

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of water Commissioners

Monday, November 4, 2013

North Brookfield Water Treatment Facility

14 Bell Road

North Brookfield, MA 01535

Present: James Kularski, Tim Nason, John Thomasian, Stephen Jones – Water Superintendent and Shiela LeBlanc – Recording Secretary

Absent: None

Guests: Vin Gianfriddo – 31 East Brookfield Road

Meeting Opened: 6:00PM

1. **Minutes Approval** – Mr. Kularski made and Mr. Nason seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the October 7, 2013 meeting as written. So voted.
2. **Vin Gianfriddo** – 31 East Brookfield Road – Mrs. LeBlanc explained to the Board that Mr. Gianfriddo's water bill was flagged for high usage when we read the meters in July. A notice was sent to Mr. Gianfriddo and Mr. Lalashius met with him on September 5, 2013. Mr. Lalashius noted on his work order that the water meter read higher than the Ert (electronic reading transmitter). Mrs. LeBlanc feels that this was a programming error from when we had to change out the bad Erts. His usage since that visit is back down to what it normally is. On September 5 Mr. Lalashius re-programmed the Ert to the reading on the meter. Since that date we have been back at least twice and the meter and Ert readings matched on both occasions. When we read the meter on October 30 the usage was back down to 296 where it normally is. There was a note that one of the toilets in the Men's room needed to have the handle jiggled.

Mr. Gianfriddo noted that he doesn't understand how this much water could be used. His business is down 25% and he would think that if he had a leak it would be coming through the ceiling. He has no basement so all the pipes run through the ceiling and the meter makes a hissing sound when the water is being used. He is there too much for the water to be running and him not be aware of it.

Mr. Thomasian explained that we currently only have a policy for residential customers and we can't classify this as a residence. There is no policy for abatements for businesses and we have turned down other businesses before because of this.

Mr. Gianfriddo stated that maybe it is time for a policy.

Mr. Nason explained that it involves the other users as well, we would be asking the other users to pay for this.

Mr. Thomasian also noted that if we were able to bill quarterly this leak would have been caught three months prior to when it was. We have been trying to change the billing but have been unsuccessful.

Mr. Jones explained that the meter cannot go up if the water doesn't go through it. He also explained how the Ert worked in conjunction with the meter.

The Board agreed to allow Mr. Gianfriddo time to make payments. His first payment will be in December and it will be paid in full by March 1st when his next bill comes due.

Desrosiers – 11 Birch Street – Mrs. LeBlanc explained that Fran Desrosier had his water shut off for non-payment and was supposed to be present to request a waiver of the turn on fee.

Mr. Thomasian made and Mr. Nason seconded a motion to deny the waiver of turn on fee for 11 Birch Street. So voted.

The Board asked that we send a letter informing Mr. Desrosiers of this decision and to further suggest that he contact the Town Collector when he receives his next bill and set up a payment plan to avoid this shut off from occurring again.

Morin – 26 Fullam Hill Road – Mrs. LeBlanc explained that she received a phone call from a third party regarding this water service. The woman that she spoke to requested that the demand fees and turn on fees be waived. Mrs. LeBlanc included this in the Commissioner's packets in case Mr. Morin or his representative showed at the meeting.

Mr. Nason made and Mr. Thomasian seconded a motion to deny the waiver of any fees for this account on 26 Fullam Hill Road. So voted.

- 3. Water Shut off Report** – Mrs. LeBlanc informed the Board that we issued 104 water shut offs. We had six (6) small balances that were not subject to shut off. There were (8) eight payment arrangements made and we had (3) three locations that had previously been shut off but still were issued shut offs because of usage. We had (20) twenty actual services shut off between October 21 -22. We have turned (15) fifteen back on and have (5) remaining off (2 abandoned properties and 3 believed to be occupied). We also have (1) one at Edna Circle that we are unable to shut off and therefore will probably become a lien on the property. We have a problem with the shut off of 300 North Main Street. Mr. Jones will continue to work on this shut off.

She also informed the Board that out of the (8) eight payment agreements for extensions, (5) five have paid as scheduled, (1) one was present tonight and (1) one is due on November 5, 2013. Desrosiers was the (1) one remaining arrangement.

