range of 70 participants in this program.

The proposed sewer rate is also detailed in the May 1, 2019 memorandum. It is proposed to increase by 1% for residential and non-residential customers. We serve about one third of the community for centralized wastewater and sewer services. We also recommend an increase in the septage disposal fees of approximately 1% going from $0.087 per gallon to $0.088.

When asked about why the municipal buildings are not on the tiered rate structure, Director Reine explained that in the case of a water ban, the service is interruptible, resulting in a discounted rate. They also need to model conservation and are held accountable for that. There also was a question about
increasing rates as the Town prepares for the future. At some point in the future, we will be investing in a few different options for solving the sewer capacity issue. One is the 155,000 gallon per day system that we would be able to construct at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The other option was the former W/R Grace Property, where the sewer fund participated in the purchase of that property, where 400,000 gallons per day of disposal potential was identified following the completion of a hydrologic study. Through the first option in accordance with the Sewer Improvement fee bylaw the sewer improvement fee was calculated and based on the additional project cost to provide increased wastewater treatment capacity which totaled approximately $7,000,000. Along with other existing plant costs, the sewer improvement fee was increased to $40.07. The money collected this evening from the Volunteers of America, which goes specifically into the sewer improvement fund, is used for future capacity to be constructed when this capacity is needed. We currently have approximately $4,500,000 in that fund. The rates along with the Sewer Improvement Fee are instrumental in having funds available for future capacity.

Another important point is the five-year permit for the Wastewater Treatment Plant is actually administratively renewed right now while the EPA reviews our renewal application. Within our application, which currently has a 1.2 million gallon per day rolling average permit limit we undertook an analysis in accordance with existing regulations to identify plant design flow. From this we were able to request an increase in that rolling average, for about another 140,000 gallons of capacity. This would be the least expensive capacity that we could obtain. It would require certain plant upgrades, and would be the most economical to pursue. Superintendent Cathcart added that the Inflow and Infiltration budget is also ramping up significantly from $100,000 to $200,000 per year, to reestablish treatment and permitted capacity. We are currently developing a short term, more aggressive plan to include some smoke testing and CCTV, to help identify where these issues exist.

Superintendent Cathcart explained that the budget plan and rate schedule has been widely advertised. The Town performs a survey every two years to assess resident’s ratings of service by the Town. Since 2013, residents have indicated that their rating for water service is predominantly excellent or good. Superintendent Cathcart introduced Bob Hill, the Management Analyst in CPW’s Water/Sewer Division who has been an integral part of our rate structure analysis. New services are being offered through improved billing and meter collection activities. Paul Reinhardt, CPW’s Management Analyst, has also been a key player working with Bob on the new billing conversion process. With regard to customer’s opinion of the water service price, most residents feel the price is reasonable. One third of the Town receives Town sewer service directly. The opinion of sewer service price is mostly “reasonably priced”.

Bob Hill explained that the first bills under the consolidated utility billing system will be going out in the mail this weekend. The National Information
Solutions Cooperative (NISC) is the name of the cooperative, of which we are a member, who has designed and installed this new software and is handling this process. One of the big changes is that distribution and mailing will be performed by this group. There will be other methods of payment accepted such as online banking or credit cards. Access to account information and the ability to monitor usage is also being provided. There is a centralized Customer Support Center to answer all inquiries. The security of the system including the encryption and storage was thoroughly reviewed by Concord’s IT Department. Budget billing can now be offered. We are working on a system that will allow instantaneous readings, so customers can monitor their water usage. We have a combination of old and new water meters in services. The older meters measure in hundred cubic feet increments. The new meters measure in cubic feet or 7.48 gallon increments.

To gather information to help determine water usage, it was suggested that a question be added to the Town Survey asking whether the resident has an underground sprinkler system.

Commissioner Wallis MOVED and Commissioner Boardman SECONDED, and it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED as follows:

To close the Public Hearing for the FY20 Water/Sewer Rates.

Commissioner Wallis MOVED and Commissioner Boardman SECONDED, and it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED as follows:

To approve the Water Rate Schedules, and Sewer Rate Schedules as presented and as described in the Fiscal Year 2020 – Water and Sewer Rate Schedules memo dated May 1, 2019, prepared by CPW’s Water/Sewer Division Superintendent and issued by the Public Works Director.

