

Town Government Study Committee Minutes
March 3, 2011

Present: Bob Ward, Ken Stevens, Mary O'Donnell, Jean Naumann, Dick Dennehy, Paul Tura, Keith Elder, Wendell Chamberlain. Absent: Fran Hoeg.

In lieu of Secretary Hoeg, who was absent, Wendell Chamberlain was designated to take the minutes.

Meeting convened at 7:05 p.m. with a quorum present.

On motion from Mr. Tura and seconded by Mr. Ward, the vote was unanimous to accept the minutes from the last meeting will be suspended until the next meeting.

The meeting then proceeded to the interview and discussions with the Town's Sewer Department. Present from the Sewer Department were: Superintendent and Chief Operator Ken Vandal and Commissioners Elaine Fiore, Peter Cobb and Thom Taylor.

Chairman Fiore gave a description of the overall makeup of Personnel, Budget, the Enterprise Fund, rate structures and other revenue sources. She also discussed the new sewer expansions and the reconfiguration of the transfer station to accommodate the new leaching fields.

Ms. Fiore with input from Supt. Vandal explained the elements of Service Sharing within the Water, Sewer and Highway Triad, mainly in the areas of clerical, loaning equipment, and snow plowing. Laborers are not shared because of the level of technical standards of expertise and licensure requirements for the sewer worker. The overall view is that the three departments work well together with Department Heads in frequent contact with each other over planning and coordination. They meet at least twice yearly.

With respect to engineering: sewer consults with CDM (Camp Dresser McKee) with little cost to the town. The Commission felt the relationship with CDM was excellent.

Ms. Fiore: on rating Commission and Sewer Performance from 1 – 5

Coordination with other departments 5

Communication 3 (always room for improvement specifically in municipal
lien processing)

Adequate resources provided by town 4

Questions from the TGSC:

Keith Elder: How many customers and how is it billed?

Elaine Fiore: 1500 customers. Betterments show on Real Estate Tax Bill and Sewer
Charge Rates on the Water Bill

Paul Tura: How much capacity will there be after the Phase III expansion?

Elaine Fiore: Currently at 50,000 GPD to 10,000 to 15,000 GPD with Phase III
expansion.

Mary O'Donnell: Given the waiting list of customers, will the cost of the expansion be covered by future generated revenues?

Elaine Fiore: Yes, Phase I and II covered the environmentally sensitive areas. Phase III will make added revenue for the town by the increase capacity for septage haulers and businesses.

Dick Dennehy: Why isn't there inter-use of manpower within the public works departments? Can one person hold multiple licenses and work for more than one department?

Supt.: Primarily due to the state requirements for jobs requiring multiple licensing around the plant. Grading systems require Grade 5 minimum and you are dealing with hazardous waste. There is a higher degree of technical expertise needed in running the sewer plant. State makes suggestions and uses a grading system. DEP has no grading system. The Superintendent said he used to have a Level 3 Water License but it has elapsed.

Wendell Chamberlain: Have you addressed the concerns Department of Revenue had in their report to the town in 2010, specifically Recommendation 10 addressing Sewer Betterment, Recommendation 25 addressing Prospective Rate Setting Process, Recommendation 26 addressing evaluating future capital needs and surplus position?

Supt.: Betterment problem, with respect to MUNIS calculation and recording, is being addressed through more clerical staff to rectify the problem. The other two are works in progress

At approximately 8:00 p.m. Commissioner Fiore left the meeting at this time to attend Finance Committee duties.

Dick Dennehy: Since CDM own their own plans and has a past history of making use of their past projects, are we (the Town) locked into their exclusive overall concepts on sewer plans and management?

Supt: Yes, once you invest in that state of the art, you are pretty much committed to that technology.

Paul Tura: Are we (the Town) required by the state to have a resident engineer in the Department?

Supt.: Only on expansion construction. Superintendent is responsible for daily testing and monitoring day to day supervision. As chief operator – responsible for signing discharge permits.

