

**WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2014 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL – 530 MAIN STREET**

PRESENT: Chairman Bill Michaud, Denton Butler, Robert Fulton, Mary Beth Greenwood, Kenneth Krohner, Steve Hanright, Michael LeClaire; Selectman Alesia Kennerson; Jason Hofmann, The Water Planet; Susan Suhanovsky and Steve Cerruto, Torrington Water Company.

ABSENT: None.

Chairman Bill Michaud called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. All regular members present were seated for the meeting. The proceedings were recorded digitally and copies are available at Town Hall.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. March 6, 2014 regular meeting.

In agenda item 3, Mr. Butler suggested changing the last sentence of paragraph 2 to read: "He stated that price with installation was approximately \$6800."

MOTION Mr. Butler, second Mr. LeClaire, to accept the minutes of the March 6, 2014 regular meeting as amended; unanimously approved.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:

No business was discussed.

3. OPERATIONS:

A. Monthly Report – The Water Planet.

Jason Hofmann addressed the Board to provide a monthly operations report. He informed the Board that permit compliance had been maintained during the month. Average flow was 58,000 gallons per day. A total of 65,550 gallons of septage was processed during the month, with 39,000 gallons of sludge removed. Expenses for the month totaled \$280.29.

Mr. Hofmann told the Board that he had just received an email from the State earlier that day that the WPCA would be receiving a check for \$737. The plant participated in a nitrogen trading program. Their permit limit was 5 pounds, and the plant averaged only 3 pounds the previous year.

B. Monthly Report – Torrington Water Company.

Steve Cerruto addressed the Board to provide a monthly operations report. He informed the Board that the total system production was 3,500,000 gallons with an average of 113,000 gallons daily; this was well below the limits of their diversion permit.

Mr. Cerruto said that they continued to make repairs at Blackbridge well. The air compressor had been replaced, and the caustic feed pump had been moved to a safer location. A new dehumidifier had been ordered and was expected to be installed later in the month. He said that there had been a failure in the filter system; a computer board had burnt out and was subsequently replaced. Mr. Cerruto said that repairs were also being made at Pine Meadow well. The tank level indicator there had been repaired.

Mr. Cerruto said that they would like to see about using Pine Meadow as the primary water source, with Blackbridge used as the backup. He explained that water was cheaper to produce at Pine Meadow, as it only required pH control and not as much filtering as the water from Blackbridge. Mr. Cerruto said they anticipated a cost savings from reduced chemicals and electricity if this plan was eventually implemented.

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Mr. Cerruto also said that the filtering system at Blackbridge was deteriorating. They had had the system inspected by the manufacturer and were awaiting his report and recommendations. He said he had also gotten an estimate from SB Church Company, the company that had install both wells, in order to inspect their operation and make recommendations to improve efficiency. The cost for inspection of both stations would be \$1850.

Mr. Butler questioned how much money was left out of the \$14,000 total set aside by the Board for water system repairs by Torrington Water Company. Mr. Cerruto stated that approximately \$5000 had been spent the previous month, and the total this month would be around \$2700; this did not include the cost of the dehumidifier or the State-required pH analyzer for Pine Meadow. Mr. Cerruto explained that the pH analyzer would cost \$1700 to replace. He said that the well inspections did not have to be done immediately, but he would like to see this done before the end of the summer. Mr. Michaud asked what would be done if inefficiencies were discovered, and Mr. Cerruto detailed the types of repairs that could be made to make the system run more efficiently. Mr. Butler suggested that the Board table this discussion to the next month's meeting in order to allow Mr. Cerruto to create a more detailed list of the total expenditures to date. The Board agreed with this plan.

Mr. Cerruto explained that there had been a service leak at 594 Main Street. They had an appointment to inspect the site; however, the homeowner was not there when they arrived. They had since tried unsuccessfully to reschedule the appointment, and had received no answer thus far. Mr. Cerruto explained that the leak was between the curb stop and the house. He also mentioned that a hydrant on Prospect Street had been replaced. Over the month there had been many service orders for meter reading checks.

Mr. Cerruto said that both wells met all state and federal requirements for water quality. Mr. Butler asked whether Mr. Cerruto knew whether United Water had completed and filed all required reports with State prior to the end of their contract. Mr. Cerruto noted that the reports were due in March, and he checked a State website where outstanding filings were listed. He said nothing was showing up as overdue for New Hartford. Mr. Butler requested that Mr. Cerruto place a phone call to double check this, and Mr. Cerruto stated that he would.