**D-3: Volunteers of America Sewer Waiver – 68 Commonwealth Avenue**

Director Reine explained that anytime there is a sewer request over 1,000 gallons per day of peak design flow, based upon Title 5, review approval is required from the Public Works Commission. The requirements for approval include frontage on the sewer system, the proposal must be consistent with the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan, the capacity at the sewer collection, transmission and treatment systems must be in place, public health must be protected and the proposal should be consistent with the Town’s planning goals. The applicant is often asked to demonstrate that public interest and Town interest have been met by going through other boards and commissions for their approval. Concord Public Works has reviewed this request and believes that the best interest criteria has been met.
Tom Bierbaum, the owner of Volunteers of America, introduced Mark Beaudry and Janice Weldon from Meridian Associates and Peter Mullin and Chris Dowd from Senior Living Residences. He explained that Volunteers of America is a 501(c)3 charitable organization based in Jamaica Plain. The Concord Park facility began development in 1997 with opening occurring in 2001. After eighteen years of operation the building has started to look dated. The Board of Directors has been talking about doing some updating for some time. The main objectives are to make the facility more modern looking and to reutilize some of the common space. New units are planned to be built alongside the existing building, which will allow for complete renovation of the existing units. Mark Beaudry of Meridian Associates showed a diagram showing the existing structure and proposed addition which includes 22 new units. Six current units are being converted to common area space, so the net increase in units is sixteen. For water usage the facility had been using 98 gallons per bed, per day on average. A smart controller is being installed to reduce the volume of water for irrigation, along with other water conservation measures. The building addition will have different aerators and lower volume flush toilets. In the final phase of construction, existing units will be updated with water saving toilets and other fixtures. This should result in 75 gallons per day per bed.

At this time the sixteen additional beds at 150 gallons per day per bed equals 2,400 gallons per day, which is the Title 5 number. Director Reine added that allocation for the 2,400 gallons is at the current sewer improvement fee, but to reestablish the baseline up to the 1,000 based on the DEP change, we are recommending the $13.60 for those thousand gallons, to get up to the proper baseline. The expectation would be to review this matter in one year to see if the goal of 75 gallons per day per bed is reached. If not, we would assess the difference.

Natural Resources, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals approval have been received.

Commissioner Boardman MOVED and Commissioner Wallis SECONDED, and it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED as follows:

To approve the appeal made by Volunteers of America, the property owner of 68 Commonwealth Avenue, (Parcel 2198) of the administrative denial for its requested increase in wastewater flow in accordance with Title 5 Sewer Review #18-174, dated November 1, 2018 and as amended in Title 5 Sewer Review #19-55, with the understanding that it satisfied recommendations included within the memorandum submitted by the Public Works Director dated May 1, 2019.

This approval shall remain in effect for a period not to exceed one year from date of approval at which time a building permit must have been issued for the
project or an extension of the approval has been made in writing to and granted by the PWC.

**D-4: PWC Reorganization**
Commissioner Wallis MOVED and Commissioner Boardman SECONDED, and it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to elect Steven Ng as Chair and James Terry as Vice-Chair of the Public Works Commission effective immediately following this meeting.

**D-5: Director’s Report**

- **DropOff-SwapOff** — The May 4 event was very successful with good weather.
- **Cambridge Turnpike Reconstruction Project** — The roadway has been reclaimed by the farm up to Hawthorne Lane. Utilities that will no longer be used are being removed in preparation for some of the ground improvement work that is underway. The ground improvement work will probably commence over the next few weeks.
- **369 Commonwealth Avenue** — CPW coordinated the removal and green demolition of this property, achieving recycling of 91% of the materials from the building.
- **Bioassay of Compost** — This test is conducted annually to determine if there are herbicide residues in the compost at the 755 Walden Street Compost Site. No herbicide damage was apparent.
- **Milldam Nursery School** — Highway and Grounds staff visited the Milldam Nursery School to discuss tree care, after which a concolor fir seedling was given to each student.
- **Arbor Day Celebration** — A black tupelo tree was planted at the Warner’s Pond Dam at this annual ceremony in partnership with the Garden Club of Concord.
- **Earth Day Festival** — CPW provided water conservation information at this festival.

**D-6: Commissioner’s Comments**

None.

**D-7: Public Comments**

Terri Ackerman (Select Board Observer), had a question about information she read in a wastewater report. Director Reine responded that effluent wet testing is performed every few years. This testing is required to determine aluminum and other impacts and the toxicity in our effluent based on a fish called a daphnia. The testing is dependent upon the percentage of the daphnia.
population percentage that survives. The testing was done last month with a positive outcome.

ADJOURNED: 9:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna R. Trout
Administrative & Special Projects Coordinator
Concord Public Works

Approved,

K.C. Winslow
Public Works Commission

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