

# WATER AND SEWER COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, August 21, 2014

## Water & Sewer Department Office

### 1. Call to Order & Freedom of Information Requirements

Freedom of Information requirements having been met, the meeting was called to order at 8:58 AM.

Those present were: Committee Members Susan Middaugh (Chair), Chauncey Clark and Jerry Kaynard; Administrators Greg Gress and Andy Benke, and Residents Mark Tanenbaum and Mark Wine.

### 2. Consideration of W&S Bill Appeals

Mark Tanenbaum, 406 Station 12, requested relief for the large water bill that resulted from an undetected leak in a separately metered, outdoor waterline to a dock (an “irrigation” line). No sewer charges are charged to this water-only line. The specific situation was presented by staff and by Mr. Tanenbaum and discussed by the Committee. According to Staff, since the Town is contractually obligated to pay CWS for metered water, whether this water is used for its intended purpose or simply leaks, this cost has to be covered. If the customer does not pay, the cost is essentially borne by the rest of Island residents. Accordingly, the Town ordinance does not provide for appeal of charges to irrigation lines.

**MOTION** to deny the appeal based on Town ordinance and staff recommendation was made by Chauncey Clark, seconded by Susan Middaugh and passed 2 to 1 with Jerry Kaynard dissenting.

Mark Wine, 3004 Brownell Ave, requested relief for the sewer portion of a large W&S bill that resulted in an undetected leak in an outdoor hose operating a motion-activated sprinkler intended to scare away wildlife contaminating collection ponds feeding a swimming pool. The hose/sprinkler was damaged in a winter freeze and was not repaired for some time due to the difficult location of the sprinkle and then lack of follow-through on a request by Mr. Wine that his yard service check and correct this problem. Discussion focused on the fact that Mr. Wine is not contesting the Water portion of his bill, recognizing that the Town has to pay CWS for this water. Also, since the leaked water did not enter the Town sewer lines, there was no cost to the Town – or other Island residents – for sewer treatment for the leaked water.

**MOTION** to approve the request for relief from the sewer portion of the bill, above the 6-month average for sewer service, was made by Jerry Kaynard, seconded by Chauncey Clark, and approved unanimously.

### **3. Review of W&S billing procedure regarding late fees & billing procedures**

Victor Genez, 913 Osceola Avenue, requested that the Committee review the timing for assessing late fees. Accordingly, two relevant aspects were discussed in detail.

One, is the procedure for determining when a bill is “late” in case of a bank holiday that delays payment, for example, when the 15<sup>th</sup> falls on a Monday holiday. Although our ordinance reads that the bill is due “no later than” the 15, our procedure is to shift this due date to the next business day. In addition, bills are not processed for late fees (and payment accepted) until midafternoon on the 16<sup>th</sup> (or next business day in case of holiday).

The second, is the suggestion by Mr. Genez that bills that are postmarked by the 15<sup>th</sup> not be considered “late” regardless of when received. The problem is that envelopes often arrive with no postmarked date, for example, those “not requiring postage”. In addition, firms that postmark their own mail (the Town does this) may not mail the item on that date. A final problem is that individuals now use a variety of bill paying services and a request to pay the water bill on the 15<sup>th</sup> may not be paid for several days depending on the method that service uses.

The consensus of the Committee and Staff was that it had been useful to review the procedures, but that there is ample time between when the bill is sent out (first of the month) and the due date (two weeks later) to avoid late fees. An individual who is having problems may need to adjust the date for automated or 3<sup>rd</sup> party payment.

Jerry Kaynard pointed out another issue related to W&S billing that can be especially problematical with rental property. If a renter leaves early in a month and has the water turned off, the bill includes the full base sewer charge. If a new renter has the water turned back on later in the month, a full base sewer change is incurred. If the owner of the rental property asks to have the water turned on for cleaning purposes between renters, there could theoretically be a third base sewer charge assessed. Greg Gress will look into the current procedures and clarify the current process and recommend any needed changes.

### **4. Discussion with CWS regarding contracted water use**

A brief report was made by Susan Middaugh to the Committee on a meeting with CWS representatives on Wednesday, August 20, regarding contract changes that have been under discussion for the past year. The focus was on 1) updating contract wording; 2) reducing the volume of water the Town is obligated to purchase to an amount that is closer to our actual water use; and 3) reducing the percentage of CWS capital costs that

the Town is charged in accordance with the proposed reduction in water volume. Discussions went well. CWS has offered to model the adjustments to Town costs due to new water volumes and will provide these cost data upon a written request from the Town. Andy Benke will provide this written request. Once these data are in hand, the Town can consider available options.

**5. Insurance for homeowner for laterals on private property**

This item under Pending Committee Topics (see below) was brought up for brief discussion to see if it would be a good idea to consider in detail, given that Mt. Pleasant is planning such an insurance program. It was discussed that CWS also recently started an insurance program. However, the CWS program is offered entirely through a third party, that pays a fee to CWS for the right to offer insurance to CWS customers while the Mt. Pleasant program will be carried out in-House. These are very different business models. The consensus was to follow these developments for the coming year and then consider this topic in some depth.

**6. The meeting adjourned at 10:20 AM on a MOTION by Jerry Kaynard, seconded by Chauncey Clark, and passed unanimously.**

**Pending Water & Sewer Committee Topics:**

The following are other current or upcoming items:

- a) Drying bed improvements
- b) Policy for I&I due to laterals on private property
- c) Insurance for homeowner for laterals on private property