Mr. LeClaire questioned whether a vote was required in order to move ahead with the purchase of the pH analyzer. Mr. Cerruto reiterated that the cost for just the pH analyzer was \$1700. He said he had originally wanted to purchase a combined chlorine and pH analyzer in case chlorine was ever used in future at Pine Meadow, but it was more expensive. Mr. Butler stated that a vote would not be necessary as the purchase was covered under the blanket authorization the Board provided when it approved the expenditure of up to \$14,000 by the end of the year.

Mr. Cerruto then explained that the Board had 6 new meters in stock when they first arrived; however, all have since been used to change out frozen meters. He explained that they had then been using Torrington Water Company refurbished meters at a reduced cost of \$50 apiece; however, they too were running out and more would have to be purchased. He suggested the Board consider replacing a set amount of meters every year, noting that some have been in the system a long time. He explained that, if anything, the Board was losing money as meters become less accurate and have higher tolerances the older they get. Mr. Butler requested Mr. Cerruto put together a replacement plan proposal for the Board to review, and Mr. Cerruto said that he would do this for the next meeting.

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Mr. Cerruto asked how often system flushing was performed in New Hartford. Mr. Michaud explained that it happened approximately once per year and was coordinated with the Fire Department, usually in May or June. Mr. Michaud stated that all system users were notified beforehand. Mr. Cerruto estimated that three days should be sufficient time to complete this. Mr. Krohner questioned whether they planned to flush every hydrant, and Mr. Cerruto responded negatively, explaining the process they would follow. Mr. Michaud said that he would like to work with Torrington Water to come up with a plan to address pressure issues in the distribution system and resolve hydrants with low flow.

Mr. Cerruto then explained that the last two houses on Steele Road were fed by a little demand pump station and were experiencing dirty water. He said that they had discovered that there was a blowoff there just before the last service; therefore, the blowoff was not really doing any good. When usage at the two houses was higher, the water became discolored. He recommended installing a new blowoff above the two houses, and he estimated this would cost approximately \$3500 as it would require digging up pavement and then repairing the road. He suggested the Board consider this repair the next fiscal year. Mr. Michaud asked for Mr. Cerruto to put together a list of recommended repairs for the Board to consider when working on the budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

C. Monthly Financial Report.

Mr. Michaud informed the Board that he had just reviewed the financial information for the 3rd quarter. He said that actual revenue was in line with that which had been projected on the budget; \$567,000 had been projected and \$570,000 had been received. With regard to expenses, at first glance it appeared that they were \$42,000 less than projected. However, the budget had included payment of \$120,000 for the WWTP debt, which had not actually been done. Therefore, in reality, expenses were actually \$80,000 higher than predicted. Mr. Michaud explained that this was largely due to expenses on the sewer side of operations, such as sludge removal costs, nonroutine charges, and miscellaneous equipment costs. He noted that nonroutine costs on the water side had also been higher than anticipated. Mr. Michaud said that \$190,000 was in their account right now, with outstanding invoices of approximately \$38,000, leaving a net of \$150,000 available.

D. Billing and Collections.

Susan Suhanovsky addressed the Board regarding this matter, explaining that meters had been read the week prior and bills would be sent out the next day. She said that Torrington Water Company had received many calls in response to the pre-lien letters that had been sent out. As a result, approximately twenty-five payment agreements had been made. She noted that April 8 would be the shut off date and lien date. Everyone who had not yet contacted them to make a payment arrangement would be called on April 7 in a last effort to resolve outstanding bills prior to shutoff. She said that the total debt past due greater than 120 days had been reduced \$15,000.

E. Resolution of Requests for One-Time Relief.

1. 537 Main Street – Mr. Michaud said that the homeowner withdrew his request.
2. 130 Reservoir Road, Building 2 Unit 8 – Mr. Michaud explained that they had a high bill in December for 28,000 gallons for the quarter. Information they submitted for the previous 2-3 years of billing showed average usage of 8,000 gallons. Mr. Michaud suggested the Board allow a one-time reduction of the bill to the equivalent of 8,000 gallons for the quarter. This would reduce the bill from \$252.28 to \$94.68. Ms. Greenwood questioned whether the cause of had been discovered. Mr. Michaud said that the landlord sent someone out; however, they did not find any leaks. The meter had also been checked, and no malfunction was found. Members of the Board agreed that they wanted to wait to see if the upcoming bill showed usage returned to normal and the problem was resolved or whether the usage still was high.

