

**Meeting Agenda – Sewer Commission
Northfield Town Hall
69 Main Street, Northfield MA**

April 18th, 2023– 4:30 pm - Conference Room First Floor

Commission: Chair – Dan Gray (DG), Tom Walker (TW), Karen Boudreau (KB), Chief Operator - Isaac Golding (IG), Michele Turner (MT) when requested, Tighe&Bond (TB) when requested.

Call to order: 4:38 Present: IG, TW, MD, KB Absent: Not Requested:

Special Guests: Bernie Boudreau, Mark DePonte Part time Operator.

Review and Approval of Minutes: yes

Citizen's Concerns: None

Business:

- Budget/Rates Adjustment– reset 3 items, 2nd vote, adjust rate. **Motion: kb 2nd: tw Vote: all**
The final rate. \$385,689.09 with a cycle rate of \$452.56 and \$905.13.
The 3/22/23 vote on the rates was our final vote with a few adjustments. The Fin Comm did not recall that our January budget was first pass. They did not reply that they needed a final vote after the January meeting. Research and conversation occurred between KB and Town Admin. In order to set a firm Sewer rate, the Sewer Comm is reliant upon the COLA percentage from Fin Comm, Indirect Costs number from the Town Admin, and lastly we adjust our overtime amount. This recent budget cycle was still much better than last year. Going forward, the Sewer Comm can appear later in February Fin Comm meetings. By then we should have a locked in COLA from Fin Comm and a locked in Indirect Cost from the Town Admin. Our process can change so that we estimate our budget with a slightly higher COLA and Indirect costs in Sept/October, Plan out our capital projects, and put them on an estimated timeline. Next year will have some new project nuances because of the Asset Management project.
- T&B – Asset Mgmt Project update.
Update from Isaac. KB was unavailable for the 4/13 call. The call did not happen. T&B is burning the midnight oil to hit the 4/30 end date. No vote.
- T&B - Zoom into 4 meetings per year. Needs to go on the draft project list. There are 2 task lists that need to be combined and documented. No vote. Future work.
- Easements And Deeds – Article money. Status on this? No update. Question: since the building is owned and insured by the Town, how do we accurately determine building investment dollars? This could be important as we begin the grant and large loan process.
- Bylaws Update. May and will incorporate wording changes on the Sewer Application. No status.
- Technical data survey update. No status. Waiting on Congress
- Open Positions: Full time, Part time and Candidate interview Deliberate on our next steps and possible candidates. IG-wait on Maintenance position for a while. No vote.
- Capital projects January – May. Capital projects June – November. Priorities.Needs work with Task list project.

- Account demographics and breakout. As we head into the launch of the Asset Management project, needs for funding, working with Mallory (Grant Director) and a rate study, KB has requested more end of year reports from Erin, going back to 2012. This should help everyone see trends over a several years. No vote needed at this time. Erin has provided a volume of historic reports. No vote.
- Accounting firm update. The Hilltown Accounting firm is working with us on a more detailed inspection of our operating budget. Beginning in February, Pete carefully watches the budget as it is near 75% of the year and should be 75% or less of the expenses. Pete was glad to hear that we now have automation to perform the same or similar tasks. In March, Pete and KB compared expenses to actual and matched to the penny. This is increasingly better than last year's processes. KB will report its findings to Pete at the end of April and we will compare the figures. This will be done again at the end of May and June. No vote needed.
- Billing and usage fees: EDU vs Usage vs Tiered EDU. **Motion: kb 2nd: tw Vote: All**
 Research has started regarding possible different techniques of tiered EDU structures vs, actual usage metrics to produce rates and budgets. Some municipalities use pipe size to determine an EDU tier, some use household size. Household of 1-2 is Tier 1, Household of 3-4 is tier 2...etc. Industry trends show that Equivalent rate structures are decreasing in popularity for several reasons. They are mathematically unfair and they do not promote conservation practices. When water and sewer are managed by one department, as in a larger municipality, it is easier and more accurate to apply direct usage metrics to achieve a budget and rate. Northfield has 2 separate water companies (formed under a legislative action). Those 2 companies could have different meters, different times of reading the meters and producing bills, and certainly different employees. This will be problematic for the Sewer Commission to gather all of the data, review it, upload it to the accounting system and produce bills. It will also put additional strain on the Water Companies. In a smaller municipality, it might be easier and more accurate to move towards a tiered EDU rate structure. This possible conversion alone is not a small task and will require much more analysis, coordination, sunset out/sunrise in a change metric, and a repetitive comprehensive communication plan to the citizens.
 Requesting a vote to continue further research and deliberation.
- Land use room – n/a on the update.
- Updates to the Sewer Application form. Witnessed hookup and signatures. No vote.

Operator Report: Isaac

- Aerators – both in, running. All ok.
- Water Line break – new bid. Needs to be reviewed in the next meeting. TW talked to RR track personnel. Best to sleeve the line. A few minutes before the meeting, the SC received a proposal from an engineer. No vote.
- Purchase a sonic flow meter for the plant or large events. IG about 10K. No vote.
- 2022 Yearly reports being handled by T&B
- Mapping. No recent updates.
- Sewer extension. Meet 314 CMR 7.00, 35-36 houses on main street, 7000 gallons per day should be ok. The historical Commission might need to ok this.
- Glenwood estimate is approximately \$40,000.
- 2 special event permits. Chicken BBQ for 350th at the Trin Church. The events should not be a problem as they are 1 day and short hours. Spring Carnival and fun run at Elem School. The events should not be a problem as they are 1 day and short hours.
- Replacing both Variable Frequency Drives (VFD's). Cost is approximately \$4500.

- The Grinder – The control box was damaged by water. not warranty control box that was wet. Need to order a new control box. The vendor is shipping a new grinder head. The original grinder head was too short. The vendor refers back to 4x weather rating. It's only covered by direct hose splash and vibrations. About 3,000\$ to replace the Control Box.

Billing:

- Abatements - None
- Questions/Correspondence. - None
- Setting 2024 rates and Flat Rates. Review all accounts. See item 1 above. See vote above to adjust final rate vote.

Current Project Update / Next Steps: Highland Ave project and ordering, Glenwood Ave.

Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair: A question came in about a recent hook up on Winchester rd. It is believed that the site is now properly filled in and seeded. The question is best addressed to the Board of Health, if there is still a problem.

Next Meeting is: 5/3/2023 and 5/17/2023

Adjourned: 5:44 **Motion:** kb **2nd:** tw **Vote:** all

The meeting minutes are being posted in compliance with Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

Approved:

Signature: *Soren Boudreau* Date: *5/3/2023*

Signature: *Thomas Walter* Date: *5/3/2023*

Signature: *Don Gray* Date:

Signature: Date: