TOWN OF KINGSTON
BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS
OPEN SESSION
WATER DEPT OFFICE - 22 ELM ST, MICHAEL J.
MACPHERSON MEETING ROOM & VIA ZOOM
SEPTEMBER 11, 2023

4:00 PM – CALL TO ORDER
Chairman Richard W. Loring Jr. called the meeting to order at 4pm.

In attendance were Vice Chairman Robert Erlandsen, Commissioner Robert Kostka, Superintendent Chris Veracka and Stacey Smith, Clerk.
Attending via ZOOM were Kristen Berger of Resilient C.E and resident Nathan Hedberg.

APPROVAL OF DEPARTMENT BILL SCHEDULES:

MEETING MINUTES:

VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF AUGUST 9 AND AUGUST 22, 2023
Commissioner Kostka made the motion to approve the minutes of August 9 and August 22, 2023 as presented. Vice Chairman Erlandsen seconded the motion and it was voted on unanimously (3-0-0).

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

DISCUSSION AND VOTE REGARDING FY24 BUDGET SHORTFALL, REALLOCATION OF RETAINED EARNINGS VOTED AT FY24 ATM AND WATER RATE INCREASE
Chairman Loring stated this is unfinished business to discuss the FY24 budget shortfall.

Ms. Smith referenced the email from Carol McCoy, Finance Director, included in the meeting packets recapping the budget shortfall as discussed at prior meetings. Ms. Smith added, the budget was due to several factors among them an expected loan payment in FY23 that was planned and budgeted but never made, the down turn of the economy which reduced the number of connections being sold and the moratorium issued in April. She added, FY23 closed without deficit but moving forward, FY24 will be facing deficit.

Chairman Loring stated since the last rate increase, in May 2014, we have had extensive increases in labor costs and supplies. The projection was the rate increase would be good for five years. We are now four to five years beyond that point.

Ms. Smith stated the other part of this discussion is to re-allocate retained earnings previously voted at the Spring Town Meeting to supplement the FY24 budget and in addition, replace those funds with additional ARPA funding to go towards the Main Street Water Main Project. If this Board is in agreement with that, a motion will need to be made this evening so that it can be shared with the Board of Selectmen tomorrow evening at their meeting. Discussion continued regarding the exact wording of the motion. Vice Chairman Erlandsen suggested making the motion contingent on the Board of Selectmen's approval of the additional 200K in ARPA funding. Prior to making that motion, Chairman Loring suggested waiting until after the presentation of the rate increase and recommendations made by Superintendent Veracka and Ms. Smith.

Commissioner Robert Kostka moved to raise the water rates by .50 per thousand in all tiers (as read aloud) and increase the quarterly service charge from $36 to $42, effective November 1, 2023. Vice Chairman Erlandsen seconded the motion. Chairman Loring asked if anyone had questions regarding the increase. Commissioner Kostka said he believed the Board had entered into significant discussion with both the Town Administrator and Town Accountant and department personnel regarding this issue and they had all agreed that rates needed to be increased. Chairman Loring would like to consider the higher end users (40,000 gals+) and possibly increase those rates, not immediately but perhaps in the future, to encourage residents that perhaps green lawns aren't the most important when considering water conservation. Commissioner Kostka agreed with Chairman Loring's concerns and suggested that they be studied in the future. Chairman Loring called for a vote on the motion to increase the water rates and it was voted on unanimously (3-0-0).

Ms. Smith stated she has a motion for the Board regarding the budget. It reads, 'Move to reallocate 200K from retained earnings, voted at 2023 Spring Town Meeting for the Main St Water Main Project, to supplement the FY24 budget; contingent upon the Board of Selectmen's approval to grant an additional 200K ARPA funding to supplement the Main St Water Main Project'. All were in agreement that the wording was appropriate. Commissioner Kostka read and moved the motion. Vice Chairman Erlandsen seconded the motion and it was voted on unanimously (3-0-0).

Chairman Loring stated that both Superintendent Veracka and Ms. Smith have been reviewing the department rules and regulations and will bring their recommended changes before the Board at a future meeting. Ms. Smith stated she and Superintendent Veracka will further review the proposed changes and make sure they are both cohesive and make sense. Discussion continued regarding the process and voting on the fee schedule in the future. The other item mentioned was the town being charged for water, as recommended by both the town administrator and the town accountant. Commissioner Kostka stated he had concerns about these new charges and when they will be implemented, as various town department budgets have already been approved.

Commissioner Kostka stated, with the consent of the Board, he needed to leave the meeting early. Prior to his leaving, it was discussed that, due to scheduling conflicts, the October meetings would be scheduled for October 16 and October 30, 2023.

Commissioner Kostka left the meeting at 4:17pm

APPOINTMENTS:

<u>KRISTEN BERGER, RESILIENT CE</u>

<u>GRASSY HOLE/I-86 TREATMENT PLANT UPDATE</u>
Ms. Berger stated the contractor has been waiting for the weather to be conducive for growing vegetation to address the stormwater pond issue. She said she would follow up with Winston Builders regarding scheduling the work. She said they wanted to come before the end of September.

