

DRAFT MINUTES
SHEPHERDSTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA
WATER & SANITARY BOARDS

April 22, 2021

Attendees: **Water Board** – J. Auxer (Mayor), J. Bresland, J. Ford, S. Kemnitzer (Chair), A. Slater
Sanitary Board – J. Auxer (Chair), H. Heyser, R. Keller
Town Staff –C. Coe, C. Painter, D. Nickerson, K. Shipley, F. Welch,
Engineer – J. Ekstrom, Ghosh Engineering
Town Council- C. Stroech

Visitors: Ross Morgan and Jim Schmidt, for Shepherdstown Fire Department
Dick Klein, for Rankin Properties

Media: Steve Pearson, for The Observer

Note: this was a virtual meeting held on the Zoom platform as a health precaution due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. CALL TO ORDER.

The Water and Sanitary Boards meeting was called to order by J. Auxer at 12:30 pm.

2. MINUTES FROM PRIOR MEETING.

The proposed minutes of the March 18, 2021 regular meeting were reviewed. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were approved as presented.

3. VISITORS-FIRE HYDRANTS.

Fire Chief Ross Morgan and Trustee Jim Schmidt of the Shepherdstown Fire Department (SFD) joined the meeting to discuss fire hydrants that are out of service. Chief Morgan began the discussion by sharing his concern about the number of fire hydrants that are out of service and the length of time that many have been out of service. Chief Morgan requested that every effort be made to find the funding and repair all these hydrants as quickly as possible. F. Welch responded that some of the hydrants have been repaired and some are new to the list of approximately 11 hydrants currently out of service, of a total of 183 hydrants on the water system. C. Coe responded that efforts are underway to find contractors willing to work on this project, but it has been difficult attracting bids; one bid was received for \$198,000 where the engineer's estimate was only \$50,000. Chief Morgan reviewed the list of hydrants and noted the critical importance of several key hydrants in adequately responding to a fire emergency. J. Schmidt stated that the ISO (Insurance Services Office) ratings for SFD are among the highest in the state which has benefited homeowners with their fire insurance; it is important to maintain that rating. Mayor Auxer asked that a detailed report of hydrants that are out of service be prepared, that a plan of action be developed to repair the hydrants as quickly as practicable, and periodic reporting be made to the Water Board and SVD. J. Slater offered to work with Staff and the SFD representatives to help facilitate the resolution of this problem. C. Coe asked the SFD representatives to give notice to the Water Department when they are training volunteers on hydrants, particularly when hydrants are opened, as this appears to be a major leak situation without the courtesy of a notification.

R. Morgan and J. Schmidt left the meeting.

4. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS.

The financial statements were reviewed. The following discussion ensued.

H. Heyser questioned the significant budget variances (under budget) for the following water accounts: 604 (\$18k), 401.3 (\$37k), 618 (\$17k), 631 (\$139k), 635 (\$29k), 650 (\$18k). F. Welch responded that part of the explanation is that the workforce is down by two workers, as well as the Pandemic reducing flows and related costs. C. Coe also responded that rainfall is down which reduces operating costs, particularly chemicals. H. Heyser then turned to the sewage accounts noting that 401.3 was (\$12k) underspent and 401.4 (\$108k); he asked if these variances were acceptable. F. Welch responded that all plant maintenance and related activities remain at appropriate levels of service. R. Keller asked if several recent plant replacement and improvement projects were charged properly? F. Welch advised that some significant expenditures this year were charged to the Improvement & Replacement Reserve Fund as opposed to the current budget. H. Heyser also inquired of the under-expenditure in account 718 chemicals (\$40k); to which F. Welch responded there have been less gallons of flow due to several key customers closing or curtailing activity (e.g.-Shepherd University, Clarion, Quality Inn). R. Keller inquired into 401.61 balance of \$30,000; D. Nickerson responded this was a capacity payment for engineering services for Seneca Crossing.

5. FLOW AND QUALITY REPORTS.

5.a WATER - NO VIOLATIONS.

C. Coe stated that all the water-related reports were negative, therefore no violations.

C. Coe updated the board on discussions with the State regarding a typographical error in mislabeling Nitrates as Nitrites on the August 2020 water quality report. C. Coe advised the State will not accept the administrative error of not fully labeling the report, consequently a notification must go out to all customers advising of the report labeling error and reporting time limit. C. Coe advised this notification will accompany the annual Consumer Confidence Report that will be issued the week of May 3, 2021. C. Coe once again emphasized that both Nitrate and Nitrite results were well within the tolerance limits, that this was simply a report labeling error by the sampling laboratory.

5.b. SEWER REPORTS

Results for February were reviewed, no violations. K. Shipley advised that due to the delay in reporting he is switching laboratories from Reliance to Pace so more timely reporting may be resumed. K. Shipley also discussed ongoing efforts to regain access to the Willard farm for sludge spreading.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

6.a WATER PLANT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT.

