

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners
Monday, December 13, 2010
North Brookfield Water Treatment Facility
14 Bell Road
North Brookfield, MA 01535**

Present: James Kularski, John Thomasian, Stephen Jones and Shiela LeBlanc
– Recording Secretary
Absent: Tim Nason
Guests: None

Meeting opened: 6:00PM

- 1. Mr. Kularski made and Mr. Thomasian seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the November 8, 2010 meeting with one typo correction. So voted.**
- 2. Mr. Thomasian made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss the contract negotiation for non-union personnel at 6:05 PM.
Roll Call: Kularski –Yes, Thomasian – Yes.**
- 3. Motion to adjourn Executive Session at 6:10 PM.
Roll Call: Kularski –Yes, Thomasian –Yes.**
- 4. Demand Fee Increase Proposal -** The Board of Selectmen have made a point of asking all department's to look at their fees to see if they needed changing. Mrs. LeBlanc has brought to Mr. Jones' attention that the water demand fee was \$5.00. She mentioned that the Town Collector has raised that office's demand fee to \$30.00. Mr. Jones feels that \$5.00 is way too low and doesn't even pay for the time used to send them out, never mind material. Mr. Jones recommended that we raise the demand fee to \$20.00 and Mrs. LeBlanc has worked up the numbers for this. Using an average of the past three years, there will be an average increase of income of approximately \$5,800.00.

If the Board does decide to raise the demand rate, Mr. Jones recommended that we do not include it in the regular income column. He has two reasons for this; one is that demand fees are only levied when a bill is not paid in time. The amount of demands sent out in any given year is changeable, obviously increasing in economic times such as this and then decreasing in better economic times. He doesn't feel that it would be wise to count on this as regular income. Also, any extra money generated from this raise in fees would go into retained earnings and would help cover the bills that are not paid due to foreclosure.

Mr. Jones noted to the Board that he received a call from the Sewer Department Superintendent, Rodney Jenkins late this afternoon suggesting that we increase the demand fee to \$30.00 to keep in line with the Tax Office. Mr. Jones noted that both he and Mrs. LeBlanc feel that the jump to \$20.00

should be sufficient and we can re-visit this issue to increase it if necessary at a later date.

Mr. Thomasian made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to increase the demand fee to \$20.00 beginning with fiscal year 2012, to be reviewed the following year to potentially increase it. So voted.

Mr. Kularski made and Mr. Thomasian seconded a motion to amend the North Brookfield Water Department Rules and Regulations Chapter 9 – Water Billing #5 to read as follows: "Water bills not paid when due are subject to penalties of \$20.00 demand, together with the charges, fees and interest as accrued." So voted.

5. **Budget 2012** – Mr. Jones apologized to the Board for how rough it is. We have been told to level fund the budget but the bottom line number is different then last year and we didn't get that information until last week. The Board of Selectmen now requires us to submit a budget one month earlier this year, at the beginning of February, so the Board has the one more scheduled meeting in January to finalize what we want to turn in.

We have been told to use the operating line items only for the bottom line. This means we do not use the MWPAT money or the debt funded through the DWSRF. Our actual operating budget costs for last year was \$447,171.00, which does not include the MWPAT amount of \$163,098.00 or the DWSRF debt of \$257,480.00. This year's rough draft operating budget is \$445,792.00 at this point.

Mr. Jones reviewed the increased costs with the Board as follows:

Operator salary is up \$10,272 or 27.1%. This is the result of raising the pay when we hired a replacement operator this past year. It also reflects the decision to add \$1.00 per hour per license as an incentive for Mr. Lalashius to get his Grade 2 Treatment & Distribution licenses.

Indirect costs are up \$3,000 as a result of a health insurance increase for the Fallon Senior Plan and added costs for Medicaid and Retirement for the new operator. Retirement will also be going up for Mr. Jones when the salary starts, retirement isn't taken out for overtime but will be for regular salary.

Overtime is down with Mr. Jones' overtime taken out, but in actuality it will be up due to the higher pay for the operator.

Mr. Jones has also budgeted \$7,000 to replace the utility body on the Ford 350 pickup truck. Originally we had planned on replacing the truck in 2013, but the truck itself has 75,000 miles on it and no body rust. The utility body has a lot of rust and a number of holes in it. Mr. Jones does not expect it will pass

inspection next year due to the holes. We have already replaced the floor a couple of years ago, and he thinks it is time to replace the whole thing. He is not sure if we will be able to keep this item in the budget. With the level funding in effect and the cost increases listed above, the budget is tight.

Mr. Jones noted that he has budgeted in \$3,700.00 for another Phase I inspection of the Doane Pond Dam. Being a large significant hazard dam means it has to have a Phase I inspection every 5 years and it has been 5 years since we last did it. This is a quote he received from Lenard Engineering but when the time comes he will make phone calls for other quotes.

We have cut the budget for Purchased Services & Hired Labor, Chemicals, Electricity, Heating Fuel, and the Other Expenses line item.