4. **Leak Detection Survey** –Mr. Jones explained to the Board that of the (5) five leaks that were found during the leak detection survey, (1) one additional leak was repaired during the past month, 14 East Brookfield Road. There had been a prior leak at this location (5) five years ago. That time the leak was located and the line was patched. This time the owner replaced the entire line from the street to the driveway, over 100'. This service line had originally been installed around 1980 and was polyethylene pipe. Over the years it has been found that the early polyethylene pipe does not last, the plastic gets brittle and will break under pressure. We have seen a number of these types of leaks over the past few years. Mr. Jones is now recommending to the homeowner to replace as much as they can afford because if they do not, it will probably happen again. We have seen a drop of approximately 5,000 gallons per day since this leak was fixed, which works out to 3.5 gpm. Carl Sopper of Water & Waste Pipe Testing Incorporated, the company that had conducted the leak detection survey that found these leaks had estimated this leak to be in the (5) five gallon per minute range.

We now have two leaks that have not been repaired.

Mr. Jones had held off on shutting off the water to 136 Ward Street because Jim Thompson had talked to Tim Nason about the repair and he was the person that got it done at the same location last year. It didn't yield any results this time so we shut the water off on October 22nd. As a footnote, we shut the water off because the leak is before the meter and the homeowner is not paying for the water that is lost, all the water users are paying for this lost water in their bills.

This house is owned by the Estate of Joseph F. & Margaret Byszek. Joseph died many years ago and Margaret died last year. Katie Byszek, a resident at this address, called Mr. Jones after the water was shut off and he explained once again that at the very least we needed to know that a contractor had been hired to repair the leak before we could turn the water back on. We had sent this information by mail a month prior to this, asking for the leak to be fixed within 14 days.

Later on that day Ray Barnes called to say that he had been hired to repair the leak. On November 1, Mr. Jones called Mr. Barnes to find out when it would be repaired. He said that John Byszek, another resident of this address, had since told him not to repair the leak. Mr. Jones sent an email to Nicholas Feeley, another resident of this address who had corresponded with him earlier about repairing the leak. This email asked the residents of this address to let him know if they had hired another contractor to fix the leak, and if not, we would be shutting the water off again. Mr. Sopper estimated this leak to be in the 3 gallons per minute range which works out to be approximately 4,300 gallons per day.

Mr. Thomasian noted that it is after November 1, 2013 so we cannot shut them off again.

Mr. Jones recommended that we send a letter out to this residence and explain that this leak needs to be repaired and if it is not repaired, the water will be shut off on April 1st, 2014 and will remain off until such time as the repairs are completed and not when it is scheduled.

Mr. Kularski questioned if we had a major leak or fire below this location if a cross connection can occur which would flow back into the distribution system. This could be a potential health hazard. He asked if we can shut it off because it could potentially cause a health hazard. Mr. Jones was unsure of this and will call around and see if he can get any answers. Either way this is a relatively small leak.

Mr. Jones noted that there was a leak here before and Ray Barnes replaced a 3 foot piece of copper and he recommended to the resident that he replace the entire line but the resident chose to only patch it.

The other leak still ongoing is at 10 Ward Street. Mr. Jones had given an extension to David Earle, the owner of 10 Ward St because he had been out of town. He had received a quote from Paul Potvin originally and Mr. Potvin had called Mr. Jones to say he was doing the repair. Something changed and Mr. Earle had decided to get quotes from other contractors. Last week he notified us that Beauchamp Excavating had been hired to repair the leak and it would be completed the week of November 11th. Just to make sure Mr. Jones called company owner Jeff Beauchamp to confirm these arrangements. Mr. Sopper had estimated this leak to be in the 8 gallons per minute range which works out to 11,500 gallons per day.

Mr. Jones noted that none of these leaks ever surfaced and were only picked up by the leak detection.

