



781-585-4058
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TOWN OF KINGSTON
Office of the Sewer Commission/Wastewater Department
26 Evergreen Street
Kingston, MA 02364

Elaine A. Fiore - Chair
William Watson – Vice Chair
Brian M. Donahoe

Minutes 01/07/25

January 7, 2025, sewer commissioners meeting discussed a \$70,000 change order for CDMS design services, increasing the budget from \$2,910,000 to \$2,980,000. The commission reviewed an email response to a resident's inquiries, detailing sewer rates, plant expansion costs, and operating expenses. They addressed a request to buy back two EIUs from the American Legion, considering the property's limited use and the need to balance debt repayment. The commission also voted to fund an escrow account to cover potential liabilities in a dispute between a contractor and subcontractor. The meeting focused on clarifying the phases and financial obligations related to a plant expansion and infrastructure upgrades. Phase one and two refer to pre-plant projects, with phase two including a plan expansion not covered by town offsets. The discussion highlighted a \$400,000 expense and the need to understand the actual debt, estimated at \$8 million. The subcommittee aims to determine exact liabilities, with a detailed analysis suggesting a \$1.7 million proposal. Environmental and neighborhood impacts were also considered. The group aims to finalize a presentation by early February, ensuring all members are informed and aligned on financial and operational strategies.

Action Items

- [] Review and provide any input on the content for the annual town report.
- [] Obtain pricing and purchase critical spare pumps using available article funds.
- [] Follow up with the property owner on their request to sell back sewer capacity and further discuss the implications at the next meeting.
- [] Continue discussions with the town administration on the potential creation of a DPW and explore a more collaborative approach between departments.

Outline

Change Order and Design Services Approval

- Elaine Fiore opens January 7, 2025, sewer commissioners meeting and mentions Tom Casey's absence.



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- David Walsh explains the delay in the change order due to timely responses from the DDP and the new deadline of January 20th.
- Elaine Fiore proposes a motion to increase the design services amount from \$2,910,000 to \$2,980,000 for an additional \$70,000.
- The motion is seconded and approved unanimously.
- Elaine Fiore informs Kathleen that she will be back tomorrow and mentions the funding for the change order comes from SRF money.

Email Response to Resident Inquiries

- Elaine Fiore reads an email from Dave Bugbee dated December 7, 2024, addressing multiple questions about sewer increases and plant expansion.
- The proposed sewer rates are \$14.03 per quarter with a \$42 service fee, and the plant expansion cost is estimated at \$21 million.
- The email includes a breakdown of operating expenses, the cause of the plant expansion, and the plan to add more users.
- The email also discusses the necessity of leaching fields and the term of the loan, which is 20 years.
- Elaine Fiore notes that the resident has not responded to the detailed email response.

Discussion on Operating Management Funds and Leaching Fields

- Brian Donahoe expresses concern about using operating management funds for capital expenses, emphasizing the need for recovery.
- Elaine Fiore agrees but differentiates between operating and debt expenses.
- David Walsh updates on recent emergencies at the pump stations, including a short circuit at Boundary Street pump station and the need for emergency float installation.
- The discussion includes the denial of emergency spare pumps by DEP due to time constraints and the need for re-bids for components.
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- David Walsh proposes using article money to purchase spare pumps and reducing the cost from \$326,000 to \$22,000 to \$32,000.

Annual Town Report and Project Completions in 2024

- David Walsh discusses the annual town report, including the processing of 120,446,256 gallons of wastewater and the average daily flow of 329,009 gallons.
- The report highlights the completion of various projects in 2024, such as the addition of a VFD motor starter bypass at Jones River pump station and the replacement of failed pumps at Marriott Drive.
- The corrosion assessment on force mains at Jones River and Rocky No pump stations showed no significant issues.
- The town joined a Chemical Co-op to reduce chemical costs, and the punch list for the plant upgrade is expected to close out by the end of the month.
- Goals for 2025 include preventive maintenance, emergency preparedness, and ordering spare pumps.

Website Updates and Guided Tours

- Jeanne Dunn suggests updating the website every two weeks with fun facts and information.
- Brian Donahoe proposes giving guided tours of the sewer facilities to town officials and community groups like the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts.
- The idea of developing a training program for high school students interested in wastewater treatment is discussed.
- David Walsh mentions the need to renew the membership of the Big State Water Pollution Control Association and the benefits of attending their annual meeting.

