

Wilton Sewer Commission Minutes – DRAFT/APPROVED 4/18/2013
March 21, 2013 at 6:30 PM
Town Hall Courtroom

Wilton Sewer Commission met in the Town Hall Courtroom for its regular monthly meeting. Present were Commissioners Jim Tuttle, John Jowders and Tom Schultz; Clerk Joanna K. Eckstrom. Opening of the meeting was slightly delayed while AARP Tax Assistance finished their work. Chairman Jim Tuttle called the meeting to order at 6:45 PM.

Agenda:

- **Review and approve minutes of 1-24-13**
It was noted that these minutes were unanimously approved at the February 28th joint meeting of the water and sewer commissioners. (Voting ‘yes’ to approve these minutes on 2/28 were water and sewer commissioners Jim Tuttle and Tom Schultz and water commissioner Dan Hastings.) John hadn’t realized that the 1/24 minutes had been approved however, as they were fine as written, he confirmed his approval tonight.

In response to Joanna’s question about the minutes of the February 28 meeting, the commissioners agreed that, because no sewer business was discussed or voted upon, approval of those minutes would be done by the water commission at its 3/28 meeting.
- **Review and approve payables**
Jim presented Fieldstone’s bill for charges to date on the Maple Street project - \$2,183. John thought this to be a lot of money but it was explained that this bill includes labor, engineering, camera-work, test-borings, and plans that were available for Town Meeting. The bill was approved for payment (contracted services).
- **Discuss Maple St. project (Fieldstone) bids, management (Carl inspector on site)**
Commissioners reviewed Fieldstone’s estimate for Bid Document Preparation services - \$4500. Tom asked if other proposals are being sought for this. No, because the proposal is based on Fieldstone’s plans. John asked what is budgeted for this ... the \$4500 would come out of ‘contracted services’ and replaced when the bond takes effect. Jim suggested 4-6 weeks for Fieldstone to get bids together so that work does not impact school traffic, etc. Carl Somero will be on-site to inspect/oversee work. John’s motion, seconded by Tom, to award Fieldstone (contract) for Bid Document Preparation Services - \$4500 - was unanimously approved.
- **Discuss next step/timeline for sewer bond**
Jim was unable to get on Selectmen’s 3/18 agenda to discuss the bond. He is scheduled for 3/25.
- **Abatements / Adjustments / Accounts Receivable**
At a recent Selectmen’s meeting, Jim was asked by Jerry Greene, SUMA Realty - Alsfeld Tax Service, for an abatement of interest on 7 sewer bills going back to 2011. Jim said he can’t make decision alone; needs to be addressed by all commissioners. Tom got clarification from Jane: agreements made on real estate taxes; water bills are paid but, currently, nothing paid on sewer bills. Jerry wants to pay only \$1038. Commissioners agreed that the Clerk should ask the parties to come to the next sewer meeting to explain their request in person.

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A request has been made by Wassell / NTV LLC for property across from Intervale Machine to correct/abate the sewer bills. For many months, there has been no water or sewer. Sewer commissioners agreed that owner should only be responsible for \$143 or \$24 for current bill (due 3/22) and \$119 on previous bills. Tax Collector will be apprised of this.

Jim addressed issues at 17 Pleasant Street. Property originally owned by Bill Jordan and Linda Bravo; foreclosed – original bank sold mortgage to new bank in Colorado. Eric Hussey has been living there (perhaps since May or June last year; he is being evicted on April 23, 2013. He is expected to pay his water bill (\$74) by 3/22 but all sewer bills remain outstanding. Jim suggests lien on property for unpaid sewer bills if not brought up to date by 3/22 to protect sewer department interest (in any pending sale to another bank or new owner). Tax Collector will be apprised to execute a lien for sewer bills that remain unpaid after 3/22.

- **Sacred Heart Church (connection to system time limit and connection fee)**
Jim spoke with Father Bill in Jaffrey. Diocese is getting prices to connect to sewer line.

It was noted that the original letter to Diocese mistakenly said sewage from church was going into underground brook. Waste is actually going into septic system (and dry well); no one knows when, if septic tank has ever been pumped.

As to whether a property owner is required to connect to town sewer if available - yes. (When sewer line went in on Robbins Road, i.e., residents were required to connect to the system.)

John moved, Tom seconded that the Clerk send a revised letter (correcting discharge from underground brook to septic system), citing legal requirement to connect to town sewer line, and give them 60 days in which to respond with their plans; unanimously approved.

- **Pump Station – highway labor, cost, job description**
Pump station swipe logs show that not enough time is being spent on specific tasks at pump station. For example, process for ensuring air quality in confined spaces should take at least 20 minutes, but swipes show 5 minutes. Sewer Department pays highway department for this labor. Swipe logs and the job description were distributed to commissioners. On a motion by Tom, seconded by John, Steve Elliott, Road Agent (Director of Public Works) will be asked to come to next Sewer Commission to discuss pump station work. Unanimously approved. A copy of the Job Description will be given to Steve ahead of the meeting. Clerk to follow up on this.
- **Sewer rate increases (continued from Feb. meeting) late fee, connection fee, rate per gallon, quarterly fee**
Clerk noted that at 2/28 meeting (last paragraph in minutes), suggestion for sewer connection fee was made however, no action was taken.
Re – rate increases – John has been thinking about this a lot. Tom said that on January 17, three scenarios were suggested - \$40 - \$60 - \$160 increase to flat rate. Effective rate would be \$260, \$280 or \$380 per year. No vote or action had been taken on any scenario.

