

**Meeting Minutes – Sewer Commission**  
**Northfield Town Hall**  
**69 Main Street, Northfield MA**  
**Jan 17, 2024– 4:30 pm - Conference Room First Floor**

<b>Commission:</b>	<b>Present</b>		<b>Additional:</b>	<b>Requested:</b>
<b>Chair – Dan Gray (DG)</b>	<b>A</b>			
Tom Walker (TW)	<b>P</b>		Michele Turner (MT)	<b>P</b>
Karen Boudreau (KB)	<b>P</b>		Zach Chornyak – T&B	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Chief - Isaac Golding (IG)</b>	<b>P</b>			

**Call to order: 4:30 PM, TW**

**Review and Approval of Minutes: Signed and Accepted.**

**Motion to Approve: Karen Boudreau, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tom Walker, All approved.**  
**Citizen's Communication: None.**

**Business:**

- Water Line Update and Railroad by TW and KB. Quote from Arc Energy Services for \$27,000.
- Arc Energy Services, Tolland Mass provided the quote for services needed to replace a leaking water pipe under the railroad tracks on Meadow St according to specifications detailed in the Quote.
- **Motion to Approve: Karen Boudreau, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tom Walker, All approved.**
- FY 24 Budget Review, as of 01/10/2024. Reviewed in every meeting. We are at 54% through the year. The budget is at 49%. This is tight but we are still on track to avoid deficit spending. Climate Change excessive rains are killing the overtime budget line item. No vote needed.
- FY24 Rate Adjustment update. Vote to approve and send bills is needed.
  - Michele Turner presented the Commitment report for the one-time rate adjustment bills. The Sewer Commission presented this information in multiple formats throughout the past 4-6 months. Going forward the budget will adhere to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and will be compliant.
- **Motion to Approve: Karen Boudreau, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tom Walker, All approved.**
- End of year records review with Treasurer – Jan 5<sup>th</sup> with Michele.
  - Michele and Karen met on January 5<sup>th</sup> for several hours to review the Rate Adjustment data one last time and to validate final amounts. Throughout the year, tighter data controls will be implanted specific to the Utility report and aging accounts. No vote needed.
- FY25 Budget– needs a new vote and resubmit to Finance Committee.
  - **The Sewer Dept/Comm did not receive the FY25 Salary (Grade/Step) Worksheet until 1/2/2024.** This causes us to adjust the Wages portion of the FY25 proposed budget that we previously submitted to the Finance Committee. **The previous submission is null and void.** For the record, the following items are budget requirements to be completed before the budgets can be submitted as accurate and ready for review.
    - Enterprise Fund Certification completed with the Dept of Revenue by Towns accounting firm.
    - COLA percentage to be determined by the Select Board.
    - Indirect rate amounts.
    - Grade/Step Worksheet Classification determined by the Select Board.



We made Line-item adjustments to our budget. We needed to reduce line items to find \$5635.18 caused by a late data delivery from the Select Board. Adjusting in this manner allowed us to not increase end user rates.

Regrettably, the total FY25 presented budget is \$528,067.33. The user rate to be voted on in May 2024 is 1247.53, the flat fee amount to be voted on in May 2024 is \$11,700.

**Motion to Approve: Karen Boudreau, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tom Walker, All approved.**

- Accounting team update: The back-office team (Erin, Michele, Karen, Pete, Dave, Beth) are slicing, dicing and reviewing data and processes. Unfortunately, chaos occurred, and things got out of control from 2016 to 2021. The 20221 team (above) is narrowing the chaos gap. Our Accountant Pete is quoted below on how budget data and processes occur. His statements are spot on and follow acceptable accounting practices. Next year, the Sewer Comm and accountants strongly encourage the Select Board and Finance Committee to hit their end dates with up-front requirements and that the data be timely. Setting a budget submission end date of 12/14 and providing important data on January 2<sup>nd</sup> created this challenge. We always look forward to working collaboratively and cordially with the Select Board and helping them learn the fine art of Budgeting. The items below are what we are addressing. No vote needed.

“Start with realistic revenue projection and budget expenses at less, beginning with known fixed costs and salaries and end with discretionary. Surplus of revenue over expense will build your fund balance. Fund balance appropriations should be for 1-time expenses of a capital or emergency nature.”

- Working with Pete (accountant) up front in the process, Schedule A information/training, Free cash Certification process information/training, updated Rate letters, updated Commitment letters, account line-item review of all operational line items, Ent Fund balance schedule A \$72,916 amount from 2019-2020 is suspect.
  - Next steps with Beth Walker/Assessors office.
  - Deep dive and trending into all operational account details from the past 3 years. Data from FY22 and before is fluid and needs Sewer Comm deliberation.
- Grants – MVP possibility. Mallory submitted an Expression of Interest for the Mill St Siphon analysis consent order task. Status only, no vote.
  - Special Town Meeting (STM) – January 24, 2024. No vote needed.
    - Review of 1/9/2024 Select Board appearance. There is no perfect solution to this challenge of expansion. Appointment vs Vote. The Sewer Comm chose to have the 2 seats voted for based on the size and implication of this upgrade project. This is a Town problem with a massive price tag.
    - 2 New positions, Asst Super and Office Coordinator. Update on Student internship. Still on the radar to happen. No vote needed.
  - Special Town Meeting (STM) Determine Projects to use Ent Funds for Engineering:
    - Article 4 - Manhole Raising and Meadow St Manhole Rehab were chosen as the projects to go for State Revolving Fund Grants
    - Article 5 - Highland Ave Project – Sewer Department improvements coupled with Highway Dept Sidewalk & Culvert project, satisfies part of the Consent order. The Sewer Dept is reviewing quotes.
    - Article 6 - Expand Commission to 5 members – Background from KB.

**Motion to Approve: Karen Boudreau, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tom Walker, All approved.**

- Easements And Deeds, Plant– Article money – Status update from Isaac. Currently being worked on. No Vote needed.
- DEP communication. Water TA funding, weekly status report. The WaterTA funding does not move forward with resources our assistance. They send out pretty slides and movies to watch. They do not have resources that can aid and forward movement.
- Chlorine door replacement – update. Charles Abbott Carpentry was chosen to replace the door. The Quote came in at \$1830.00. The previous quote from another Vendor was \$3196 for the door, installation extra. Using research and competition, we were able to significantly reduce the price and use a local business. No vote needed.

#### **Billing:**

- Abatements - None
- Questions/Correspondence/Applications –
  - Reach out to Mr. Quinn to appear on 1/25/2024 at 5 pm.
  - A Charlemont business called the plant inquiring about moving to Northfield.

#### **Operator Report: Isaac Golding**

- **Status only** – no discussion/deliberations. The Plant is running well. Excessive storms are inflating the overtime budget.
- **Status with discussion/deliberation-** Known before the meeting.
- **Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chief Operator:**  
The plant is severely aged and under a Consent order. Regularly emergencies occur between posting of the agenda and the meeting.

#### **Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair/Commission:**

#### **Next Meeting Agenda: Limited items.**

**Next Meeting Date:** 1/25/2024 4:30 **Adjourned:** 5:30 PM

**Motion to Approve:** Karen Boudreau, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tom Walker, All approved.



**Approved:**

Signature: Karen Bandeen Date: 1/25/24

Signature: William V. V. V. Date: 1/25/24

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This is posted in compliance with Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.