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3. 10 Steele Road – Mr. Michaud said he had not gotten any further information. The Board then agreed to table this matter to the next month's meeting.

Ms. Suhanovsky said that she would forward information to the Board regarding the billing for both the Reservoir Road and the Steele Road customers' usage. Neither customer's past due amount would be considered late while this review was underway.

Bob Moore addressed the Board to state that they had recently had their meter replaced and it cost \$450. He noted that the same replacement would have cost \$210 in Torrington according to the Torrington Water Company's rates. Ms. Suhanovsky said that they were charging the fees according to New Hartford's rate schedule. Mr. Michaud said that rates for meter replacements were designed to simply cover costs, not make a profit. He said that the Board could review them to see if modifications could be made.

4. REPORTS:

A. **Septage Receiving.**

Mr. Butler and Mr. Litchfield addressed the Board on this matter. A copy of the report entitled "Septage Receiving Analysis and Recommendations" was prepared by the subcommittee and discussed by the Board. Mr. Butler stated that it was the subcommittee's recommendation that the program be terminated no later than August 31st as per the requirements of the contract with Russ's Septic Service.

Mr. Butler stated that, after researching the program, it was determined that of the \$105,000 gross revenue received from this contract, the net profit was only \$1850. He noted that, were it not for electrical credits, the program would have only broken even. Mr. Butler stated that the subcommittee was concerned about the accelerated depreciation of the equipment at the wastewater treatment plant, noting that the manufacturer had indicated this was not the intended usage for the equipment for a prolonged ongoing basis. Mr. Butler stated that the subcommittee was also concerned about maintaining permit compliance, and the fact that there did not appear to be a fail-safe backup plan for equipment failures. He noted that, due to the way that septage had to be processed at the plant, it would not be easily or inexpensively possible to rearrange work in the event of equipment failure. Mr. Butler also noted that over the past year, 916 truckloads of septage had come into the plant and 123 loads of sludge had been removed from the plant, which meant more than 1000 trucks were entering and exiting the site, which had ramifications for the adjacent neighbors. He also noted that the odor control system had been designed to address sewage, not septage.

Mr. Butler expressed concern that this decision might inadvertently lead to adverse publicity for all parties. He suggested that the Board issue a press release about the termination of the contract, which reiterated the fact that the contract was ending by mutual agreement, and that Russ's Septic Service and the Town of New Hartford would continue to have as good of a working relationship as they did prior to this arrangement.

Mr. Krohner stated that Maguire Engineering had said that the Town would be able to accept septage with this system design, noting that they were apparently incorrect. A member of the audience, Troy LaMere, addressed the Board to state that he applauded this effort and agreed with the decision; however, he suggested that the Board had actually lost money on this arrangement in terms of opportunity cost, since they did not charge as high an amount as other area towns did for the same service.

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Mr. Butler said that the subcommittee was not saying that the plant could never receive some level of septage; it would simply have to be a smaller amount and monitored carefully. For instance, it was conceivable that the plant could accept septage from New Hartford nonusers as initially planned and promised, as this was a much lower amount that could likely be safely handled.

Selectman Alesia Kennerson addressed the Board, noting that First Selectman Dan Jerram was not here due to illness. She asked on his behalf that the Board consider waiting to make a final decision and issue a press release in order to review the contract and see if a modification would be possible. She noted that the Russ's Septic Service had offered to increase the amount they paid, and she suggested that perhaps the amount of septage received could be reduced. Mr. Butler said that the plant could potentially handle a reduced amount of septage, however there were other issues of concern besides the financial aspect. He reiterated the importance of giving adequate notice to Russ's Septic Service as per the terms of the contract. Both Mr. Litchfield and Mr. Butler stated that the Board could move to terminate this contract and still be open to renegotiation on the terms of a new contract. Mr. Michaud and Mr. Krohner concurred.

MOTION Mr. LeClaire, second Mr. Krohner, to terminate the existing contract with Russ' Septic Service for septage receiving as of August 31, 2014 and to explore opportunities for renegotiating a new contract with Russ's Septic Service; unanimously approved.

Maria Moore addressed the Board to encourage exploration of the use of the plant for receipt of septage from Town residents. She stated that this would be a good will gesture and would help with the perception that the plant truly is for the entire town. Mr. Butler offered the services of the members of the subcommittee if the Board wished to have them explore alternative programs for the plant, such as that described by Ms. Moore.