Bob Ward: If MUNIS worked properly on the Betterments Process, couldn't we eliminate that ½ clerical employee? Fixing mistakes generates revenue.

Supt.: Problems in MUNIS between departments on Betterments—needs to be fixed!

Ken Stevens: What is the breakdown of Betterment amortization?

Supt.: 30 year payment. Oldest 2001 from Phase I. Newer Phase II 2005

Keith Elder: what about foreclosures?

Supt.: Need for better communication in tracking payoffs of Betterments. It is a complicated process.

Ken Stevens: On a \$10,000 betterment – where did it go – what is the chain?

Supt.: Paid in full or amortized over 30 years interest free. Shows up on the tax bill.

Mary O'Donnell: Are there additives to process or breakdown wastes faster?

Supt.: We use SBR, Sequential Batch Reactor, Bio-Mag increase treatment. We are tied to existing technology. Newer technology has more moving parts. Likes old school technologies. Worried about permitting requirements.

Keith Elder: How is your relation with the Town Administrator on Budgeting and Collective Bargaining—union negotiations?

Supt.: I do the budget. Work will with the Town Administrator and Finance Committee attending meetings. Has not input in the collective bargaining or union negotiations.

Keith Elder: do you coordinate and communicate well with water and highway department on equipment sharing.

Supt.: Very well especially on common interest in project planning and emergency or storm related circumstances.

Wendell Chamberlain: On emerging technologies such as composting, co-generation of energy through methane extraction and installing Rotary Press to reduce handling fees by reducing sludge to a solid component?

Supt.: Too expensive.

Bob Ward: Due to environmental concerns of bordering towns not sewerred, doesn't that concern motivate you to consider regional solutions.

Supt.: Always have concerns. But sewer system not large enough to offer regional help.

Paul Tura: Could the town install dual meters in tandem with the water department to measure water use not entering the sewer system calculation?

Supt.: Not practical due to ERU system of one betterment per single family – 330 GPD of estimated waste water production.

Dick Dennehy: How does that cover the costs of operation?

Supt.: 1500 rate payers = \$1 million – surplus from septage haulers covers ¼ of operating budget. Discussed breakdown of distribution of ERU's in commercial and residential based on Title V.

Paul Tura and Bob Ward: You mean that rate payers still have to cover operating costs?

Supt.: Yes.

Mary O'Donnell: People who conserve should get credit.

Ken Stevens: Can we establish base rates for certain accounts and have higher rates for more usage?

Supt.: Water Department has jurisdiction over meters. Problem is: sewerage discharge data is unknown.

Paul Tura: Has the town gotten good value out of the 10 year old system?

Supt.: Yes. But the motors are getting tired and we will need more money in reserve for repairs and maintenance.

8:30 p.m. Dick Dennehy had to leave the meeting.

Mary O'Donnell: Would you design a new system if you had to start over, using new technologies?

Supt.: It is cost effective to stay with the same type of system. I would add a new tank to get added septage hauler revenue.

Keith Elder: Building maintenance – do you (laborers and operators) do the work or contract out?

Supt.: We do our own plant maintenance.

Keith Elder: What do you want that would make things better?
Supt.: Another or 3rd SBR.

Unfinished Business:

Keith Elder:

1. No town or boards scheduled for interviews at the next meeting
2. need for planning on upcoming town meeting presentation for TGSC article which comes up late
3. DOR – home rule petition?
4. Brief mention of lawsuit on the Water Dept. of Abington/Rockland vs. Hingham developer pointing to the need for regionalization.
5. Tech committee having questions on school committee giving surplus equipment to the town
6. Need for updating and collating information on our “discoveries” for report.
7. Selectmen have made 4 policy articles changes and have asked TGSC to support info or opinions.

Next meeting: 3/17/2011

9:10 p.m. Paul Tura made a motion, seconded by Ken Stevens to adjourn the meeting.
Unanimously approved.