Mr. Jones has not budgeted for the scheduled leak detection survey for the upcoming year. The budget is tight and he feels that we can do this in house. We have already started doing it ourselves and have found two leaks. Mr. Lalashius and Mr. Jones have done 33% of the hydrants in the system so far this year. Mr. Jones feels the town is pretty tight right now, as shown by the last leak detection we had done that only came up with one hydrant leak.

Mr. Jones has also cut the System Improvement account by \$8,000 or 29%. This is the account that we use to make repairs in the distribution system and replace fire hydrants. The \$20,000 he has budgeted will pay for the average four main breaks we have each year and a leak or two or a hydrant repair but will not leave enough to replace any of the older hydrants, something we have been working on since he was hired.

Mr. Jones is also looking into dropping the pager service and buying another cell phone contract instead. If we do this, the cost would save us a small amount of money depending on the plan that we end up going with.

Mr. Jones noted that we need to figure out what service is best in West Warren. Mr. Kularski feels that the cell phones are the way to go. Mr. Thomasian agreed. Mr. Thomasian did note that the Trac Phones seems to be the way to go. Mr. Thomasian noted that he doesn't think AT&T works well in Warren.

Mr. Kularski noted on the budget that maybe we need to look at the body being patched or repaired instead of replaced.

He also noted that on the Testing & research sheet the THM testing is not calculated correctly. Mr. Jones will correct that.

Mr. Thomasian asked about the interest on the DWSRF loan and if we had the option of re-financing it. Mrs. LeBlanc noted that we couldn't do this.

Technically this is borrowing from a trust and it is not a bank loan. But it is also technically a 0% interest loan. But due to the way the trust runs we have to pay it separately as interest and principle.

Mr. Kularski also noted that the Finance Committee and the Selectmen knew that we would be looking at increases due to the hiring and training of virtually our next water superintendent and that is why our budget is going up.

Mr. Jones explained that we have to take the MWPAT amounts out of the budget because this is a bookkeeping entry only. It comes in as income and goes out as an expense. He reviewed with the Board how we came out with our bottom line. We dropped the debt and interest expenses as well because they are fixed.

This has been very unclear and we are working with Nancy Nykiel on obtaining the accurate bottom line.

He explained that we are actually \$1,000.00 below being level funded. He explained that he would be submitting something a little clearer next month.

6. **Water Meter Interference** – Mrs. LeBlanc reviewed with the Board an email that was received from MWWA regarding the increase of fines for the interference with water company meters. She pointed out that this is now state law. Mr. Jones noted that we have kept it separate from the frozen meters because that is not intentional.

“Whoever unlawfully and intentionally injures, or suffers to be injured, a water meter belonging to the North Brookfield Water Department, or prevents such meter from duly registering the quantity of water supplied through it or hinders or interferes with its proper action or just registration, or attaches a pipe to a main or pipe belonging to the Town, or otherwise uses or causes to be used the water supplied by the Town without consent of the same, unless it passes through a meter set by the town, shall be punished by a fine of triple the amount of damages sustained thereby or \$1,000.00, whichever is greater.

Damages shall include the value of the water used and the cost of labor and equipment repair and replacement.

The cost of repair or replacement of seals, meters, or transmitters damaged by freezing, or neglect shall be paid by the property owner. The Water Department will charge a minimum of 2 hours labor and for the parts needed to repair the meter.

Should the meter be damaged beyond repair the owner shall be responsible for the cost of a new meter and transmitter set up as well as the 2 hours of labor.”

Mr. Kularski made and Mr. Thomasian seconded a motion to amend Chapter 2, Section 10 of the North Brookfield Rules and Regulations to reflect the new law as read. So voted.

Mrs. LeBlanc also noted that in Chapter 2, Section 7 is a repeat of this information and requested that the Board approve to delete this section from the rules and regulations.

Mr. Thomasian made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to delete Section 7 of Chapter 2 of the North Brookfield Rules and Regulations. So voted.

7. **Horse Pond Dam Update** – Mr. Jones informed the Board that USDA has made an offer to the town regarding the loan and grant that was applied for to fund the repairs at the Horse Pond Dam. The loan portion is \$992,000.00 at 2.25% and the grant portion is \$248,000.00, a 20% grant. The grant part is less than we had hoped for but the interest rate is very good and much less than the rate that had been given us earlier. USDA Representative, James Fritze is scheduled to come tomorrow to have the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen sign the Letter of Conditions.

Mr. Jones has been in touch with Lenard Project Manager Scott Charpentier regarding the funding. Mr. Charpentier will go back through the contract and the bid package to remove the language that had been required by USDA regarding the stimulus money. He has sent out a change order to do this, which has been forwarded to the Board of Selectmen. Lenard is asking for a total of \$4,500.00 for the original change and now to change it back as required by USDA.