5. OLD BUSINESS:

A. WWTP Debt Allocation.

B. Municipal Loan Modification.

Mr. Michaud briefly reviewed the 5-point plan discussed at the March regular meeting. He said that there had been no movement on the bulk of the plan as yet. Ms. Kennerson explained that the next step would be another meeting of the subcommittee to discuss the Board's proposal.

However, Mr. Michaud said that the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen had both considered the requested modification of the \$130,000 loan, and they had agreed to move the issue forward to Town Meeting. Ms. Kennerson explained that they just needed to set a date and publish the required noticing. Mr. Michaud suggested that the Board proceed with the first of their proposed schedule of payments for repayment of the debt. In 2014, the Board was to make payments of \$3250 on May 1, August 1, and December 1.

MOTION Mr. Butler, second Mr. Hanright, to make the first installment of proposed payments under revised repayment plan scheduled for May 1 in the amount of \$3250; unanimously approved.

Mr. Michaud asked Ms. Kennerson if there had been any discussion regarding a revolving loan fund for sewer line connections. Ms. Kennerson stated that the Board of Selectmen were not opposed to the idea. She said that she believed the Board of Finance had discussed the issue; however, she was not sure what the final consensus had been. Mr. Michaud stated that he believed such a fund should be in place before the Board moved to finalize the Orders to Connect.

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Mr. Butler suggested that the Board review their connection fees prior to finalizing the Orders to Connect as well, stating that the connection fees should be more realistic if the Town was going to offer loans to help with connection. Mr. Michaud explained why the connection fee was set at the current amount, and that benefit assessments were the more appropriate way to recoup the outlay for line extensions. Mr. Butler asked for additional information on this issue, and Mr. Michaud stated that he would forward all documentation to him that the Board had used to make this determination.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Sewer Extension Planning.

Mr. Michaud explained that the Cottage Street extension was on the Clean Water Fund 2014-2015 Draft Priority List with a set-aside of \$3.7 million dollars. This also included line extensions up to the industrial park and Greenwoods Road. He explained that the Cottage Street extension had been on the 2012-2013 Priority List, and Wright Pierce had sent a letter to the DEEP notifying them that the two other extensions had been included in STEAP grant applications. The DEEP then combined all the project into one listing for the 2014-2015 draft list. Mr. Michaud said that he had spoken with Wright Pierce regarding steps to take to ensure the Town gets on the final list. He recommended a meeting about this with Wright-Pierce, the Board of Selectmen, and the Board of Finance.

Mr. Butler suggested crafting a letter to the DEEP which clarified that the Town might use the funds for either the Cottage Street extension or the Pine Meadow extension in order to protect the aquifer. He recommended the Board keep its options open, and Mr. Michaud concurred, noting that \$3.7 million was very close to the total amount necessary for the Pine Meadow project. Mr. Butler stated that he had information from the original application for the treatment plant that detailed the importance of the aquifer in Pine Meadow; he would use that information as a part of his draft letter to the DEEP, and he would email a draft of the letter to the Board within the next week.

B. Fiscal Year 2014-2015 Budget Process.

Mr. Michaud stated that he would bring information for next month's meeting so that the Board could begin planning for the upcoming fiscal year.

7. OTHER BUSINESS PROPER TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD:

A. Fats, Oil, & Grease Program.

Mr. LeClaire questioned what the status of this program was, noting that the Board had hired someone to handle this for them. He said he had not heard any followup after the first two meetings on this issue. Mr. Krohner stated that he had tried to contact Ms. Arel with a question about the restaurant on his property, but she had never contacted him back. Mr. Michaud requested Mr. LeClaire contact Ms. Arel for a status update.

B. Sewer Service Map.

Mr. LeClaire stated that he had also spoken with Christine Kurtz at Wright Pierce. He said that they were still having discussions with the State about some small final points with regard to the Sewer Service Map. Therefore, it was not yet finalized.

C. Blue Ridge Development, LLC:

Mr. Michaud explained that the Board had agreed to have the Town's land use attorney handle the discussions, and he was not aware of any additional information at this time.

Maria Moore addressed the Board to state that the WPCA should have presence in these discussions in order to be sure they would not miss out on an opportunity for increased revenue.

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8. NEXT MEETING AND AGENDA.

Mr. Butler requested that the MDC bill be added to the agenda of the next month's meeting. He stated that he had new information on this issue. Several members of the Board requested all earlier information on this issue in order to be better aware of the background on this issue.

MOTION Mr. Butler, second Mr. Krohner, to adjourn at 8:46 PM; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

**Stacey M. Sefcik
Board Clerk**