5. **CDBG** - This past year Mr. Jones was a member of the town's advisory committee for the Community Development Block Grant that was applied for and awarded a grant for housing rehabilitation funding and funds to study the drainage problem the town has in the center of town. Mr. Jones agreed to join this committee because the time demand was not excessive and because it could lead to water main replacement in the areas affected. They had the first meeting since the grant was awarded last Tuesday. The grant was awarded to both Spencer and North Brookfield with Spencer being the lead town. It is in two parts, housing rehabilitation and planning for the drainage problem in the north central part of town. This planning part of the grant is for approximately \$153,090.00 and covers the planning stage only. Pioneer Valley Planning is administering the grant. There is a chance that they will look to replace the water mains of the roads they work on for drainage and that is what Mr. Jones is going to be looking for, but that is years out.
6. **Superintendent Retirement** – Mr. Jones reported to the Board that the pay of the operator's position was as follows: Mr. Lalashius was hired at \$21.00/hour. He received \$1.00 per license for Grade II Distribution and Grade II Treatment which brought him up to \$23.00/hour. We all then received a 5% raise that brought him up to \$24.15 which is where he is now.

Mrs. LeBlanc explained to the Board that she is working on the budget for 2015 and she has a couple questions that need to be answered by the Board before going forward. The first question was regarding the three months training period for the new superintendent. Are we thinking of three months training April, May and June or three exact months with Mr. Jones meaning the training to begin on March 16 –June 12? This is a difference of about \$6,000.00 for salary and benefits, an increase over what we had originally planned.

The Board was in agreement that it should be three calendar months (April, May & June).

She also asked the Board if they wanted to pay the new employee two different rates or just one. (One rate for in-training and full when he took over completely.)

The Board agreed to keep one rate as previously discussed.

Mrs. LeBlanc noted to the Board that because Mr. Jones' last day is June 12, 2015 he is eligible to receive his 4 weeks of vacation time pay. By budgeting the entire yearly pay for the Superintendent we will have two weeks of this amount covered. There will be an additional two weeks at the approximate cost of \$2,684.00 that needs to be funded. She asked how they wanted this funded, as part of the transfer from retained earnings or through the water rates.

The Board was in agreement to include this amount in the transfer of funds from Water Retained Earnings.

- 7. Superintendent Report – Main Break** - We had one water main break in October on Shore Road. When we have a break in this area of town it drains the water from the Ward Street - Old East Brookfield intersection all the way down to the lake area. Fortunately Mr. Jones located it fairly quickly and there was a gate valve about 50' before the break that he used to shut the water off. Mrs. LeBlanc had taken the day off but came in and helped Mr. Jones organize the response. She estimated that 110 people were out of water. These days when there is over 100 people out of water we have to call DEP and report it, which she did. The water went off around 11:30 in the morning and went back on around 6:20 in the evening. Ed Thibault was on vacation so Mr. Jones worked with his son Travis and Richard Buxton and because we were short of people he also called the Hydra Tech Company for help. This is the same company that we hire to repair hydrants and they also replaced the gate valve on the pressure regulating valve last year. This added approximately \$1,900.00 to the cost of the repair. This was the third break this calendar year. We had a service line leak the next day at 50 Green Road that Mr. Jones repaired with Mr. Thibault's crew. The one good thing to come out of this is that it seems the leak must have been running for a while and just now surfaced. Once the leak was fixed we have seen a reduction of water use of approximately 28,000 gallons per day (19.5 gpm).

Pressure Regulator - The Pressure Regulating Valve (PRV) on Old East Brookfield Road malfunctioned a couple of weeks ago which is probably what caused the break on Shore Road. The 4" PRV would get stuck open for a while before settling back into place. Ross Valve came out and rebuilt the valve.

Valley View Fire - The fire at the Valley View School used approximately 175,000 gallons of water from the hydrant near the school. They also pumped directly out of Doane Pond. Mrs. LeBlanc had texted Mr. Jones about the fire going on and shortly afterwards dispatch called to notify him of the fire. He started the treatment plant to make sure there was enough water and went up to Valley View to let the fire department know he was available if needed.

Green Road Hydrant - The fire hydrant located at 64 Green Road stopped working correctly during the water break on Shore Road. Mr. Jones hired Hydra Tech to come in and repair it. The cost of the repair was around \$1,250.00. We also have a broken hydrant on Oakham Road, the hydrant that is connected directly to Doane Pond. This will not be repairable and will have to be replaced.

