

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners  
Monday, June 14, 2010  
North Brookfield Water Treatment Facility  
14 Bell Road  
North Brookfield, MA 01535**

**Present:** Tim Nason, Jim Kularski, Stephen Jones and Shiela LeBlanc –  
**Recording Secretary**  
**Absent:** John Thomasian  
**Guests:** Phil Spiva – Valley View School, Jim Lovett & Bob Smith – Finance  
**Committee**

**Meeting opened: 6:03 pm**

1. **Valley View School** – Mr. Jones reviewed information regarding Dr. Spiva's attendance at the meeting. Mr. Jones explained that we have the meter testing regulation for 2" meters and larger and after three notifications Valley View had not submitted any paperwork or contacted the Water Department in any way regarding this issue. Per the North Brookfield Rules and Regulations, Valley View was billed and paid a fine in the amount of \$100.00 for violation of this testing regulation. Dr. Spiva was in attendance to see if the Board could waive the second bill that included fines for two months in the amount of \$200.00.

Dr. Spiva asked the Board if they would consider waiving or abating this fee for the meter testing violation. He did not become aware of this situation until he received the bill for the fines. There was a communication error on the part of the school. Once he became aware of this situation he had his maintenance man contact a plumber to take care of this issue.

Mr. Jones informed the Board that a new testable meter has been installed and inspected by us and everything seems to be working correctly. He also told the Board he had no issue with the waiving of this fee. The school had paid one and the new meter has been installed.

**Mr. Kularski made and Mr. Nason seconded a motion to waive the water meter-testing fine of \$200.00 for Valley View School. So voted.**

**At this time Dr. Spiva left the meeting.**

2. **Finance Committee** – Bob Smith and Jim Lovett, representing the Finance Committee were present to discuss the Water Department budget. Mr. Jones opened by reviewing the department head meeting with the Finance Committee and Selectmen last Thursday. He showed those present the budget sheet that was passed out at the meeting. At the meeting they were told to complete the budget sheet breakdown and that there were to be no salary increases in the submittal. Mr. Jones went on to explain that the total budget request was for \$867,749.00.

This number is our level funded budget with the addition of the \$18,648.00 for health insurance for a new operator.

Mr. Smith explained that the Finance Committee is recommending no salary increase this year. Mr. Jones stated that was what was said last year but the school had received theirs. Mr. Lovett explained that the school had been given a budget amount and the union decided to take the individual pay raises and risk the cutting of other positions. He pointed out that there were several teachers in the union that were retiring this year thus the decision to take the raises.

Mr. Jones pointed out that the Highway is in negotiations and the raise is still on the table. He is told that the Police also have raises in their contract. Mr. Lovett pointed out that the Finance Committee is an Advisory group and they are recommending to the Selectmen no raises at all.

Mr. Smith stated that currently the Finance Committee is holding this budget together with tape.

Mr. Kularski questioned whether they have considered a Proposition 2 ½ override. Mr. Lovett said they did but in North Brookfield we have never been able to get one passed.

Mr. Nason brought up the fact that we have been running without a third operator for several years now. Mr. Lovett stated that the other department such as police and highway have a need for additional help too and they have had to go with out.

Mr. Smith stated that they recognize the issue about Proposition 2 ½ but FY 2012 looks even worse. They explained that they used about \$150,000.00 from foreclosure sales to assist in balancing the budget for 2011. Mr. Lovett also pointed out that the town has a lot of debt. Most of which will hit on the next tax bill.

As for the school, they noted that they have no control over it. The school is given a figure and they make their line item allocations, as was stated before last year they opted to not forfeit any raises.

Mr. Smith explained that when the Finance Committee voted on the water budget two weeks ago, they were assuming that it was level-funded without salary increases. It was later noticed that it contained salary increases.

Mr. Jones informed them that there was never any attempt to hide any salary increases. It is the same as the original submittal with the exception of the increase in the health insurance for the new operator.

