

# BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

## VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES

September 1, 2020

7:00 P.M.

### CHERRY VALLEY & ROCHDALE WATER DISTRICT

- I. CALL TO ORDER - The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bergin @ 7: 00 P.M.

The following were in attendance:

Kevin Bergin, Chairman

unknown # of Subscribers

Arthur Paquette - LCAC

Arthur E.J. Levesque, Commissioner

Benjamin Morris, Superintendent

Robert H. Lemieux, Sr., Commissioner

Jennifer Wood, Treasurer

Cheryl Balkus, Clerk

- II. **District Member Forum** – Per Chairman Bergin it has been referenced in the past in social media regarding our rates. There is the sewer and water side and it is being blurred together. A recap for the water rate is that there have been 3 rate reductions in the last two fiscal years, and they have not increased. There has been chatter of consumption. Currently per person gallons per day 33 gallons per person, additionally 70% of the District has a monthly water bill under \$100.00.
- If you are a 2-person household 66 gpd (gallons per day) is 1,980 gallons or 265.7 cubic feet /month @ the current rate is \$30.92 plus the \$25.00 minimum = \$55.92  
4-person household 132 gpd = 3,960 gal or 531.54 c.f. \$61.87 + 25.00 = \$86.87  
5-person household 165 gpd = 4,950 gallons or 664.42 c.f. \$77.34 + \$25.00 = \$102.34  
6-person household 198 gal per day = 5,940 gallons or 797.32 c.f. \$92.81 + \$25.00 = \$117.81 per month.
- A suggestion is to lower usage is upgrading fixtures such as toilets. Home Depot has the ultra-low flow toilets that uses about 1 gallon per flush as opposed as 6 or 7 gallons. If in the market for new dishwashers, they use approximately four gallons per entire load as opposed to hand washing per statistics can use 30-40 gallons. Front load washers are very water stingy and range between 20-30 gallons per load as opposed to top loader. Not saying to run out and buy one but consider without changing your habits. There are a lot of appliances out there that can save water. He is aware that there are people out with signs and legislative officials are aware and wanted to make aware that the Town Wide Study is under way. He knows sewer rates increased and this Board does not have control of the sewer side. We do bill for the sewer on behalf of an intermunicipal agreement with them. We do hear & understand you and are trying to keep our budget as tight as possible so we can continue as efficiently as we can, so we do not have to raise rates and lower our operating costs. The goal is to hopefully lower the water rates and working on and trying to resolve that. Those are some of the observations and it may not be what everyone would like to

hear but we are working on this and try to resolve and find a solution for and will take a little time.

Subscriber Gabriel Tompkins 2 Chesnar Dr. yesterday there was a Facebook post with a ratepayer that most likely has a water leak with a hefty bill. Noticed is water bills are billed a month behind so by the time you get that giant bill another month has passed and if there some policy to potentially alert them if there is a leak and prevent multiple giant bills.

Per Superintendent Morris the new metering software we are putting in place gives the ability to notify the customer on a daily basis and gives the customer a portal to receive alerts to let you know if you have a leak or a freezing temperature. We get the alert & you also receive the alert. Cheryl is very good in monitoring by logging in daily to catch if there are significant leaks and notify the customer. Recently we had a customer who had a leak of 200 gallons per hour. We went to the property and found that the homeowner was not home, spoke with the neighbor who was able to contact the owner and stop the leak. If the Subscriber does not have this type of the meter in the house, we would not know about this until after the meter is being read.

Suggestions is that if you would like to have this type of meter in the home to contact the office for an appointment to have the new style meter installed and there is no charge for the new meter. It is a very useful tool for the homeowner and for us to alert the customer sooner than the older style of meters. Per Commissioner Lemieux endorses the new meters and software and replacement of low flow toilets as it is a good savings.

Per Peter Cusolito a big believer in water conservation but recommended about \$1,200 of upgrades not including installation. It is good public service but a lot of out lay and recognizes rate reduction but higher than your average District and wanted to keep that perspective. Per Chairman Bergin agreed was not a suggestion to not go out but if in the market suggesting least expensive. He does recognize associated costs but possible to make one of the recommended changes to make a significant impact on a bill.