Lead & Copper - We collected samples for the Lead & Copper testing in September and recently received the results. All of the locations in town were below the levels called for by the EPA and many were zero. We are on a reduced sampling schedule due to the success of the corrosion control program. The next sampling period will be in three years.

Backflow Testing - Our semi-annual backflow device testing was completed in October. Toomey Water Services does the testing for us to make sure all the devices in town are working correctly. There was one failure, a device at the waste water treatment plant. When a device fails we send out a notice to have it fixed within 14 days.

F-350 - Over the past month we have had to replace the alternator, the passenger side front wheel bearing and the passenger side exhaust manifold on the F-350 utility truck. The driver's side exhaust manifold also needs replacing. With these repairs and our regular vehicle maintenance we have spent most of the vehicle repair line item in our budget. Mr. Jones will be making a recommendation on transferring money into this account next month. Although the truck only has around 90,000 miles on it, it is over 13 years old.

80 Elm Street - Ed Thibault repaired the driveway at 80 Elm Street. The Highway Department hired him to add a swale from the driveway to the brook at the same time so the storm water wouldn't puddle up in the driveway.

GPS/ MRWA - Last month Mr. Jones informed the Board that the Mass Rural Water Association had offered us a GPS unit on loan to mark the locations of the gate valves for the mains in the distribution system. Bruce Young of MRWA came down with the unit, and worked with Mr. Lalashius to load the software into one of our computers. Mr. Young then went out into the system and trained Mr. Lalashius on the use of the unit. Mr. Lalashius and Mr. Jones have gone out once to find the gate valves and then have the GPS unit mark a location for the valve. Mr.

Lalashius then downloads the information gathered, edits the locations and prepares it to be sent to Mr. Young. Mr. Young will take this information, enter it into his GIS software and send the information to us so it can be printed out. This takes time, it is a long term project that we will work on in between other things we need to do this time of year. GPS is definitely the future, but it can be a costly thing. We will work on it slowly and try to build it up over the coming years. The future goal would be to have all the shutoffs in the system, both gate valves and curb stops located by the GPS unit and downloaded into GIS software. Field personnel would have mobile units that could access the GIS software and find any shutoff from wherever they are. Again, this is the future and what we are doing now is a small part of the larger plan.

Part-time Employee -Seasonal worker Joe Flamand's time is up for this year. Mr. Flamand has been working with us for many years now and he is a valuable addition to the staff. He is an excellent worker with a great work ethic. We only wish we could keep him working year round.

8. **New Business – Valley View School** –Mr. Jones had a contractor visit him today regarding the Valley View School. They are bringing in some modular trailers for the kids to live in and would like to install temporary water services. Mr. Jones told him it was fine as long as they were metered. The contractor is planning on tapping into the service line that feeds one of the buildings, installing a pit and locating the meter there. Mr. Jones informed him if it was going to be permanent it had to be a meter pit. He was thinking more of a concrete structure. A concrete meter pit becomes a confined space with all the safety aspects of that. We could do this temporarily; say one year, but definitely not permanently. Also, they would be responsible for meter installation, repair, and removal. Mr. Jones informed him that he needed to submit this all in writing and then we can respond with a time frame.

Mr. Kularski question the tie in time frame and it closing between November and April. Mr. Jones explained that they are tapping into their own line and they will not be tapping into our main in the street.

Watershed Tour – During the watershed inspection today Mr. Jones noticed a couple of logs that had been thrown into the North Brook Canal. It looked like somebody had backed up and threw the logs into the brook. He removed the logs from the brook and then noticed that somebody had been cutting trees down below the banking of the brook, both on town land and private land. He also noticed that they had been driving over the town land to get to the tree cutting site. He will be following up on this with the conservation committee and whoever is responsible for enforcing this type of thing. Mr. Thomasian pointed out that the Selectmen will have to write a letter, they are essentially the responsible party to govern this.

Meeting with Board of Selectmen – Mr. Kularski informed the Board that he and Mr. Nason met with the Board of Selectmen regarding the purchase request system. They feel that this is a duplication of effort. The Board of Selectmen want us to do this as a trial for one year. They want real time budget numbers.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:44PM

Respectfully submitted,

Shiela LeBlanc,

Recording Secretary