<u>1-86 WELL CLEANING PROJECT</u>
Ms. Berger presented the formal change order for the well cleaning project. This change order reflects the purchase of the new pump totaling $834. She explained when they pull out the old pump they will not need to do any rehab work. They can simply install the new pump. She added, the motor had not arrived. It is expected to arrive in early October and they can expect to tackle the first half of the project at that time.

<u>MAIN STREET WATER MAIN PROJECT</u>
Ms. Berger stated the Main St Water Main Project has been paused awaiting for the re-allocation of funds at the Special Town Meeting in October. She would like to get the bid out over the winter and start work in the Spring 2024. This is all contingent upon receiving the additional ARPA funding.
Chairman Loring stated he hopes the Board of Selectmen will vote to reallocate the additional 200K in ARPA funding.

<u>TABLE TO USE FOR ESTIMATING WATER USE DURING FLUSHING OF WATER MAINS</u>
Ms. Berger explained at the last meeting there was discussion to develop a way to determine how to charge developers for the establishment, disinfection and flushing of new water mains. She created an excel spreadsheet to estimate water usage during flushing. She stated there were two options to do this, one is based on time and the other assumes

the amount of water being flushed. Ms. Berger feels the option of "time" is probably best as a gallon per minute flow rate can be assumed based on the velocity of the flow needed. A water department employee will be present and we can safely record the start and end time of the work to use in the calculation.

Chairman Loring stated this seems to be moving in the right direction.

Additionally, Ms Berger said she's been updating the costs of the well project. She asked the hydrogeologist to pull the revised amount of effort remaining for test well work and permitted well construction. Ms. Berger will pull in costs for a combined pump station and chemical feed building. She stated this would help with the department's five-year rate planning window. Ms. Berger is also working on cost estimates for a new tank in the high zone. Depending on size and location, this will impact the total expense. She will need to speak to Superintendent Veracka in more detail about the specifications for a new water tank.

WATER SUPERINTENDENT DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE:

<u>ELM STREET TANK MAINTENANCE PROJECT UPDATE</u>

Superintendent Veracka stated the tank is offline and drained. The painters showed up on Friday. They are getting a slow start due to the delay with the cell carrier's transfer of equipment. He added, it's been challenging running the system on pressure. The projected time to get the tank back online is around Thanksgiving. He added, another delay to the project is the steel fabrication for the exterior of the tank. Superintendent Veracka stated it was the perfect storm with the extreme heat last week. The cooler weather and rain in the forecast will help.

<u>A WATER REPAIRMAN POSITION HAS BEEN POSTED. WE RECEIVED ONLY ONE APPLICANT FOR THE PUMP OPERATOR POSITION AND THE APPLICANT DID NOT HAVE THE REQUIRED LICENSES.</u>

Superintendent Veracka stated we received on applicant for the Pump Operator position. However, the applicant has no water licenses, just wastewater licenses. Having no other applicants, the position of water repairman was posted and one internal applicant applied. Discussion took place regarding what's required with the position regarding licenses, training and the job requirements.

Superintendent Veracka stated lead and copper sample letters went out today to those residents asking for their cooperation, once again, in collecting these samples so that we may stay in compliance with Mass DEP.

NEW BUSINESS:

<u>REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION OF ABATEMENT AT 65-69 SUMMER ST (A3) DUE TO WATER LEAK IN CRAWL SPACE.</u>

Ms. Smith presented the abatement request for 65-69 Summer St (A3 Restaurant). The tenant of the business found a leak in the crawlspace that had gone undetected. They are requesting an abatement on their bill for water and sewer. A separate request has also gone to the sewer commissioners. Ms. Smith stated during the last two quarterly bills, their usage had jumped significantly. A letter was sent to warn them of the high usage. She went on to say they had been on the shut-off list and they paid the outstanding balance. Superintendent Veracka stated this particular property does straddle Stony Brook and was leaking into the crawlspace so that's why it may have gone undetected. Vice Chairman Erlandsen made the motion to approve an abatement and charge the gallons at the lowest tiered rate. Discussion continued. Chairman Loring stated it may be worthwhile to ask for confirmation that the leak has been repaired. Chairman Loring seconded the motion to approve an amendment and charge the gallons at the lowest tiered rate and it was voted on unanimously (2-0-0).

Ms. Smith asked for clarification as to what bills will be abated. Superintendent Veracka suggested a hold on this may be appropriate until we can get further clarification on the repairs and what bills will be abated. Chairman Loring asked Vice Chairman Erlandsen if he was comfortable with holding off on the abatement for further clarification. Vice Chairman Erlandsen agreed.

Ms. Smith will reach out to the business owner.

<u>NOTES FROM AUG 10, 2023 DEPT HEAD MEETING WITH THORNDIKE DEVELOPMENT RE: SISTER'S LAND</u>

The notes presented from the department head meeting with Thorndike Development were for informational purposes only. No action is necessary.

