
Town of Portland Water and Sewer Commission

March 13, 2023, Regular Meeting

Buck Foreman Community Center – Second Floor

265 Main Street, Portland, CT

Members Present: Jim Nursick, Jim Tripp, Dick Cote, Dave Kuzminski

Absent: Jim McCabe

Also Present: Ryan O’Halpin, Public Works Director; Board of Selectman: Ralph Zampano, Shaun Manning; Matthew Coronella, Owner, Portland Laundromat

1. **Call to Order**

Chair Jim Tripp called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Buck Foreman Community Center.

2. **Review & Approve Minutes of February 13, 2023, Regular Meeting**

Jim Tripp entertained motions to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2023, meeting. One correction was noted: Dick Cote was absent from the February meeting. A motion was made by Dave Kuzminski, seconded by Jim Nursick to approve the corrected minutes. Vote unanimous. Motion passed.

- ## 3. **Correspondence and Communication:**
- Jim Tripp stated that he received a text from a property owner (Matthew Cornella) of the Portland Laundromat regarding the leak at his business. Ryan stated that the owner is looking for assistance/relief on the sewer bill.

4. **Report from Director**

Ryan O’Halpin noted that MDC 6.67 million gallons from MDC and 10.5 million gallons from the well in February. The well gauge was at 8 feet at the end of February. The MDC bill for February was \$37,173, which is reflective of the new rate of \$3.80 dollars per CCF.

5. **Old Business**

a. Development of an Alternate Water Source: Ryan O’Halpin stated that GZA has conducted geophysical surveys at seven sites, including two at the RT 17 park, one at a location across from the park, one each at PGC, PGC West, 147 Ames Hollow, and Portland Sand and Gravel. Both surveys at the park looked good and indicated that they should be drilling for test wells. PGC and PGC West: the PGC West survey looked to be more promising of the two sites. The YMCA and the property across from the RT 17 park do not look good.

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b. Maintenance:

i. Water System: Ryan O’Halpin noted there were no water issues this past month. There were 245 demand letters and 245 past due notices sent to customers that are 90 days or more delinquent.

ii. Sewer System: Ryan O’Halpin stated that after the first pump failed on 2/13, the second pump at the Coe Avenue station had also failed on 2/21. A temporary pump with a bypass was set up the next day and two Godwin pumps were brought in from Xylem. The rental cost was approximately \$11,000. One of the original pumps was repaired and reinstalled on March 2.

- **ARP Project Update:** the town will hopefully move forward on the engineering for both the water and sewer projects with the Weston and Sampson proposal for the sewer project priced at \$54,100. The Haley Ward proposal for the water project is \$42,500. BOS Resolutions to be voted on at the 3/15/23 meeting.

c. Meter Updates, Budget Rates: Chairman Tripp noted that presentation by Sustainability Partners and discussion at last month’s meeting was productive. Dave Kuzminski stated that the choice is to purchase the same meters or switch to the newer technology. He believes the option to use Sustainability Partners to be more favorable. Shaun Manning, BOS, stated that the priority should be to get more resources to the Water and Sewer Department. He questioned if the meter issue should be considered after a new water source is determined, given the cost of the new meter technology. Ryan O’Halpin noted that preventative maintenance should be the number one priority, but finding money in the budget for additional labor is not currently feasible. Chairman Tripp agreed that more manpower is needed. He also noted that the new meter technology will ultimately reduce costs by eliminating the need to spend 24 weeks per year reading meters, which would free up that resource to perform maintenance tasks, and by using the leak detection capabilities to reduce lost water. He added that while lost water will be reduced long term, in the short term additional labor costs would be incurred to fix the leaks identified by the new meter technology. A lot of work has gone into keeping rates reasonable and the combined water and sewer debt has been decreased significantly. The new meter technology would eliminate the need for one person to handle the meter responsibilities.

6. **New Business:** Matthew Coronella, owner of the Portland Laundromat, stated that the plumber he hired found that the hot water line was leaking in two places. The copper line, which was underground, was replaced and brought up to code. The leak did not go into the sewer. The hot water heater now needs to be replaced. The requested relief credit was \$1,985 for the sewer bill overage caused by the leak. Mr. Coronella will provide a letter from his plumber indicating the specific of the leak repair. A motion was made by Dick Cote to, after evaluation by the commission, to recommend to the Board of Selectman to approve relief in the amount of \$1,985 and associated interest to Mr. Coronella, owner of the Portland Laundromat, for the sewer portion of the January 21, 2023, monthly bill. Further the board would authorize the Water and Sewer chairman to write the letter of recommendation on behalf of the commission. Second by Jim Nursick. Vote unanimous. Motion carried.

7. **Committee Reports/General Discussion:** None

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8. **Public Comment:** Mr. Coronella, owner of the Portland Laundromat, LLC, located at 137 Marlborough Street, stated that the figures to replace the meters differed slightly from what he originally saw. Jim Tripp stated that the figure of \$8.47 per meter per month would be if the Sustainability Partners installed and managed the meters, and that this option would not require a capital outlay to move forward. He also noted that it would be much cheaper overall if the town bought and installed the meters, but that would require a capital outlay of \$848,000 and current interest rates would make that prohibitive. Mr. Coronella noted that a monthly meter cost could be offset with a customer charge. Jim Tripp noted that could add \$100/year to a customer's bill, which could be a significant burden for some customers.

9. **Adjournment**

Dick Cote made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Dave Kuzminski. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Next Meeting: April 10, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

Jon D'Arpino
Board Clerk