

**WATER & SEWER COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 24, 2021**

5:30 PM - Remote Participation

Chairman's Introduction to Remote Meeting

Chairman Meader opened the meeting at 5:30 PM and stated that this Open Meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission was being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Bakers Executive Order of June 16, 2021, an Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency. 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 tonight 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

Town Staff:

Scott Charpentier, Department of Public Works (DPW) Director

Tim Davison, Water & Sewer Supervisor

Robert Luke, DPW Admin

Meeting Business Ground Rules Chairman Meader covered the ground rules for effective and clear conduct of the business. He asked members of the Board to mute their phone or computer when not speaking and to speak clearly and in a way that helps generate accurate meeting minutes. He will go through the items on the agenda. Following the presentation, Board members will be offered an opportunity to speak. Members were asked if they wish to speak, to do so through the Chair, taking care to identify themselves. The Chair introduced each meeting attendee with attendee acknowledging presence verbally.

For Items with Public Comment:

After members have spoken, the Chair will afford public comment as follows:

By Phone Dial *9 to raise your hand and wait to be recognized by the Chair. Please note that part of your phone number will be visible to those viewing the meeting. By Zoom Click “Raise Hand” on the bottom of your screen and wait to be recognized by the Chair. The Chair will ask members of the public who wish to speak to identify their names and addresses only. Once the Chair has a list of all public commentators, the Chair will call on each by name and afford 3 minutes for any comments.

1. Consideration of minutes from the July 27, 2021 regular meeting

Commissioner Meader deferred the consideration of minutes until after the public hearing.

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

At 5:33 PM Chairman Meader opened the public hearing to consider water and sewer rate adjustments. Mr. Meader discussed the Public Hearing process.

Mr. Charpentier gave a brief summary of the water and sewer rate study process and schedule. Regarding the sanitary sewer rate, he noted the Town is working without a municipal agreement with the City of Marlborough. He also noted the Town has increased rates steadily over recent years in anticipation of having a resolution to the municipal agreement. Therefore, the finding this year is that an increase in sewer rates is not warranted. With regard to water rates, he noted that consumption increased last year as many more individuals were working from home due to the pandemic, thus leading to a 24% increase in assessment fee charged by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). This requires an increase of 5% in water volumetric rates and a \$1 increase in the residential base charge. The increase in base charges helps mitigate fluctuations in water consumption over the upcoming 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 a 5-6 year window of the financial forecast of 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, 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 all the different costs to determine what rate adjustments are necessary to support the financial plan to pay for costs and maintain financial liability.

The recommendation for FY'22 is a 4% increase on the fixed water service residential base charge and a 5% increase on the water volumetric charges, no increase to the sewer volumetric charges or the flat rate sewer service charge.

Mr. Fox noted that the Town was able to use its reserve fund to mitigate the increase in rates to keep a stabilized and maintainable rate increase.

Commissioner Meader asked about the increase in base charges for commercial and industrial accounts. Mr. Fox noted that the residential base fee is moving from \$15 to \$16, the commercial base fee is moving from \$45 to \$48, and the industrial base fee is moving from \$68 to \$73. No questions or further comments were voiced from the Commissioners at this time.

No one from the public attended the public hearing tonight.

Motion made by Commissioner Firmin to close the public hearing at 5:55 pm with second by Commissioner Meader. The vote was by roll call and was unanimous with two votes in favor.

3. *Vote on Water & Sewer Rate Adjustment*

Motion by Commissioner Firmin to adopt the water and sewer rates as presented to the Commission tonight at the public hearing and second by Commissioner Meader. The new water & sewer volumetric rates and base charges will be effective on the third quarter bills dated February 1, 2022 are as follows:

| Water Service Base Charge | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Service Type | Current Rate (per quarter) | New Rate (per quarter) |
| Residential | \$15.00 | \$16.00 |
| Commercial | \$45.00 | \$48.00 |
| Industrial | \$68.00 | \$73.00 |

| Water | | |
|----------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Usage/quarter | Current Rate (per 1,000 cf) | New Rate (per 1,000 cf) |
| 0 - 2,000 cf | \$49.04 | \$51.49 |
| 2,001 - 6,000 cf | \$58.77 | \$61.71 |
| Over 6,000 cf | \$72.43 | \$76.05 |

The vote was by roll call and was unanimous with two votes in favor.

4. Water / Sewer Bill Adjustment – 30 Samuel Gamwel Road

Mr. Charpentier and the Commission reviewed the information pertaining to a sewer bill adjustment request for account number 3314 located at 30 Samuel Gamwel Road due to catastrophic damage done to the pool liner during the 2020-2021 winter season.

Mr. Charpentier reviewed the request and is recommending approval of a sewer abatement in the amount of 2,507 cubic feet totaling \$300.84 as the in-kind pool liner replacement was 16' X 34' X 4'6" average depth which equates to approximately 18,752 gallons of water (2,507 cubic feet) per the pool contractor's estimate and Town confirmation. The Commission discussed the information presented.

Based on local regulation, a motion to approve the request for a sewer abatement of \$300.84 (2,507 cf / 18,752 gallons) as this is an exceptional case that was not caused by customer action or choice was made by Commissioner Firmin and second by Commissioner Meader. Vote was done by roll call was unanimous with two votes in favor.

**5. Review and electronically execute sewer betterment recording documents
185-187 Hudson Street.**

Motion to electronically execute the sewer betterment recording document for the property located at 185-187 Hudson Street Northborough Massachusetts, 01532 was made by Commissioner Firmin and second by Commissioner Meader. Vote was done by roll call and was unanimous with two votes in favor.

Sewer Betterment Total: \$13,650.00

Betterment document will be recorded at the Worcester District Registry of Deeds. Once recorded, all information will be sent to the Principal Assessor & Finance Director for final assessment.

6. Consideration of minutes from the July 27, 2021 regular meeting

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of the July 27, 2021 regular meeting as amended was made by Commissioner Firmin and second by Commissioner Meader. Vote was done by roll call and was unanimous with two votes in favor.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Next Meeting: The next regular meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, September 28, 2021 at 5:30 PM either via Zoom or in person as decided later.

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn at 6:06 PM by Commissioner Firmin and second by Commissioner Meader. Vote was done by roll call and was unanimous with two votes in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott D. Charpentier

Documents used during meeting:

1. August 24, 2021 Meeting Agenda
2. July 27, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes
3. Final FY 2022 Water and Sewer Rate Study report dated July 31, 2021 from Raftelis Financial Consultants
4. Memo RE: Sewer Abatement 30 Samuel Gamwel Road – Account #3314
5. Sewer Betterment Order – 185-187 Hudson Street