

WATER & SEWER COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 22, 2023

5:30 PM - Remote Participation

Chairman's Introduction to Remote Meeting

Chairman Meader opened the meeting at 5:50 PM (due to technical difficulties) and stated that this Open Meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission is being conducted remotely pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency, signed into law on March 29, 2023, this meeting will be conducted via remote participation. All members of the Water & Sewer Commission are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely. The Order allows the Water & Sewer Commission to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting. The public is encouraged to follow along using the posted agenda, unless the Chair notes otherwise. Members of the public who wish to view the live stream of this meeting may do so by going to Northborough Remote Meetings on YouTube via the link listed on the agenda. Ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. This meeting will feature public comment.

Chairman Meader confirmed that the following members and persons anticipated on the agenda were remotely present and could be heard.

Water & Sewer Commission:

John Meader, Chairman

Bryant Firmin, Member (joined meeting at 5:55 PM due to technical difficulties)

David Pepe, Member

Town Staff:

Scott Charpentier, Public Works Director

Tim Davison, Water & Sewer Supervisor

Robert Luke, Public Works Admin (joined meeting at 5:55 PM)

I. Consideration of minutes from the July 18, 2023 regular meeting

A motion was made by Commissioner Pepe to approve the meeting minutes of the July 18, 2023 regular meeting as written with a second by Commissioner Meader. Vote was taken

by roll call, Commissioner Pepe “aye,” Commissioner Meader “aye,” Commissioner Firmin was absent; the vote was unanimous with two votes in favor.

2. Public Hearing to consider a Water / Sewer Rate Adjustment

At 5:55 PM Chairman Meader opened the public hearing to consider water and sewer rate adjustments. Chairman Meader discussed the Public Hearing process and then introduced Scott Charpentier, Director of Public Works, to give an overview of the process.

Mr. Charpentier gave a brief summary of the water and sewer rate study process and schedule. He noted it’s an annual evaluation of the Water & Sewer enterprise funds, which are self-sufficient and allow the Water & Sewer Department to function independently. All revenue from Water & Sewer billing goes toward the operating expenses without any general fund subsidies. This includes capital improvements as well as the replacement of aging equipment. Mr. Charpentier noted the cost of electricity has increased substantially over the past year which impacts the cost of water and especially sewer as it is largely driven by pumping requirements. The Town also maintains a fund reserve for large purchases and as an emergency fund if needed. At this point Mr. Charpentier called upon Mr. Fox to discuss the findings of this year.

Dave Fox from Raftelis Financial Consultants (Natick, MA) gave a brief introduction of himself followed by an overview of the annual rate study process. Mr. Fox described how they typically look at the financial forecast for both the water and sewer funds, taking into consideration historical actual expenditures as well as upcoming budget and financial trends, specifically looking at operating expenses, Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) assessments, existing debt service schedules and financing of capital improvement plans. The final rate study puts together a financial forecast of all those different revenue requirements and to determine what rate adjustments if any are necessary to support the financial plan and maintain the fiscal stability of the enterprise funds. The recommendation for Fiscal Year 2024 is an approximate 5.5%-6.0% increase on the fixed water service base charges, a 4% increase on the water volumetric charges, a 4% increase to the sewer volumetric charges and a 4.1% increase to the flat rate sewer service charges.

Commissioner Meader corrected the date and time of the Public Hearing to August 22, 2023 and it began at 5:55 PM. Mr. Charpentier gave a brief update on the ongoing sewer situation with the City of Marlborough. No questions or further comments were voiced by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Meader asked for public comment at this time; no public comments were offered.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Firmin to close the public hearing at 6:26 PM with a second by Commissioner Pepe. Vote was taken by roll call, Commissioner Firmin “aye,” Commissioner Pepe “aye,” Commissioner Meader “aye;’ the vote was unanimous with three votes in favor.

3. Vote on Water & Sewer Rate Adjustment

Motion by Commissioner Pepe to adopt the water and sewer rates as presented to the Commission tonight at the public hearing and seconded by Commissioner Firmin. Vote was taken by roll call, Commissioner Firmin “aye,” Commissioner Pepe “aye,” Commissioner Meader “aye;” the vote was unanimous with three votes in favor.

The new water & sewer volumetric rates and base charges will be effective on the third quarter bills dated February 1, 2024 are as follows:

Water		
Usage/quarter	Current Rate (per 1,000 cf)	New Rate (per 1,000 cf)
0 - 2,000 cf	\$53.03	\$55.15
2,001 - 6,000 cf	\$63.56	\$66.10
Over 6,000 cf	\$78.33	\$81.46

Water Service Base Charge		
Service Type	Current Rate (per quarter)	New Rate (per quarter)
Residential	\$18.00	\$19.00
Commercial	\$54.00	\$57.00
Industrial	\$82.00	\$87.00

Sewer		
Usage/quarter	Current Rate (per 1,000 cf)	New Rate (per 1,000 cf)
0 - 2,000 cf	\$119.07	\$123.83
2,001 - 6,000 cf	\$123.66	\$128.61
Over 6,000 cf	\$129.18	\$134.35

Sewer Only Accounts		
Service Type	Current Rate (per quarter)	New Rate (per quarter)
Flat Sewer Account	\$220.00	\$229.00

OTHER BUSINESS:

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 10, 2023 at 5:30 PM.

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Firmin at 6:30 PM with a second by Commissioner Pepe. Vote was taken by roll call, Commissioner Firmin “aye,” Commissioner Pepe “aye,” Commissioner Meader “aye;” the vote was unanimous with three votes in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Luke,
Public Works Administrator

Documents used during meeting:

1. August 22, 2023 Meeting Agenda
2. July 18, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes
3. Final Fiscal Year 2024 Water and Sewer Rate Study report dated August 22, 2023 from Raftelis Financial Consultants