TOWN OF KINGSTON
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Sewer Commissioner Minutes 06/05/25

The Kingston Sewer Commission held a public hearing on June 5, 2025, to discuss sewer rates and charges. The current leaching field debt is $252,900, with a projected $404,831 for the next year. The town voted to support $137,000, leaving $267,831 to be divided among 2,529 users. The commission debated between a fixed rate (betterment) or flexible rate (special assessment) approach. They proposed using $153,000 from a $1.6 million fund and setting a new betterment fee at $38,000 over 20 years. The next meeting is scheduled for June 26, 2025, to finalize these decisions.

Action Items

- [ ] Define the formula for the leaching field special assessment, including the definition of "available revenue".
- [ ] Confirm the language for the leaching field special assessment in the rules and regulations.
- [ ] Discuss the betterment connection fees and categories (e.g., phase one, phase two, new users, unique construction projects) at the next meeting.
- [ ] Schedule and hold the continued public hearing on Thursday, June 26th at 6:30 PM.

Outline

Opening the Public Hearing

- Elaine Fiore opens the June 5 public hearing for the Kingston Sewer Commission, noting the purpose is to discuss and vote on sewer rates, charges, fees, civil penalties, and regulations.
- Copies of the draft documents are available for review at the clerk's office and sewer commissioner office.
- Elaine Fiore mentions no one is in attendance and proceeds to open the hearing.
- The leaching field debt is discussed, with a current debt of $252,900 and a next year's debt of $404,831.

Discussion on Debt Allocation and Payment Options

- Elaine Fiore discusses the options for paying the leaching field debt: either through betterments (fixed rate on real estate taxes) or through water sewer bills (flexible yearly adjustments).
- William Watson prefers a special assessment approach.
- Brian Donahoe emphasizes the importance of flexibility due to the expectation that more users will join, reducing the debt over time.
- A motion is made and seconded to discuss the approach first, then the details.

Formulating a Formula for Debt Payment

- Elaine Fiore suggests starting with the yearly leaching field debt, less any revenue sources, as a base for the discussion.
- Brian Donahoe recommends using available revenue from capital budget items to avoid taking from their own funds.
- The formula proposed includes yearly leaching field debt, less available revenue, divided by current EIUs.

- David Walsh suggests including surplus septage revenue in the available revenue.

Deciding on the Use of Available Funds

- Elaine Fiore and Brian Donahoe discuss the priority of using available capital revenue before other funds.
- A motion is made to use $153,000 from the apartment betterment excess betterment for the fiscal year.
- The formula and revenue use are confirmed, and the importance of town meeting approval is noted.
- Elaine Fiore mentions the need to work with the water department on charge codes.

Addressing Betterment Fees and EIUs for Condos

- Elaine Fiore discusses the need to address betterment fees for condos, ensuring they are considered a minimum of one EIU.
- William Watson and Brian Donahoe agree on the importance of this rule for billing purposes.
- A motion is made and seconded to set the minimum EIU for condos at one.
- The discussion includes the need to update rules and regulations to reflect this change.

Setting Betterment Fees and Future Adjustments

- Elaine Fiore reviews the historical debt and subsidies used for the plant expansion and leaching fields.
- The proposed betterment fee is discussed, with a starting number of $38,000 over 20 years.
- William Watson expresses concern about the fee being too high and suggests discussing it further.
- Brian Donahoe explains the rationale behind the proposed fee, emphasizing the value of having a sewer system.

Considering Future Adjustments and Public Hearing Continuation

- David Walsh suggests reviewing betterment fees every five years to keep up with increasing costs.
- William Watson agrees, noting the need for regular adjustments.
- The importance of attracting new users to manage costs is emphasized.
- A motion is made to continue the public hearing to the next meeting on Thursday, June 26 at 6:30 PM.
- The meeting is adjourned after confirming the continuation date.