

BOARD OF SEWER COMMISSIONERS

5 MILLBURY STREET

AUBURN, MASSACHUSETTS 01501

MEETING MINUTES

August 27, 2020

The Auburn Board of Sewer Commissioners held a regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, August 27, 2020 remotely via <https://global.gotomeeting.com>

ITEM ONE-CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Healey called the meeting to order at 4:36 p.m.

Those in attendance remotely were:

Board Members:

Mr. Thomas J. Healey, Chairperson

Mr. Mark E. LaPlante, Secretary

Department Staff:

Ms. Joanna Paquin, Sewer Superintendent

Mr. William Coyle, D.P.W. Director/Town Engineer

Mrs. JoAnne Donahue, Principal Clerk

ITEM TWO –APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. The Board reviewed the minutes of the June 11, 2020 regular meeting. Mr. LaPlante motioned to approve the minutes of the June 11, 2020 regular meeting. Mr. Healey seconded and it was so voted.

ITEM THREE– NEW BUSINESS

A. Drainlayer License Applications: The Board reviewed the drainlayer license application and supporting documents received from Stormy Construction, Inc. of Millbury, MA. Mr. LaPlante motioned to recommend issuance of a drainlayer license by the Board of Selectmen to Stormy Construction, Inc. of Millbury, MA. Mr. Healey seconded and it was so voted.

B. Fiscal Year 2019 Sewer Use Abatement Applications: The Board reviewed the abatement applications that were filed since the last meeting for the Fiscal Year 2019 Sewer Use bills. After a brief discussion, Mr. LaPlante motioned to approve the first and second installments of the Fiscal Year 2019 Sewer Use Abatement Applications in the amount of \$134.18 for each installment. Mr. Healey seconded and it was so voted.

C. FY2020 Sewer Use Billing Rates: Mr. Healey stated that in the past, Mr. Mitchell would provide information in regard to the upcoming budget issues and the assessment from the Upper Blackstone as

well as any other significant adjustments, and would provide the Board with spreadsheets showing several different scenarios of rate increases for them to review. Ms. Paquin advised the Board that she and Mr. Coyle had met with Edward Kazanovicz, the Chief Financial Officer/Assistant Town Manager, and that he had discussed with them the fact that \$463,000 was going to be put into retained earnings for FY2020, and that the balance in the Sewer retained earnings would be going from \$1.2 million to \$1.7 million. He felt that with that in mind, there would not be any reason to increase the rates for this year. Keeping in mind the COVID-19 situation, and the unstable economy for the sewer users, they felt it would be prudent to keep the rates as they are instead of raising them. Mr. Coyle also mentioned that last year there was a significant increase in the rates for the usage over 5,000 cubic feet (20%) which provided a substantial increase in revenue for FY2020. Ms. Paquin also mentioned that there was also a spending freeze imposed when the COVID-19 restrictions began, and that there was a lot of unexpended funds left in the sewer operating accounts. Mr. Healey requested that Ms. Paquin email them documentation to show the Board the figures that would substantiate keeping the rates the same. Ms. Paquin emailed the Board a copy of the Expenditures & Revenue Worksheet that Mr. Kazanovicz had provided at their meeting. The Board reviewed the worksheet which included expenditures and estimated revenue figures for the Sewer Division for FY2021. After a brief discussion, the Board agreed that with the current economic situation, keeping the rates the same as the previous year would be the prudent thing to do. Mr. LaPlante motioned to maintain the current sewer rates from fiscal year 2019 for the fiscal year 2020 sewer billing. Mr. Healey seconded and it was so voted.

ITEM FOUR – I & I SEWER REHABILITATION

A. Ms. Paquin informed the Board that the consultant (EST Associates) that performed the flow monitoring was having trouble retrieving the data from the equipment and, therefore, Environmental Partners Group had requested an extension from D.E.P. until the end of the month. She stated they should be getting the report shortly.

