

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners  
Monday, February 11, 2013  
North Brookfield Water Treatment Facility  
14 Bell Road  
North Brookfield, MA 01535**

**Present:** James Kularski, Tim Nason, John Thomasian and Stephen Jones,  
Water Superintendent.

**Absent:** Shiela LeBlanc

**Guests:** Dennis & Jeannette Foley – 342 North Main Street

**Meeting Opened: 6:00PM**

- 1. Mr. Thomasian made and Mr. Nason seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2013 meeting as written. 2 In favor – 1 Abstain.**
- 2. Dennis & Jeannette Foley – 342 North Main Street – The Board reviewed the paperwork regarding the Foley property. Based upon the information provided Mr. Thomasian made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to approve an abatement in the amount of \$36.57 for the Foleys. So voted.**

The Board reviewed the information provided regarding Mercak of 21 Brown Street. The service line runs from Ayer Street to Brown Street. They had been told to run the water by the previous Superintendent to avoid the line freezing. Mr. Jones calculated 17 days in December and the amount came out to \$26.81. He also explained to her that this was for the month of December only and she would have to approach the Board again when the next water bills was sent out.

**Mr. Thomasian made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to approve an abatement in the amount of \$26.81 for Janet Mercak of 21 Brown Street due to the need to run water to avoid the freezing of the service line. So voted.**

The Board reviewed information regarding Quilitzsch – 13 Warren Street. The water use at this location had been flagged as high usage so an appointment was made. Mr. Lalashius found that the ERT and meter did not match. He reset the ERT at that time. He went back two weeks later and once again found that the meter and ERT did not match. The ERT was replaced at this time. Using the reading on the meter, Mrs. LeBlanc has calculated that an abatement of \$272.13 is due.

**Mr. Thomasian made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to approve an abatement in the amount of \$272.13 for Quilitzsch of 13 Warren Street due to a technology failure. So voted.**

Mr. & Mrs. Foley entered the meeting at this time. Mr. Thomasian explained that the Board discussed the Foley's water bill and that explained that they had granted them an abatement in the amount of \$36.57. He explained that the current

policy of the water department is to abate down to \$450.00 per unit. We are obligated to follow this policy.

Mrs. Foley explained that she currently has another person living in the home and there were some plumbing issues that she had to get fixed and when the water department personnel came to the house there was one toilet found to be leaking that they didn't know about. Mr. Thomasian explained that we have approved an abatement but we cannot give anything beyond that.

Mrs. Foley questioned why we cannot go to quarterly billing. Mr. Thomasian explained that we would prefer to have quarterly bills but at this time we cannot do it and there are other people involved besides this department. She asked if there is something she should be doing to watch the toilet for leaking. Mr. Thomasian explained that she could shut it off from below and come back in a few hours and if the level has dropped it indicates a leak. Sometimes the toilet flappers get bad and does not seal right. Mr. Jones explained how the Foleys could use food coloring the same way that was done with the dye tabs. The Board directed the Foleys to talk to the Sewer Commissioners regarding the sewer billing.

The Foleys left the meeting at this time.

**Other Abatements** - The Board reviewed the information submitted regarding high water usage for the Ross property on 12 King Street and Stuart on 91 Old East Brookfield Road. Mr. Jones noted that both these locations have previously received water abatements. He noted the North Brookfield Water Department Rules and Regulations where it states that the Board of Water Commissioners may approve a one-time reduction of a residential water bill if a customer can convince the Water Board by a majority vote that he /she was unaware of a water leak or how much water they were using. We have never run into this before but both these locations have received prior abatements. On Ross we are not sure where the water had gone but there was a faucet leaking when Mr. Lalashius was there and they filled part of a pool.

Mr. Thomasian asked that a letter be sent to Ross and explain that we cannot abate their bill for the second time. Along with a copy of the Rules and Regulations section that explains one-time abatement policy.

Mr. Thomasian stated that we cannot abate Stuart and suggested that they check with their sprinkler company to find out how many gallons it puts out. Mr. Jones stated that we did suggest that he read the meter and Mr. Stuart stated he did but he stopped after the reading was fine last year. These sprinkler systems can be a lot more usage of water than one realizes.

Mr. Jones stated that this has happened before with people with sprinkler systems and they don't realize how much water these systems use. The Board asked that a letter be sent to Stuart as well.

3. **Horse Pond Dam Update** - The money has come in for the equipment purchases. We have purchased one chainsaw and two trimmer/brush cutter units. Herrick Welding completed the fabrication of parts for the weir board. We are all done with the purchases.