The Board feels that the state cuts do not affect the water department we do not operate with any state funding. Mr. Smith noted that if the other departments give raises they would have to cut positions to compensate for it.

Mr. Kularski feels that last year the water employees were asked and agreed to give up their raises and he will not ask them to do that again.

Mr. Smith stated that he couldn't recommend increases for some and not for others.

Mr. Kularski suggested that maybe the other departments could cut enough from another part of their budget in order to get their employees a raise. Mr. Smith explained that there is no room in the other budgets to cut.

Mr. Lovett noted that unless the economy changes real quick things aren't going to change and even if it does we won't see it for two years. They also noted that the real estate and excise tax collections are down.

Mr. Smith would like to go into the town meeting in agreement.

**Mr. Kularski and Mr. Nason stated that they are not willing to cut the salary increases for the Water Department Employees.**

**At this time Mr. Lovett and Mr. Smith left the meeting.**

3. **Mr. Nason made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the May 10, 2010 meeting as written. So voted.**
4. **Mr. Nason made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the Executive Session of May 10, 2010 as written. So voted.**
5. **Operator Resignation** - Mr. Jones informed the Board that Rich Kennan has taken the vacant Operator's job in West Brookfield. He explained to Mr. Jones that the reason he is going to work in West Brookfield is that he will have "a better work schedule." West Brookfield has 2 operators but also have two commissioners that have drinking water licenses and they cover all Sundays and Holidays. It doesn't hurt that West Brookfield still gives out raises, they received a cost of living raise last year and will be receiving one this year. They can also receive raises every three years as they move up the step and grade personnel scale.

Mr. Jones received Mr. Kennan's notice on May 26<sup>th</sup> and the next week we published an advertisement for a replacement operator in the New Leader and on the Massachusetts Water Works Web page. A job description and the benefits have been included in the packet. We are planning on paying the same amount of money that was budgeted for Mr. Kennan, which is \$18.24 an hour. We wanted

to make sure that the Board wanted to keep the pay and job description the same before we send this information out to the applicants.

The new hire must have at least a Grade 1 T & Grade 1 D. We cannot hire anyone with less than this. As it is, Mr. Jones is the only person that will be able to operate the plant once Mr. Kennan leaves. He has cancelled his July vacation, the second year in a row he has had to do this. The best-case scenario is that we have an application or two from people with licenses by July 8<sup>th</sup>, which is the date we have as the closing date. The Board can review the applicants at their meeting on July 12 decide on interviews at that time.

The worst-case scenario is that we do not get any applicants with licenses. If this happens we will have to contact contract operators or engineering firms that have licensed operators on their staff. The town will have to hire a licensed operator from one of these firms. Mr. Jones would anticipate the cost of hiring an operator of this type to be more expensive than we have budgeted for, so it could throw our budget off considerably. Even if it was to just cover Mr. Jones's time off each week this will still be costly.

According to the North Brookfield Employee handbook, an employee that has worked at least 5 years must be compensated for 15 unused sick days. We plan on using the FY2011 Operator's salary to pay this compensation to Mr. Kennan. It will cost approximately \$2,268 and will only be a problem if we hire someone before the three weeks between when Mr. Kennan leaves and the new hire.

Mr. Jones explained that he has written to the Board of Selectmen regarding Mr. Kennan's vacation time. He will be working 5 days into the new fiscal year so he emailed the Selectmen's Administrative Assistant asking how to handle the vacation time, whether to pro rate the vacation time or compensate him for the full three weeks. The Administrative Assistant wrote back saying that that information has to come from the Town Treasurer or the Town Accountant. Mr. Jones then emailed the Town Treasurer and the Town Accountant and asked them how to handle this situation. The Treasurer didn't answer the email and the Town Accountant wrote back basically saying that it was the Board of Selectmen's decision.

So at this point he doesn't know which way to go and he is not getting any help from the town officials who should know the answer. He asked if the Board had any thoughts on this.