93 Tom asked how the department ended up in 2012. Can the commissioners justify the rate
94 increases? The Town Report was looked at – there is ‘negative’ \$17,995 cash on hand for sewer.
95 This could be due to the fourth quarter not being billed until February 2013. The town report
96 summaries were unclear. Joanna noted that money remitted to Treasurer (from Sewer) total
97 approximately \$133,050. Add in the \$43K from the billing that went out in February 2013, you
98 end up with approx. \$176K. Per Town report page 43, sewer charges & collections was
99 \$172,121.28 (from users fees, bills?)

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101 After much discussion about increasing flat rate fee and adding usage, Tom asked that a motion
102 be made. Jim moved, John seconded to increase the flat rate by \$40 making the annual fee \$260.
103 Jim and John voted yes; Tom – no; motion carried.

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105 Late fee – consensus that customers don’t take a \$5 late fee seriously. Jim said there’s a lot of
106 paperwork is generated on sewer late fees. Tom doesn’t feel it’s worth changing a \$5 late fee.
107 He said he’s voting no on any increases. Joanna noted that several years ago, late charges were
108 calculated at 12%, minimum \$5. Currently, users are charged a \$5 late fee and the 12%.

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110 Various options (and a sample bill – late since August 2012) were looked at; neither Tom nor
111 John wanted to increase the late fee; commissioners consensus was to leave the late fee as is.

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113 **Re: Connection fee (charged to new customers) – Milford fee \$1026. Jim moved, John seconded**
114 **to increase connection fee from \$800 to \$900. Jim and John voted yes; Tom no; motion carried.**

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116 Re: Rate per gallon for commercial sewer customers. At present, there is only one commercial
117 customer – Monadnock Spring Water. They are currently being charged for two sewer units at
118 \$220 each and should be charged \$2.00 per 1000 gallons waste (determined by water meter).
119 Jim said Milford charges commercial customers well in excess of this. Grey water from
120 Monadnock is costing the Sewer department that isn’t covered by the \$2 / 1000 gallon charge.
121 He suggested going to \$4 or \$6 per 1000 gallons however, commissioners were generally
122 uncomfortable with a usage increase without being able to confirm current situation. Water
123 meter at Monadnock may be broken – so there’s no way to confirm usage. Further discussion
124 deferred until April.

- 125
126 • Sewer receivables (due 3-22 statements) requests for corrections / abatements as
127 provided by collector and Paper work for adjustments/ abatements should be provided
128 by collector before each monthly meeting.
129 A motion by Jim, seconded by John to have collector make this information available by the start
130 of each meeting was unanimously approved.
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132 • Any other business to come before the board

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134 Jim noted that Dan Jowders had been double billed for a sewer unit at his Maple Street Property.
135 The commissioners agreed that a correction is in order.

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137 Energy Generation (from 2/28/13) Tom has been exploring alternatives to PSNH for energy
138 generation. There are several companies that offer greatly reduced rates that could result in an
139 annual savings of \$3500 per year. Most alternate companies require a one-year contract, penalty
140 if broken before the year’s up. But, still, it’s worth it, considering the savings. Bills continue to
141 be rendered by PSNH; the transfer is seamless.

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John Shepardson, Building Inspector, is researching this on behalf of all town departments; consensus that he include Sewer department.

John said he's had second thoughts about increasing the flat rate, especially in light of the action he intends to take. He asked if it's possible to change his vote. Tom said he voted no so it would be self-serving on his part so he wouldn't move an action.

Jim asked if the intent was to revisit the decision, change his vote to no and leave the flat rate as is. John said Yes, that's his intent.

On a motion by John, seconded by Tom, the commissioners unanimously agreed to reconsider the flat rate increase.

On a motion by John, seconded by Tom, the commissioners agreed unanimously to vacate their previous decision and leave the flat rate at \$220 per year.

John read the following letter into the record:

3/21/2013

Board of Selectmen

Board of Sewer Commissioners

It is my wish to vacate my position as Sewer Commissioner for the Wilton Sewer Department.

I have held this position for the past two years and recently signed on for another term. At that time, I was somewhat reluctant to have my name placed on the ballot, but thought that the continuity between board members seemed to be moving in a more positive direction than had in the past two years.

There seems to be a personality conflict with members of the board, which is perceived to be unprofessional. During the campaign for the recent election of town officials, it became apparent to me that less than desirable actions were conducted by a board member to undermine the integrity of another. I find this type of behavior to be unethical and in poor judgment. Therefore, I no longer wish to be a member of this board.

Respectfully submitted,

John Jowders

John apologized about things having gotten to this but said he was very disappointed sitting here at the last meeting and doesn't want to go through this anymore. He doesn't see it changing but only getting worse.

191 Jim read the following letter into the record:

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193 *March 21, 2013*

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195 *Wilton Sewer Commission*

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197 *To Whom It May Concern:*

198

199 *I believe it is in the best interest of the Town of Wilton that I resign my position as Sewer*
200 *Commissioner effective at the close of the monthly meeting of the Sewer Commissioners on*
201 *March 21, 2013.*

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203 *The assassination of my character and integrity by Commissioner (Tom) Schultz in the recent*
204 *election makes it impossible for us to work together.*

205

206 *Respectfully,*

207

208 *James A Tuttle*

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210 *CC: Selectmen, Town of Wilton, NH*

211 *The Milford Cabinet*

212 *The Monadnock Ledger*

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214 Tom made copies of both letters and left the meeting.

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216 There being no other business, the meeting was officially closed at 8:50 PM.

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218 Respectfully submitted,

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220 Joanna K. Eckstrom

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222 Transcribed March 22, 2013

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