We have not received the Certificate of Compliance from the Conservation Commission or the Office of Dam safety yet. This is all that is left.

Mr. Jones did a PowerPoint presentation for the Board of Selectmen on the Horse Pond Dam Repair project two weeks ago. He put the project together with help from Andy Lalashius, Shiela LeBlanc, and his son Matt. He borrowed a projector from the library to be able to do the presentation. We have posted it on the water department web page on the town's website for anyone that would like to see it.

4. **Budget 2014** - We have removed the money for raises; it came to a total of \$4,599. Mr. Jones added \$591 to the Other salary account to be used for two more weeks for the part time worker or to clean the intake if needed. We were recently informed that the employer Retirement line item has risen \$1,460 so that has been funded by this money. The rest of the money he added to the System Improvement Account to be used to purchase low lead brass as that has to be completed by the end of 2013.

The budget was handed in at the end of January with these numbers as it was due by February 1.

5. **Raw Water Pump Station** - We haven't discussed much of the large problems that the Water Department is facing. As Mr. Jones has said before, we don't have much money to be proactive about these problems and won't until the debt for the treatment plant is paid up. Having said this, he would like to discuss the Raw Water Pump Station.

The pump station was built in 1896 and there have not been a lot of repairs done on it since then. The soffits and roof are original and have been showing deterioration for quite some time. The roof is slate and we have pieces that have fallen off or are hanging by one nail. The soffits are rotting and have been chewed through by squirrels seeking access. In 2002 he requested a quote to replace the soffits from Ray Dwelly. The quote came in at \$4,674.00. The commissioners felt this was too much money and did not accept it. Nothing has been done since.

The chimney is also deteriorating so he called Shawn Coughlin for a quote to repair it. While he was there we figured out that there is nothing using the

chimney anymore so it can be removed at some point. There is no sense repairing it although it looks like some of the bricks will start falling soon.

He would like to get some ideas on repairing or replacing the roof and soffits to get an idea on how much it would cost.

Also, if we are going to do any repairs on the roof he feels it would be wise to remove all the trees around the building since they are mature conifers that could break or fall at any time. He hired Tony Holway to remove trees from the backside of the pump house last month. Two years ago one of these trees fell on the back roof and caused minor damage. The cost to remove these trees was \$2,800.00. He also asked for a ball park figure on what it would cost to remove the rest of the trees that could fall on the building and Mr. Holway has said around \$5,000.00.

There has been an increasing of amount extreme weather events such as the ice storm of 2008, Hurricane Irene, the Halloween snowstorm of 2011, Hurricane Sandy of last year, and now Nemo, the Blizzard of 2013. All of these storms contained strong wind gusts. Many trees have fallen that we have had to deal with but so far only one has fallen on the pump station and it did minimal damage. As these trees get older more will fall. He feels it is time to remove all the trees that could fall on the building.

Of course, the problem here is that we do not have much money saved up. We have approximately \$35,000 in the system improvement account of which we could use \$20,000 easily on system repairs over the next year. Still, he thinks it is worth looking into how much the repairs on the pump station will cost. He would like to go get quotes to see where we would be at.

There was discussion of whether to go roofing shingle or slate and if the wood underneath would have to be replaced. Mr. Jones stated that the soffits are a mess and need to be replaced. Mr. Jones will ask these questions to contractors. He explained that the windows are good and they were replaced before he got here. He feels that it is the roof and the trees. The Board was in favor of obtaining quotes to see what we would be looking at.

6. **Electric - Net Metering Credits** - Peter Shipman, Mary Walter & Mr. Jones met with a representative from Solterra LLC regarding Net Meter Billing. The information was in the commissioners' packet. Solterra is planning on building solar panels on the Spencer Abbey grounds that will produce 18 megawatts of power. The power from the panels will go to National Grid and credits will be issued. Public buildings get higher amounts of credits, around \$.14 kwh at this time, private buildings get around \$.10 kwh. Solterra is looking to sell these credits. If we sign a contract with them, Solterra would bill us for 80% of the credits and we end up with 20% of the credits for free. We would basically be

getting 20% off our electric bill. The contract would be with Solterra and would be for 20 years.

We heard back from Solterra two weeks ago with the official offer and the amount we would be saving has risen to 25%. They have already gone up at this point. The one thing that would have to change for us would be the billing. Our bills would have to be billed through National Grid. One of the problems is that the schools buy their power from one company, sewer buys theirs from Constellation and the town and water department buy theirs from Hampshire Power. We would have to have them change to bill through National Grid. When Leslie Scott- Burton called Hampshire County to see if they would bill through National Grid they mentioned that they too now offered a Net Metering Credit program that just came out.