Mr. Kularski recommended emailing the Selectmen again and should we not have an answer by June 24, we will have to request to be placed on their agenda to discuss this issue.

Mr. Nason feels that if they can't answer the email then we should pay Mr. Kennan the three weeks.

**Quarterly Billing** - The sewer department has shown interest in combining the billing process with us so we could go to quarterly billing. As we have discussed many times, it would serve both the water users and the water department better if we could switch to quarterly billing instead of semi annual billing. For the customer it is better because the bill is smaller. For the Water Department, we get a better cash flow. At this time we have a cash flow problem at the end of the six-month period and it leaves us low on funding in January and especially in July. The Board wrote a letter to the Town Collector about this but never received a response. Selectman Mary Walter is trying to streamline the billing and collection process but cannot say categorically if it will ever lead to us being able to do quarterly billing through the Town Collector's Office. We have also heard that the new auditors report will suggest that we bill and collect together with the Sewer Department. We will have to wait and see whether that is true or not. Their report will be coming out this month.

One option for us to bill quarterly is to combine with the Sewer Department in a way that one department will do the billing and one will do the collection. The reason for this convoluted system is that Mrs. LeBlanc has found that we cannot bill and collect our own money. We don't know if this would work or not but it is worth looking into. Sewer Superintendent Rodney Jenkins and Administrative Assistant Laurie Lapierre met with Mrs. LeBlanc and Mr. Jones last month to discuss this possibility. Ideas were talked about and we all came up with problems that would have to be solved to make it work. It was left that Mrs. LeBlanc and Mrs. Lapierre would get together and try to iron out the details. The idea is that we need to have a system in place to be able to present it to the respective Boards. We will keep you updated as to the status of this project.

6. **Water Billing Clarification** – The Board reviewed the letter from the Board of Sewer Commissioners regarding the minimum fee being from 0-5,000 or 1-5,000. The Board of Water Commissioners feels that it is from 1 gallon used to 5,000. And to further clarify that if there is a meter reading of 0 usage there is no bill issued.
7. **Youth Center** – The Board reviewed a letter from the North Brookfield Youth Center requesting to once again conduct their 10k road race through the reservoir area and for permission to use the key for the gates mainly to get there water station set up. They agree to take responsibility for the key and to return it to the office after the race.

**Mr. Nason made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to approve the use of the reservoir area for the 10k Road Race sponsored by the North Brookfield Youth Center. So voted.**

8. **Resident Appreciation Letter** – Mr. Kularski read a letter that he received thanking Mr. Jones and Mr. Kennan for the outstanding job they did in solving a

water problem for Fred & Carol Slauenwhite, 99 School Street. Mr. Kularski noted that it is nice to hear good things.

9. **Low Pressure area update** – Mr. Jones updated the Board on the status of the pressure issues in this area. Roger Davis of 16 Sunset Ave has asked to pay the difference between the system that we have proposed and the traditional system. Mr. Kularski and Mr. Jones felt this was fine and had Mr. Davis sign a letter confirming that he would pay the difference. This system has been installed and the bill will be paid through this week's warrant.

Mr. Jones has also given Mr. Charpentier the names and addresses of the other three houses that will need booster pumps. He has already given us quotes on the 3 Sunset Ave and 18 Bell Rd addresses. Mr. Jones feels these quotes are good enough to give him the go ahead to install the pumps at these addresses. These two quotes are slightly higher due to the need to bring the electric to the area of the pump.

This will leave only 5 Witt Drive that hasn't been visited yet. Mr. Charpentier is working on getting an appointment with Mr. Bossolt in order to submit a quote.

We have also sent a letter to the Lavalles of Sunset Ave. We know they have a pump installed already but we offered to install one when the time came to replace it as stated by the Board of Water Commissioners.