Per Subscriber Gabe Tompkins 2 Chesnar commented regarding the future of the rates. We know that the sewer rate is to go up and relying that the water rates to get down somehow in the coming years to takes the pressure of the sewer rates looming over us. Per Chairman Bergin agrees and explained approved at the Annual Meeting is to take money in free cash to get the Clear Well and Grindstone Well back online. The water taken out of the well can be treated at a fraction of a cost as opposed to purchasing all Worcester Water. The City budget line item is \$425,000 on the Districts \$1.2 million budget. Water used to be free and all we had to do it treat it and now adding the City of Worcester. People think the City of Worcester charge is reasonable and where we must pay \$425,000 is not a reasonable cost. The goal is to reduce the amount of water from the City, lower expenses and try to get the rates down. Nicole Muzzy thought that we purchase the water from the City for \$3.93 c.f. & we then in turn buy it back and you stated \$11.64 a unit. Per Chairman Bergin City of Worcester charges, us for finished water that is their cost and then there are the cost to maintain the system. Everything we used to do stays the same the change is that the cost of water from the City of Worcester that increases the budget \$425,000.00. Prior to the City of Worcester, it used to cost the District \$40,000.00 to treat the free water. Now being connected to the city its \$425,000.00. Nicole wanted to know if the subscribers will be notified of the Town Wide Study. Per Chairman Bergin when we have a meeting he takes notes and reports back at our water meeting. The Working Group does not

meet regular but when they do meet, he then will provide updates at a water meeting to report back.

Subscriber Tracy Gallati Requested clarification about the Annual Meeting in free cash to put the well up and running.

Per Chairman Bergin these were on the warrants at the Annual Meeting and voted to proceed.

The Clear Well is where finished water is treated and then pumped out to the system. The Grindstone Well is where the water comes from and then treated and placed in the Clear Well.

Per Superintendent Morris the current time frame to get online and hope to have it start in Spring of 2021. Once hurdles cleared with DEP will have a more definitive time frame.

### III. **APPROVE MINUTES**

**A. August 18, 2020** - Commissioner Levesque motioned to approve the minutes of August 18, 2020. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.

### IV. **FINANCE**

**A. Approve August 24, 2020 Warrants** – Commissioner Lemieux motions to approve the August 24, 2020 warrants. Seconded by Commissioner Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.

**B. Approve August 31, 2020 Warrants-** Commissioner Levesque motions to approve the August 31, 2020 warrants. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.

Chairman Bergin did not have a list or breakdown of the warrants with him and said could have them at the next meeting. He normally notes the information when he goes to the office to view and sign.

Per Commissioner Levesque, wanted to make the listeners aware that the Commissioners view and sign the warrants.

**C. August Bank Transfer** – Per Commissioner Levesque motions to transfer \$78,240.47 from the Water Checking Account to the Sewer Checking Account.

This is money that the Water District collects on the behalf of the Sewer District and the money is given to the sewer fund that is rightly theirs.

**D. Fee Schedule** – Per Superintendent Morris these are a schedule of fees that a customer is charged such as if they want water to be shut off. Ex. Snowbirds, contractor prices, new construction. He did research of neighboring communities to compare and there are not a lot of changes. The connection fee was \$8,325.00 and after review compared \$4,500.00 is approximately half of where we were. Same for branch lines to a more favorable figure of \$4,500.00. Other fees looked at is in the inspection services of \$93.00 of installation or a service repair. To be in the same ballpark as other utilities \$75.00 a more reasonable number.

Application fee \$463.00 in addition to the \$8,325.00. Being reduced by \$100 to stay in line with other utilities. To replace a service line would be adjusted to \$225.00. Proposes the \$225 as opposed to the \$463 and includes inspection fee. The rest of the fee schedule will remain the same. If there are no questions or comment he would need a vote from the Board to move forward and into

effect starting tonight. Per Commissioner Lemieux motions to accept the new pricing schedule. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.