ITEM FIVE - U.B.W.P.A.D./UPPER BLACKSTONE CLEAN WATER

A. Mr. Coyle stated that there was not much to report, and that the flow reports did not show a lot of spikes, due to the low rainfall during the spring and summer up until recently. Mr. Healey asked if there were any upcoming capital projects at the Upper Blackstone plant. Mr. Coyle stated that he was not aware of any new projects coming up.

ITEM SIX - REVIEW OF BILL SCHEDULES

A. The Board reviewed the Sewer Division Bill Schedules that had been processed since the last meeting.

ITEM SEVEN - NEW SEWER CONNECTIONS

A. The Board reviewed the updated sewer connection list as of August 27, 2020.

ITEM EIGHT – SEWER DIVISION/D.P.W. WORK LOG

A. Ms. Paquin stated that they did not have an updated work log again this month because the Divisions had been pretty much working in their respective Divisions. Mr. Coyle mentioned that they would be having a meeting with the Town Manager next week to discuss filling the open position in the Sewer Division. The Board had a discussion regarding their concerns about the staff keeping up with the daily workload as well as the preventative work that the Division should be doing on a regular basis.

ITEM NINE - BUDGET REVIEW

A. The Board reviewed copies of the updated monthly budget report for Fiscal Year 2020 through June 30, 2020, which was prepared for their review. They also reviewed the monthly CIP/Article budget report as of June 30, 2020. Since the Fiscal 2020 year had not yet been closed out and there was minimal activity in Fiscal Year 2021, the first monthly budget reports for Fiscal Year 2021 will be provided at the next meeting.

ITEM TEN – CAPITAL PLANNING

A. Update on Current Projects:

Pinrock Road Bypass project – Ms. Paquin stated that the attorney for the Upper Blackstone was still working with the abutters on the easements on Rose Lane. She stated that one resident was not willing to agree to the easement and that was what was causing the delay. She said that all of the easements needed to be finalized before the project can move forward. Mr. Coyle stated that they would reach out directly to the attorney for the Upper Blackstone to see how soon the issues would be able to be resolved.

Bancroft Street Bridge Sewer Line Replacement – Ms. Paquin stated that the project is currently in Mass DOT’s hands. The engineering consultant had revised and resubmitted the design plans, and once those were approved they would be able to go out to bid. Mr. Coyle also stated that they were still hoping to start the project this year, but would most likely not be able to work within Route 20 until next year.

ITEM ELEVEN – OLD BUSINESS

A. Blaker Street 40B Development Project: Ms. Paquin informed the Board that the Zoning Board of Appeals was scheduled to meet on September 17th with Eastland Partners, and that they expect to have a report back from Onsite Engineering in regard to the pump station adequacy evaluation by the 14th of September. Representatives from the Auburn Water District and the Sewer Division have been requested to attend the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting.

B. I&I Fees: Ms. Paquin informed the Board that she had reached out to several towns but was still waiting to hear back from some of them. She received responses from Millbury and Shrewsbury that they do charge I&I fees, but she is waiting to get more information to compare the connection fees and I&I fees being charged. Mr. Healey stated that should also look at what the criteria is for charging the I&I fees.

ITEM TWELVE – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

A. The next regular meeting was tentatively scheduled for Thursday, September 24, 2020 at 4:30 p.m.

ITEM THIRTEEN – ADJOURNMENT

A. The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

DOCUMENTS:

The following documents were part of the Board of Sewer Commissioner's Meeting on August 27, 2020, and are maintained in the Sewer Division office:

- Agenda
- Minutes of the June 11, 2020 Regular Meeting
- FY2019 Sewer Use Abatement applications received through August 27, 2020
- Expenditures & Revenue Worksheet for Sewer Division for FY2021
- Copies of Bill Schedules dated June 22, July 16, August 3, August 17, and August 18, 2020
- Updated Sewer Connection List as of August 27, 2020
- Monthly Departmental Budget Report as of June 30, 2020
- Monthly CIP/Article Budget Report as of June 30, 2020