**The Board instructed Mr. Jones to have Mr. Charpentier begin the other installations.**

10. **Budget 2011** – Mr. Jones feels that this has been covered. He did question the Board on how they want us to fill out the most recent form received from the Finance Committee. The Board asked that it be filled out exactly as the original submittal plus the health insurance for a new operator including the raises.
11. **Horse Pond Dam Update** - Lenard has finished the bid document and sent it to us. Mrs. LeBlanc has had to make a few changes and has since forwarded it for review to Town Council and the Town's insurance agency.

USDA has asked for more information and clarification of some of the information that we provided. Mrs. LeBlanc submitted this information to them. We have not yet heard about the grant portion of the loan.

12. **On Line Data Back up** – Mr. Jones had planned on running this by the town's Technology Committee but was informed that there isn't one anymore. So he emailed information on the on line data backup to the Board of Selectmen's Administrative Assistant, each of the Selectmen individually, the sewer department and the town collector. The only response he received was from Selectman Mary Walter who wanted to discuss it. She came up to the office to

discuss billing procedure with Mrs. LeBlanc and we also talked about the online data back up. She felt the Town Accountant might be interested.

As Mr. Jones had mentioned at the last meeting, our IT guy, David Smith, had recommended that we begin using an online service for backing up our data. He recommended using Carbonite, which Mr. Jones looked into. They do not support Microsoft Server, which is the operating system we have on our server. Mr. Jones uses Mozy at home and it also comes highly recommended. They do support Microsoft Server. The cost is \$6.95 per month for one license and \$0.50/GB per month. We would be backing up approximately 3 GB so the cost would be \$107.40 per year. He feels we can fit this into our FY2011 budget and if the Board agrees he would like to start moving towards using Mozy to back up our data off site. He will check with the Sewer Department first to see if they want to participate and will also let the Selectmen know that we are going in that direction.

**Mr. Nason made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to approve the on line back up using Mozy for the cost of approximately \$107.40 per year, with payment coming out of the Computer Repair line item in the Hired Labor/Purchase of Services. So voted**

13. **Superintendent Report – Hydrants Flushing** - Flushing was completed in May. Mr. Kennan felt the water was cleaner this year than ever before. Our hopes have been that the pipes would clean out over time and that the corrosion control process would limit the deterioration of the distribution system.

**Hydrant Replacement** - We replaced one hydrant in June. This was a Chapman Style 88 hydrant on Crooks Road that was installed in the 30's or 40's.

**Pressure Reducer** – Ross valve came out to do the annual maintenance on the Pressure regulating valve on Old East Brookfield Road. This is a very important piece of equipment as it keeps the pressure in the pipes south of this from getting so high that it would destroy the distribution system. The maintenance consists of replacing the three pilot valves and testing the valves. The cost is high, \$1200.00 for the maintenance and then another \$800.00 for the rebuilding of the pilot valves.

**LCS Controls** - LCS Controls came out to install a technology fix for a problem we have had with the SCADA system at the Raw Water Pump Station. Approximately 4 or 5 times a year, something happens to the system to make the set point numbers change. When the plant wasn't running it wasn't a big deal but if the plant was running it made the chemical pumps go to maximum level, thereby pumping too much chemical and ruining the coagulation process that allows the filters to work correctly. In the past we had Troy Brown look at the problem and also a tech support person from Allen Bradley and they both couldn't find the problem. LCS Controls weren't sure if they found the problem

either but they did try a fix and they also set up an alarm so that if the set points go too high it will shut the plant down and call out an alarm.

**Geese Peace** - The Geese oiling apparently was successful for the fourth straight year. None of the eggs from the current nest have hatched and the mother has given up.

**CCR** - The Annual Water Quality Report was finished this month and has been sent to all water users, posted at the Post Office and the library, and copies were left at both housing offices, the Senior Center and at Quabaug Corp as called for by regulations. Mrs. LeBlanc gets all the credit for completing this project that is very time consuming.

**14. New Business – none**

**Meeting adjourned: 7:14 pm**

Respectfully submitted,

Shiela LeBlanc,  
Recording Secretary