

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
May 9, 2016

At the Selectmen's Meeting held on Monday, May 9, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. the following people were in attendance: Mark Lufkin, Wendy Hersom, and Peter Corey.

The Whitefield Board of Selectmen called the Public Hearing to Order at 6:30 p.m. to review the proposed rate increase for Town Water & Sewer. There were approximately 16 people in attendance. Chairperson Wendy Hersom explained that the rate structure incorporates both a minimum fee for connection to the town water and sewer based on meter size as well as a fee for the volume of usage. There was a packet of information that was handed out that included a graph showing the town rates compared with the state rates. Wendy said on the graph the state average is not the benchmark. There are a couple of other graphs and water rate surveys and where we compare with other towns in the state for water and sewer. We have been having issues with the water and sewer systems, and the sewer system has jumped ahead of the water system in terms of priority. The Board met with the EPA and DES the Friday before town meeting because the EPA has expressed concerns about our discharge system. We are permitted each year for discharge into the John's River. We were told at the meeting that our sewer user rates are too low. We are about to enter into an Administrative Order with the EPA as they want to see the Town do something to address this issue. They want us to undertake a study and we were given an extension until after next year's town meeting. We don't have the funding at this time to do this. We don't qualify for a lot of grant funding as our rates are too low. Steve Lafrance had said that it is not eminent that we change our rates now, and it was made pretty clear to the Board at our meeting with the EPA that we need to raise our rates. Steve was not at that meeting. We have to hire an engineer to evaluate the current Wastewater Treatment Facility treatment system including operation and maintenance practices by May, 2017. They have 6 months to get the study done. Part of the agreement when we met with them was we were going to be addressing the rate issue. If we can get the rates to where they should be, it may help us with funding when we actually have to do the project.

Our rates are very low compared to the rest of the state, well below the average and that is what triggers us not being eligible for water and sewer rate increases. If we are not eligible for grants, then we will have to pay for the entire cost of the project. Either way the rates will go up. We need to get in line with other towns in the state. We don't know what the costs will be for these upgrades. If we keep the rates low, then the whole project cost would be borne by the Town. Either way we are going to pay for it, and with an increase in the rates it will help us qualify for some grant funds.

Edie Worcester asked if we need to have a bigger treatment plant? Wendy said that the affluent limits are too high. The system we use is an outdated system. We are trying to find ways to get out of the river. The system doesn't necessarily have to be bigger. The engineering study will determine that. Edie said there are some projects coming on line that could impact this as well. Wendy said either way we have to do it. The life expectancy of the current system was 20 years, and we have gone well beyond that. Does the Town try to project what may be coming down the line? Wendy said that is why the engineers are involved. Edie asked who would pay for this project? Wendy said it is undetermined at this time. Wendy said the way the bills work

now you pay by usage. It is undetermined if this project will be put on the tax base or the users. Wendy said that is unknown at this point in time. Daniel Zajic asked about the base fee increasing? Wendy said there is a base meter fee and that is not changing.

Sondra Brekke thought the engineer said at the last meeting it was illegal to charge the tax base for the upgrades. Wendy thought he said that it was for some grant requirements and assurances.

Wendy said we have been increasing the water/sewer rates on a yearly basis, but this increase has been the most significant increase. Wendy said we have been trying to make it not too painful on the users, but we are not keeping up with the state increases.

This is for both the water/sewer users. Sara Daley asked what the issues were with water. Wendy said we are losing water in the system, and this is something the state wants us to address. It is an older system, we have had some recent water line breaks, etc.

Marcia Lombardi asked how much fluoride is in the water, and Bill Thompson replied that we don't put fluoride in the water.

The Public Hearing closed at 6:50 p.m.

The Board reviewed the revised dates for the Administrative Order, which Mr. Pincumbe said were not unreasonable. Item #1 – Will remain at 12 months; Item #2 will remain at 18 months; Item #3 will change to within 30 months instead of 24 months; Item #4 will change from 30 months to 36 months, as December is not a good time to start construction, and Item #5 will be 54 months, Fall of 2020. Judy will contact Mr. Pincumbe and let him know to go ahead and make these changes.

Wendy said there is a Northern Pass Public Hearing at the Mt. View Grand on May 19th at 6 p.m. This is a public hearing with the Site Evaluation Committee, which is one of the two additional public hearings they added to the schedule because the initial round of hearings were held before the Applicants submitted all of the additional information required under the new SEC rules. This is primarily for public input on the proposed project. It does not take the place of formal testimony the interveners will eventually submit. Katie Lombardi said it is very effective if the Selectmen could attend the meeting that night and read the letter they had submitted. Wendy and Peter both have other commitments that night. Mark might be able to attend the meeting at the Mt. View Grand. Kate asked if the Board could delegate someone at the meeting. Katie said she feels someone should attend on behalf of the Town.

Sondra Brekke said if it is a meeting with Northern Pass people, there was a meeting for the interveners with the SEC recently in Lincoln, which she attended, that they prefer you not reiterate the information you have already submitted. If you have new information, that is what they want. Katie said people are commenting on this supplement and have add information to it. Katie said we would like the line buried in Town.

Sondra Brekke has a question on the Northern Pass. Les Otten has been going to a lot of towns to get them to change their minds on Northern Pass. The Town of Whitefield has not been approached. The Town is an intervener in the process.

Peter said we have to meet with our town attorney and come up with factual information for the intervener status. We have not formulated the exact context. Katie said that Whitefield has the highest impact with the most above ground lines. Marcia Lombard said we have a beautiful point of view.

Sondra said there are people who are interveners who are in favor of the Northern Pass. Wendy said that we want to get the best possible result with Northern Pass and we want to pick and choose areas of town where it should be buried. Many residents in attendance thought we need to have it buried all throughout the town. The Town is asking to have it buried. Katie said the Town should be an intervener with the position of having it buried all throughout Town. It is not an issue of burying here it and not there. The more people who will say it, they may listen. Peter said we need very specific, almost as a testimonial, of why we want it buried so we can make that presentation at the SEC with the other towns.

If Les Otten came here, would it change our position? The Board said no, we would not.

Edie has a letter from the Society of Protection of NH Forests, which the Society has sent around and basically Les Otten is saying if Northern Pass doesn't go through either is the Balsam Development. She hopes the Board is not swayed.

Katie said they had over 500 signatures saying they want it underground, and it was very easy to get those signatures.

The Board would like more time to read the minutes of the April 25th meeting. Approval of the minutes will be placed on the agenda for the May 23rd meeting.

A motion was made by Wendy Hersom, seconded by Mark Lufkin, and unanimously approved at 7:30 p.m. to enter in to non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(c), matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of this board, unless such person requests an open meeting; and RSA 91-A:3, II(d), consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

