

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS

The regular meeting of the Board of Water was held on Thursday, March 3, 2011 at the department offices, 605 West Queen Street, Southington, CT. A recording of this meeting can be found on file tapes #570 and #571.

PRESENT: President Thomas Murphy, Vice President Erik Semmel, Commissioners Cheryl Lounsbury and Michael Domian, Superintendent Thomas West, Assistant Superintendent Frederick Rogers, Office Supervisor Ann Marie Anop and Janice Eisenhauer, stenographer.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by President Murphy at 6:27 PM, upon determining a quorum.

2. Approval of Minutes of February 3, 2011 meeting.

Commissioner Lounsbury made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 3, 2011 meeting as presented. Her motion was seconded by Commissioner Domian and passed on a voice vote without comment.

3. Communications

a). Communications from the Public

Art Cyr, 103 Berlin Ave spoke to the Board. He made some positive comments on the recent bond issue arrangement with the town. He wondered what the rate was on the water company bond and Superintendent West answered him that it was 2.78 percent average. Secondly, he made a suggestion that the water department post a schedule of rates on the website. President Murphy noted that copies of the rate schedule are mailed to all ratepayers, however, the suggestion was well received and taken under advisement. Cyr's third issue concerned private fire hydrants. Most condominiums have on their property fire hydrants that belong to the association. The responsibility to maintain and flush these hydrants belongs with the landowner. Cyr states that many of the associations (there are 55 in Southington) are not aware of this responsibility and voiced the dangerous possibility that any of these under-maintained hydrants could default in a crisis. There was a long interactive discussion about flushing and inspection of private hydrants and the possibility of the water department offering such a service, for a fee, to landowners who own and are responsible for private fire hydrants. If a hydrant should be deemed impaired, it is the responsibility of the landowner to have it repaired. President Murphy explained, for clarification, that all of the water lines from the public connection

are owned by the condominium association including the hydrants, and any time there is a problem, the association is responsible for replacing and maintaining them.

If the hydrants are not flushed on a timely basis, a line could be broken and no one would know it. Chief Murphy spoke of resulting hazards, including fire safety and diminishing tap water quality. Superintendent West said that more recent specifications require that water installations at condominiums be inspected to meet updated standards. Prior to that time, private installations were limited to a tap at the street by the water department. Cyr remarked on the lack of private hydrant maintenance, suspecting some having no attention for decades. President Murphy spoke about large complexes built years ago where the water/fire department has no idea where the shut off valves for the hydrants or other fittings are. They own their own system. He wonders if hydrants are clearly identified on a street map of the complex. The water department has no right to maintain a hydrant on a private parcel and could not take on the liability of digging there. Commissioner Semmel spoke in favor of exploring a fee-for-service plan offering maintenance of private hydrants. Mr. Cyr also noted that this would be a potential revenue stream for the Department outside of Water Rates. Commissioner Lounsbury suggested an education campaign to make condominium associations aware of this responsibility, and agreed that the water department should explore offering private hydrant service for a fee. There was some discussion about speaking with the Fire Chief about asking the council to adopt a town ordinance to require periodic flushing/maintenance of private hydrants.

b.) Communications from Administration

Superintendent West announced that the money derived from the bonding with the town has arrived and has been deposited.

c.) Communications from Board Members

None

4. Financial Matters

a.) Review of Water Billings & Outstanding Jobbing Bills & Approval Of Invoices

Superintendent West offered an overview of the financial data presented. There was a discussion about outstanding receivables. Superintendent West explained the charge for snow removal from the roof at the filter plant. Commissioner Semmel made a motion to approve for payment invoices as presented. Commissioner Domian seconded his motion and it passed on a voice vote.

5. Committee Reports

a.) Executive Committee

Superintendent West reported on the Executive Committee meeting held on February 15, 2011. The committee addressed an issue on West Street at the corner of West Center Street. A contractor asked approval of a connection for an additional commercial service.