**E. Late Fees** – Per Chairman Bergin we are following the lead of the State. He believes they have been pushed to October 2020 and to review and mirror this. Commissioner Levesque motions to continue to temporarily suspend late fees. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.

## V. ADMINISTRATION

**A. Service Renewal** – 51 Willow Hill Rd. The house is being rehabbed and during construction water coming up in front lawn because the service was leaking. We shut off the water immediately. The owner applied and paid to have the repair done. This is a formality to have the form ratified and approved. Commissioner Levesque motions to approve the service renewal. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.

**B. Grant Researcher Update** – Per Superintendent Morris the Grant Researcher Christopher Reilley has been looking for grants as he has been contracted to do for the District and has not found a lot. There are slim pickings since COVID with him. Mr. Reilley was not on the call and the Superintendent suggested that this item may need to be tabled to the next meeting. He did not want to speak on behalf of Mr. Reilley and give inaccurate information. Commissioner Levesque motions to table this item for a future meeting. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.

Per Peter Cusolito believes EPA has a small grant available currently. Superintendent Morris will research.

**C. Rules & Regulations Update** – Per Superintendent Morris the District R & R (Rules & Regulations) was to fine tune and address vacant properties and water leakages. Our District Attorney Barry Bachrach, Commissioner Lemieux and himself did the review. Back several years ago it was moved to make the Treasurer and Clerk appointed as opposed elected. Because at the time had the Bookkeeper then to the Treasurer. These were combined to consolidate personal and need to update the R&R. Article 3 Section 7 Sub Section B is the change for the vacant properties. Commissioner Lemieux and Superintendent Morris ok with the way worded. If no further changes can be placed into effect of this meeting. Per Chairman Bergin recognizes and appreciates the efforts involved in doing this. Commissioner Lemieux motions to approve the R&R as proposed. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor Approved.

## VI. Operations

**A. Superintendent's Report** – Weston & Sampson conducting the Town Wide Study. We have been in contact with them of gathering of information and will be contacting them to have a meeting to go over what data has been collected. Will try to give an update once a month if we have information to provide.

Valve Exercising underway almost done in the Bottomly Ave area, then to move to Redfield, Sargent and then to McCarthy Ave. that will require some sewer repairs, box repairs.

Watching the drought, meetings have been held by the State. We are holding off on Fall Flushing and will update.

We were able to virtually meet with MassDEP about the rehabilitation project of the Clear Well and Grindstone Well. Discussed all the rehab to address with the Clear Well project, the inspection report for DEP to review and the submittal process for the Grindstone Well to go online. We are to continue to do the water quality testing. This is not uncommon as we used to do this. The change out of the medias and other work to be done by the Superintendent and the Operators to save the District money. The total budgeted amount is \$580,000.00 If we do a lot of the preliminary work it will be a faster turnaround time to get it online.

The Grindstone Well will provide 100,000 gallons per day and we should be using very little of water from the City of Worcester. After a year we should be able to review budget and how much the City of Worcester line item to be reduced and review rates. Anticipating \$80,000 – \$100,000.00 reduction in that line item.

EPA mandated Risk & Resiliency to be done for amount of \$25,000.00 needs to be completed by June 30, 2021. Through our workings with RCAP Solutions it will be grant funded to be able to work with them to do the study for us and it will not cost the District this money.

Last week we finished on GIS grant obtained with RCAP – now we have a total GIS Water & Sewer of the system. This allows a better picture of the system and good tool for the customers to show layout and how things work. This was approximately a \$30,000.00 project that was a fully grant project and free to the District.

**VII. COMMUNICATIONS – Nothing to report**

**VIII. PERSONNEL – Nothing to Report**

**IX. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**A. Approval of Next Meeting** - Commissioner Lemieux motioned to hold the next Virtual Meeting Tuesday, September 15, 2020 @ 7:00 PM. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.

**X. ADJOURNMENT-** Commissioner Levesque motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:13 P.M.

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