Buyback Program and Property at 94 Main Street

- Elaine Fiore explains the buyback program for sewer capacity, which is typically for vacant parcels, not existing properties with buildings.
- Kathy Banasi from Realty Plus represents the American Legion, which wants to sell back two EIUs to reduce their debt to the town.



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- The Legion is interested in selling the property to a buyer who wants to convert it into a two-family home with four bedrooms each.
- The discussion includes the challenges of selling the property due to its location and zoning restrictions.
- The commission decides to table the decision until the next meeting to allow time for further consideration and consultation with legal counsel.

Escrow Account for Methuen Subcontractor Dispute

- Elaine Fiore discusses the need to set up an escrow account to cover potential payments to a subcontractor in a dispute with Methuen.
- The town has \$999,120 in available article money that could be used to fund the escrow account.
- The dispute is between the contractor and subcontractor, but legal counsel advises the town to be prepared to pay if necessary.
- The commission votes to fund the escrow account with the available article money.
- The decision is based on the advice of legal counsel to err on the side of caution and ensure the town is covered in case of any liability.

Clarification of Phases and Contracts

- Brian Donahoe discusses the confusion around phase two, which includes upgrades and plan expansion, and mentions the spreadsheet showing 1/3 and 2/3 splits.
- David Walsh suggests that phase one and phase two refer to everything before the plant, and William Watson agrees, noting the long-standing use of these terms.
- Elaine Fiore explains that the town records indicate otherwise and mentions specific contracts from the SRF associated with each project.
- Brian Donahoe emphasizes the need to clarify the terminology and the financial implications, particularly the tax levy payments extending to 2030.

Financial Obligations and Plan Expansion

- Brian Donahoe highlights the importance of understanding the financial obligations, including the \$400,000 associated with phase two.



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- William Watson mentions the infrastructure and the need to double capacity, which is part of the plan expansion.
- Brian Donahoe expresses concern about the subcommittee's responsibility to determine the actual financial obligations, estimating a potential loan of \$8 million.
- Elaine Fiore clarifies that the fourth tank should be covered by user fees, not the tax levy, and discusses the need to stabilize the O and M account.

Environmental and Neighborhood Considerations

- Brian Donahoe mentions a meeting with Mr. Lincoln and the need to consider environmental and neighborhood impacts when making decisions.
- Jeanne Dunn informs the group about a change in the plan, which will require further analysis.
- Brian Donahoe stresses the importance of transparency and clear communication when making decisions, ensuring that the public understands the rationale behind them.
- Elaine Fiore and Brian Donahoe discussed the need for a detailed analysis and presentation to the Sewer Commission, aiming for a meeting in the second or third week of January.

Coordination and Follow-Up

- Brian Donahoe mentions the need to follow up with members who have expressed interest in being involved, ensuring that everyone is on the same page.
- David Walsh notes that some numbers will be more accurate after the next meeting with Kathleen.
- Brian Donahoe emphasizes the importance of respecting the involvement of all members and ensuring that the final decision is well-informed and transparent.
- Elaine Fiore and Brian Donahoe discussed the need for concrete numbers and a clear understanding of the operating budget, including the collection of funds and the use of excess funds.

Operating Budget and Financial Goals

- Brian Donahoe and Elaine Fiore discuss the operating budget and the need to adjust it every five years, aiming for a stable financial situation.



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- Elaine Fiore mentions the excess funds typically generated from septic, which have been a reliable source of income.
- Jeanne Dunn notes an increase in septage intake, indicating potential growth in revenue.
- David Walsh and Brian Donahoe discuss the impact of COVID-19 on financial projections and the need to adjust accordingly.

Meeting Conclusion and Next Steps

- Brian Donahoe outlines the plan for the next meeting, aiming to review the presentation and ensure everyone is on the same page.
- Elaine Fiore and Brian Donahoe discuss the importance of having all members involved and informed them before making any decisions.
- Jeanne Dunn mentions the need to keep the group informed about any changes in the plan.
- William Watson motions to adjourn the meeting, and the motion is seconded and approved by all members.