Lenard has finished the bid package and submitted it to USDA. USDA will now review it and send it back to Lenard with any changes required. The bottom line is that Lenard hopes to get the bid package out in January and start work on dam in the spring.

Mr. Kularski noted that with the interest being at 2.25% it might be better even though we have a lower grant. Over the term of the loan of 40 years we might be making out better.

Mr. Thomasian noted that the grant portion does not come into play until we have used all the loan money. Mr. Jones noted that at this point there is nothing we can do.

The next step is for Mrs. Walter to sign the letter of conditions tomorrow morning and get the bid package approved by USDA.

8. **Superintendent Report - Main Breaks** - There was one main break this past month. It was located in the front yard of 80 Elm St. The 6" main that supplies that area broke on Thursday, December 9th, at 3:45. Mr. Jones shut the water off by 4:30. They replaced the broken pipe and had the water back on by 10:30 PM. This was the coldest night of that week; the temperature was down to 11 by 1:00 AM, which is when they finished. This is the second break in that area in just over one year.

Water Leaks - There were two known water leaks this past month. One was in a residential service line at 57 Gilbert Street, which was fixed on December 2. The other was in a 1" line inside a manhole at the former Chase Precast location. This leak was fairly large and with the high pressure in these lines, we lost a lot of water through it. There was a noticeable drop in daily use when this leak was fixed, approximately 9 gpm or 13,000 gallons per day. This leak has also been repaired. Both leaks were before the meter so the water was lost. The leak at Chase had been running for quite awhile, there is no way to tell how long. The water had been turned back on in June when one of the buildings had been rented out. The leak could have occurred at any point after that. The summer was so dry that there was no way to gauge normal flow. In September, when the flow should have dropped it did not, so we started doing our own leak detection survey. Mr. Lalashius found a leak in a hydrant and Mr. Jones found the leak at Stoddard Place that the Board had been informed of last month. Mr. Jones thought this leak was the big one, but once it was repaired, the daily usage didn't go down to the normal average. Once the Chase leak had been repaired, the flow did go down to the normal average. This brings up something Mr. Kularski recommended a few years ago. At the time we had just experienced a similar type leak that was even larger. Mr. Kularski threw out the idea of making them install a meter in a manhole directly after the gate valve. That way all leak water would be recorded and the owner of the property would pay for the water instead of all the water users paying for their leaks. This may be something to think about.

Operator - Mr. Lalashius has taken and passed the Grade II Treatment course put on by the NEWWA. He has also taken and passed the Grade II Treatment exam. As agreed upon when we hired him this will increase his pay by \$1.00 per hour. He is planning on taking the Grade II Distribution exam this winter.

Hydrants - There is four hydrants that are leaking slightly and need to have their valves replaced. Mr. Jones has called Hydratech to do the work; they are waiting for the parts to come in. In the meantime we have shut them down and pumped the water out so it won't freeze in the barrel. The fire department has been notified of the hydrants that are out of service.

Heating Wire - We have added a heating wire on the roof above the front doorway. This has been a problem in the winter when the ice dams on the

roof cause water to drip into the lunchroom and the dripping also causes an ice slick on the front walk.

Hydrant Flags -All fire hydrants have been flagged so they can be seen better in the winter. Hydrants that don't drain properly or that have high groundwater have been pumped out and a non-toxic anti freeze has been added.

Blow off- We have added a blow off to the end of the main at Pine Croft Ave. We have had a water quality complaint from a resident whose water comes from that line. It is a dead end and the hydrant that we flush is before the last two services, effectively making the end of the line a complete dead end. To rectify this we dug at the end of the 8" DI main, tapped in a 1" curb stop, ran out 25' of 1" copper with a curb stop at the end. Now we can flush this short section of main that is after the hydrant.

New Service -We had one new service tie in. The house location is on Brown Street and they tapped onto the main located on Bigelow Street

Existing Service -There is also a new house going up on Ryan Road. A previously tapped service line is being used for this house. Both new lines were inspected to make sure they were done according to our regulations.

SWPP - DEP Source Water Specialist Kathy Romero came out to talk to us about our Source Water Protection Plan and do a watershed inspection. This has to be updated every three years, and with MRWA Representative Rebekah McDermott's help, we updated ours this past summer. Ms Romero was impressed with our update and our knowledge of the watershed. She had a few small recommendations that we intend to follow up on before the next update is due in three years.

Shoveling Hydrant Request -As we have in the past, we have posted a notice on the local cable channel asking people who live near fire hydrants to shovel them out after every snowstorm. Doing this helps the fire department find the hydrants when they are needed.

9. **Playground hydrant use request** – The Playground Committee has submitted a hydrant use request for the use of the hydrant located at 33 Grove Street to fill the ice rink.

Mr. Kularski made and Mr. Thomasian seconded a motion to approve the use of the hydrant located at 33 Grove Street for the filling of the proposed ice- skating rink. So voted.

Meeting adjourned: 6:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Shiela LeBlanc,
Recording Secretary**