REQUEST FOR PAYMENT OF $5,543 FROM PLANNING DEPT FOR HYDRANT WORK COMPLETED BY CONTRACTORS ON RT 27/106 - CUMBERLAND FARMS INTERSECTION

Superintendent Veracka explained the Planning Department received a grant to address sidewalks in the Tura's Corner/Cumberland Farms intersection to make them ADA compliant. Prior to the start of the project, it was discovered that a hydrant needed to be moved as it was located where a handicap accessible ramp needed to be installed. The contractor did not ask the Kingston Water Department to move the hydrant. Superintendent Veracka stated he met with the contractor and suggested a test pit be done prior to moving the hydrant to see if it was feasible to move the hydrant based on the age of the pipe and see what they were dealing with. He added, Kingston Water Department provided the parts with the expectation of reimbursement from the contractor. The project ended up going over budget. The Town Planner, Valerie Massard, brought it to Superintendent Veracka's attention and he offered to waive the reimbursement on the parts, to try and minimize some of the expense. The town planner later submitted an invoice to the water department for a total of $5500 to move the hydrant. Superintendent Veracka stated Kingston Water could have moved the hydrant had there been prior notice, time allowed and communication.

Chairman Loring asked how far the hydrant was moved. Superintendent Veracka stated the hydrant was moved six feet. Chairman Loring said he objected to being charged for moving the hydrant when we provided the parts, then later be charged close to 1K per foot for the work. He said somebody needs to look at the planning and supervision of these grant projects.
Vice Chairman Erlandsen asked how much it would have cost the Kingston Water Department to move the hydrant. Superintendent Veracka stated $5500 is what it would cost to replace a new hydrant if it was hit in an accident. However, this project used an existing hydrant and factored in labor and traffic controls (police details) etc... Chairman Loring stated that a detail officer was onsite for the entirety of the project, not just moving the hydrant. We shouldn't be expected to pay for something twice.

Vice Chairman Erlandsen stated, if we aren't allowed or included in the planning with these projects, we cannot be expected to assume expenses. Superintendent Veracka clarified this was not a water department project, This was a town project and this oversight was due to the engineer's lack of knowledge regarding the location and what was underground. Chairman Loring said there was no town engineer on the project and we were not involved in the original planning. Discussion continued. Chairman Loring believes the expense should be placed back on the engineer. Vice Chairman Erlandsen asked about the fair labor costs and if there is a way we can determine if what is being charged falls under that.

Vice Chairman Erlandsen stated he was thinking in relation to his own job, about doing reviews, that Superintendent Veracka has been in the position a year and asked if there was a formal review process that should be done. Superintendent Veracka stated he has received a lot of support from Town Hall and others in his new position and feels he's getting a better handle of the role. Vice Chairman Erlandsen stated he was unsure if there was a formal process to follow. He acknowledged he was still the "new guy" on the Board. Chairman Loring stated it's important we do that; however, more importantly, he feels it's necessary to allow the new foreman to take control of the "day to day" operations on the road. Superintendent Veracka stated he is trying to guide Eric to take more of a leadership role. Chairman Loring stated that Superintendent Veracka had taught him and now it was time to let go of the foreman's responsibility so Eric could either succeed or fail on his own. He went on to say, if you're constantly being supervised and being told what to do and you can't make mistakes, then you can't learn. The foreman needs to apply the knowledge he's learned from the Superintendent and apply it out on the road and it's not always easy, as we can see. Chairman Loring referenced the two projects back to back regarding the Conservation Drainage Project on Elm Street and the Tura's Corner Project, both of which needed oversight.

Chairman Loring stated he received an email from Erin in the Planning Department regarding a meeting for the MBTA Task Force. The email was looking for a member's availability.

Ms. Smith stated the Board of Selectman have requested the superintendent or a commissioner attend tomorrow evening's meeting and vote on the Special Town meeting article to re-allocate retained earnings and the additional ARPA funding.

Ms. Smith will reach out to Commissioner Kostka and see if he can attend. Superintendent Veracka stated he would attend as well.

WATER CORRESPONDENCE FROM LAST MEETING:

NONE

BUSINESS OF WATER QUALITY REVIEW COMMITTEE:

NONE

NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

SEPTEMBER 25, 2023 AT 4PM

ADJOURNMENT OF OPEN SESSION:
Vice Chairman Erlandsen made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chairman Loring seconded the meeting and it was voted on unanimously (2-0-0).
The meeting adjourned at 4:53pm.

ZOOM INFORMATION

TOPIC: BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS
TIME: SEP 11, 2023 04:00 PM EASTERN TIME (US AND CANADA)
JOIN ZOOM MEETING
HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/86731198421?PWD=BNY5CMZKN0F4UWP1B29RR3VKCNRTUT09
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Respectfully submitted,

Stacey L. Smith

Stacey L. Smith
Clerk