J. Ekstrom reported that all data requests and related filings have been submitted to the West Virginia Public Service Commission; we are currently waiting on the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) from the Commission, upon which we may issue bids for the project. J. Ekstrom advised that the Health Department permit has been received, and we have requested the Highway Department permit.

6.b. WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PROJECT.

J. Ekstrom advised that field work for the water system distribution project is complete. R. Keller inquired as to progress on repairing the leak at the base of the water tower; F. Welch advised that it is on his list of projects to address.

6.c SEWER USE ORDINANCE – REVISION AND COMMENTS.

R. Keller stated that no significant progress had been made on this project and that would continue to be the case until all the parties involved (J. Auxer, H. Heyser, R. Keller) have received COVID vaccines so that they could meet face-to-face without significant health risk. He expected this to be happening in the few months.

6.d WAGE STUDY.

J. Auxer advised that J. Bresland and A. Slater have completed a wage study designed to bring water and sewer workers earnings up to a competitive range with comparable regional utilities. Details of the study will be included in the next meeting packet and will be considered in the budget discussion next month as well.

6.e WARRANTY PROGRAM-SERVICE LINES.

J. Auxer asked for discussion on the service line warranty program, recommended by the Municipal League, as first examined at the previous board meeting. F. Welch advised that he contacted Jim Hunt, Mayor of the City of Clarksburg, and reported he was very complimentary of the program. J. Ford expressed reservations of the Town endorsing the program. S. Kemnitzer questioned the true value of the warranty noting that of 1,800 accounts there were only 15 reported service issues last year. The board agreed to have the representative of the warranty service provider make a 15-minute presentation at the next board meeting.

7. NEW BUSINESS.

7.a RANKIN PROPERTY LLC STEP 2 APPLICATION.

J. Auxer introduced Dick Klein who was representing Rankin Properties. D. Klein stated that they are willing to comply with our engineer's comments on their application and plans and asked to be moved to Step 2. J. Ekstrom stated his support for this action. Discussion ensued and the following action was taken.

ACTION ITEM: S. KEMNITZER MOVED AND A. SLATER SECONDED THAT THE WATER BOARD APPROVE RANKIN PROPERTY LLC PROJECT BE MOVED TO STEP 2; UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED BY THE WATER BOARD.

ACTION ITEM: H. HEYSER MOVED AND R. KELLER SECONDED THAT THE SANITARY BOARD APPROVE RANKIN PROPERTY LLC PROJECT BE MOVED TO STEP 2; UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED BY THE SANITARY BOARD.

7.b CREDIT CARD CHARGES.

J. Auxer reported that it has come to his attention that all payments by customers on credit cards comes at the cost of 2.4% of the charge to the Town payable to the credit card companies, costing the Town \$23,500 this year. J. Auxer suggested a surcharge (% or flat fee) be considered for credit card payments to make the Town whole. J. Ford found that such a fee is allowable under state law but noted this is simply a cost of doing business for many organizations. Further consideration will be given in concert with planned changes to billing format and additional payment options. R. Keller reminded the boards that this would likely require a change to our filed tariff.

7.c TOLLHOUSE WOODS AND COLONIAL HILLS (PHASE 3).

J. Auxer advised that Tollhouse Woods and Colonial Hills requested their Phase 3 letters be renewed. Following discussion, the following action was taken.

ACTION ITEM: A. SLATER MOVED AND S. KEMNITZER SECONDED THAT THE WATER BOARD APPROVE THE PHASE 3 RENEWAL OF TOLLHOUSE WOODS AND COLONIAL HILLS; UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED BY THE WATER BOARD.

ACTION ITEM: H. HEYSER MOVED AND R. KELLER SECONDED THAT THE SANITARY BOARD APPROVE THE PHASE 3 RENEWAL OF TOLLHOUSE WOODS AND COLONIAL HILLS; UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED BY THE SANITARY BOARD.

7.d TANNER HAID – TWO RIVERS.

J. Bresland reported that he is our representative on the Safe Water Collaborative, and they are seeking a \$350,000 grant. The two-year grant will go towards improved water quality, water quality awareness, addressing farm run-off, and other important measures. The grant which includes the Potomac Conservatory and is funded by the National Fish & Wildlife Federation, has an expected January 2022 approval date. The Safe Water Collaborative has requested our assistance by writing a letter of support to accompany the grant application. There being no objection raised, J. Bresland will draft a letter of support for Mayor Auxer's signature.

8. MAYOR'S REPORT.

Mayor Auxer reported:

- All Town employees have received vaccinations for COVID-19.
- Jefferson Utilities adopted a new ordinance requiring hook-up with their water system if near or adjacent to their system; consequently, applications for well permits will not be issued when meeting this condition.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE.

May 20, 2021 at 12:30PM.

13. ADJOURNMENT. J. Auxer adjourned the meeting at 2:30PM.

Respectfully Submitted: A. Slater