

SHELBURNE WATER COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes – October 4, 2022

Present: John Day, Jennifer Martinez, Steve Smith, Pete Gadue, Craig Wooster; also Bart Sherman, Peter Frankenburg, Lee Krohn.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 P.M. Motion by Day to approve the agenda; seconded by Gadue and approved 4-0. Motion by Day to approve the minutes of September 6; seconded by Martinez and approved 4-0. There were no public comments on items not on the agenda. Smith arrived at this time.

Water Superintendent Bart Sherman gave a presentation explaining a rationale for a two-stage approach to replacing water meters throughout Town. Stage 1 would replace all of the existing Sensus remote radio read meters, which are reaching the end of their useful life, and for which support/replacements no longer exist; stage 2 would replace all of the rest of the meters on our system, which are at or beyond useful lifespan and which require significant staff time to visit all of these properties 4x/year to read these meters manually. Estimated costs are significant, but would save considerable staff time (estimated at over 1300 hours of staff time each year) for more productive work; meters all need replacing at some point anyway; would offer new technical capabilities; and would be consistent with new Neptune meters across the entire system. Of important, additional added value is that the meter replacement work would also include inspection of all service lines as required under a new federal mandate at no additional cost; a project that if conducted on its own, could itself cost several hundred thousand dollars.

Further discussion ensued about hoped-for timeframe for this work, likely continued cost increases if delayed, how this would be funded, possibilities for grants to help offset costs, and relationship in capital planning with other known priorities like the RT 7 water line replacement/relining. It was also noted that having newer meters means that water flow will be measured more accurately, leading to more accurate billing and thus, proper revenue flowing to the Department.

Sherman would ideally like to launch stage 1 ASAP, with stage 2 to follow over a likely three-year timeframe. Total cost is roughly \$1.3 million. Staff will inquire as to possibility of cost sharing with the Wastewater Department, since their billing and revenues are actually derived from water meter readings; so greater accuracy is also a direct benefit to that Department, and their rates and revenues are much greater than on the water side. Motion by Day to endorse the concept proposed, and to ask staff to return next month with a more detailed, formal proposal for Water Commission consideration. It was noted that the Selectboard should be kept informed appropriately, as well; seconded by Smith and approved unanimously.

Town Manager's report: dealing with multiple, complex matters at this time.

Finance Director's report: budget remains generally on track as anticipated; no recent costly surprises. A transfer from the General Fund to the Water Department was noted, related to the sale of a truck to Buildings & Grounds; both Departments ended up with vehicles better suited for their respective needs. Delinquencies remain higher than usual, due at least in part to the shutoff moratorium that was imposed during COVID. That said, having informed property owners of the opportunity, we did receive certain payments from the State program designed to help those with overdue utility bills.

Commissioner Concerns: Upon inquiry, it was noted that the long-awaited generator for the Wake Robin reserve water tank has been installed. Final details on the transfer switch installation remain to be done; Vermont Gas will soon install their service line; and a plumber will then complete the project. It is expected to be fully operational and on line as needed by the end of October.

The T Mobile request to install additional cell infrastructure on the south water tank remains in process. The Commission will be kept informed.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 6:07 P.M. Next meeting: Tuesday, November 1.

Respectfully submitted by Lee Krohn