Hampshire County's Net Metering Credit would be worth 30%. There is a meeting set with them for Thursday to hear their proposal. Either way, it looks like we are heading towards some sort of net metering proposal that will save us money for electricity. Mr. Jones explained that the Abbey is making money by leasing the grounds. The Electricity goes to National Grid and they issue the credit and Solterra will issue us 80% of the credits and that is how they make their money and we end up saving up to 25%. Hampshire County is up to 30% but we don't know how long the contract is for. Mr. Thomasian stated that he would be in favor if we can save money. Mr. Jones noted that 20 years is a long time to sign for. We will have to look at the contract. Mr. Kularski feels that it is definitely worth looking into.

7. **Superintendent Report – Unaccounted For Water** - Mrs. LeBlanc has been working on the Annual Statistical Report due this time every year and part of that is figuring out the unaccounted for water. This year the number is 14.6%. In 2011 it was 13 % and in 2010 it was 15%. It is disappointing that we haven't been able to get any lower. There were system leaks during the year that accounted for 1,658,592 gallons of unaccounted for water, such as the one at John Byzek's house on Ward Street that ran most of the year before Mr. Lalashius found it. We are not able to include these leaks in the calculations anymore. If we were able to, as in the past, the UAW would be 12.8%. We have budgeted to rehire the company that did the leak detection back in 2005 and 2007 when many leaks were found. This will take place after July 2013.

**System Leak** - We have been aware of one leak in the system since the end of December based on the amount of water we pump daily. We have had a number of frozen and broken pipes in houses and businesses this past month that have contributed to the increasing daily flow. Two weeks ago our daily flow increased by another 20,000 gallons per day. Since no leaks were surfacing we started a leak detection survey of the whole town. Mr. Lalashius found one frozen hydrant that was leaking and another leak on South Main Street near Bill Remington's

house that we haven't been able to pinpoint yet. He found it last Thursday and the snowstorm has held up any further progress in determining where it is.

**Smoke Detectors** - Smoke detectors were tested and replaced where necessary and the fire alarm system and batteries were tested.

**Beavers** - Two beavers were trapped out of Doane's Pond at a cost of \$200.00.

**Light Bulbs** - We finished replacing the 150 - 32watt T8 fluorescent light bulbs with the 28 watt T8 bulbs given to us by the Massachusetts Dept. of Energy Resources.

**Ethics Exam** - Ethics exams were completed by the Board of Water Commissioners during the past month.

**WTP PVC** - We replaced 115 feet of flexible PVC braided tubing used to carry the chlorine to the clearwell with Teflon tubing. We had been experiencing an increase in leaks in the chlorine line.

**Brush Cutting** - We have started the annual brush cutting around the reservoir.

**Water Bills** - Bills went out at the end of January.

**Generators** - Southworth Milton completed the annual generator oil change and maintenance, including new batteries for both generators.

8. **New Business – Forestry Plan** - As we had talked about before, members of the Town Forest Committee have been working on a Forestry Management plan. Mr. Kularski and Mr. Jones went to a Public Hearing they held on the plan last week. The Forestry plan they have put in place includes cutting for lumber on two parcels of the Town Forest and all of the land around Horse Pond & Doane Pond. The idea is to clean up these areas, manage them so the forest is in good health, and to make money that will be spent on refurbishing the Town Forest area. Town Forest Committee member Joe Holway gave an estimate of \$5,000.00 that could be collected from cutting saw logs. The actual cutting on land that concerns the water department will only take place on the parcel south of Doane Pond. According to Ross Hubacz, Town Forest Committee member and the forester that did the plan, the rest of the land around the reservoir is not worth cutting to make money. Mr. Jones is hoping that they will take down the pines and spruces around the RWPS so they will not be such a safety hazard. The one other thing we do get out of this is the Stewardship Forestry Plan that is good for ten years. If we want to do any forestry work or look for a grant to do forestry work, this plan would have been the first step anyway. Now that the plan is in place, Mr. Hubacz recommended looking for grants to pay a forester to come and work on the forests around the reservoir. The forestry plan is here or can be found on the North Brookfield web site if the Board would like to read it.

We got included because they have talked about cleaning up around the town forest and Mary Walter had us included because we have talked about Forestry Management before.

Mr. Thomasian noted that there is a market now for the outside boilers they could burn the pine in there.

**Meeting adjourned: 6:50PM.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Shiela LeBlanc, Recording Secretary**