Since this was beyond the authority of the superintendent, the Executive Committee was called together. The proposal for a Sleep Center was in compliance with water department specifications and regulations, and approved by the committee assuming the pleasure of the board. Consensus of the board was positive. Commissioner Lounsbury made a motion to accept the action of the Executive Board to approve the commercial service at 1137 West Street. Her motion was seconded by Commissioner Semmel. It passed unanimously on a voice vote.

b.) Infrastructure Committee

The committee met on February 9, 2011. The performance of a Capital Efficiency Plan for the department was discussed. Superintendent West explained the concept to the board. It involves contracting with a consulting firm to assess every piece of buried infrastructure, which is then ranked and rated with a resultant prioritization matrix. West had mentioned this to the Town Manager Garry Brumback, who then disclosed that the town had been entertaining a similar project for the sewer department. Brumback wondered if it would be possible to partner with the water department in this study, resulting in shared expenses and savings for the town. He suggested there might also be cost saving opportunities for each department in future tandem projects. West discussed this with the board at some length. The town has secured a grant for their part and therefore will be required to include a QVS procedure to choose the consultant. The water department will pay its share privately but has no problem with a joint panel to make the QVS selection of a consulting firm. Superintendent West expressed his pleasure to work with the sewer department and town staff on this project. Reaction of the board was positive. Superintendent West will pursue this venture. President Murphy, in closing, spoke about the value of a good working relationship between the town and the water department. In his opinion, it provides a latitude that was not achievable previously. He expressed hope that this proposed joint project with the town portends a positive path forward, beneficial to the people of Southington.

c.) Technology Committee

No meeting.

6. OLD BUSINESS

a.) Update on DEP "Stream Flow" Regulations

Superintendent West reports. West testified at a Commerce Committee hearing recently. There will be a hearing next week and Zeke Zelaski is on that committee. West has spoken to Zeke about this. It is Senate bill 1020. The DEP has announced that they will submit a new regulation in April to be referred to regs review.

Joe Markley is on the regs review committee. Commissioner Lounsbury asked about talking points for the representatives. West will supply her with a copy.

b.) Water Service Line Protection Plan

Ms. Anop explained the data presented for the plan. There are 1200 customers to date. There has been one claim, which has been resolved. Progress is positive.

c.) West Street, West Center and Welch Road Water Mains Projects

A new supplier of winter hot mix (paving) has been found. The material is less expensive but superior and seems to be holding up better during this cold weather.

d.) Mariondale Storage Tank Replacement Project

There are a couple of venders who have indicated interest in bidding this. It will go to bid early summer, to start in September and continue through the winter, complete in May, 2012. West discussed assorted tank options and cost with the board.

e.) Aquifer Protection Regulations

These regulations are being rolled out. Superintendent West has met with two involved entities with different issues. The YMCA has chlorine stored for the pool and Camp Sloper needs to craft best management practices for some of the products they store. The Southington Country Club has on-site fueling for the carts and various maintenance products that are stored. Meetings are scheduled with the other Country Clubs.

7. NEW BUSINESS

a.) Proposed Main Extension for Pine Hollow Subdivision, Sections 2 & 3, by DBF LLC and Bagno LLC, a 28 lot residential subdivision located off West Pines Drive

Assistant Superintendent Rogers presents the plot plan. Wetlands in the area are an issue. There are 28 houses planned, with future

plans for more. President Murphy is very concerned about the future completion of this subdivision. This plot, as presented, meets the water department specifications. Murphy is concerned that completion of all 3 phases will result in some 70 homes with a one-way feed. West added that the water department has the ability to require looping. Murphy notes that the easement goes through the wetlands, but he wonders if Inland-Wetlands will permit that. There was a long discussion about this project. Commissioner Semmel made a motion to accept the proposal as presented, a 28 lot residential subdivision located off West Pines Drive. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Domian. The motion passed on a voice vote.

b.) Discussion/Selection of new hire for Maintainer/Position

Superintendent West presented an overview. There were more than 100 applicants. Five were interviewed based on qualifications. The field has been narrowed down to three standouts. All reference checks are consistently positive. This will be discussed in Executive Session.

c.) Proposal to use "Official Payments" to process water bill payments online.

Superintendent West stated that there have been a number of requests from ratepayers for the Water Company to accept credit card payments. Investigation into the system used by the town has produced a vendor who provides on-line only service. Office Supervisor Ann Marie Anop presented the plan. "Official Payments" can be accessed on line through their website or through an 800 number. She explained the process to the board. The customer pays a handling fee for use, but there would be no charge to the Water Department. She explained the options and there was a discussion with questions from the board answered. Commissioner Semmel made a motion to pursue offering "Official Payments" service to customers. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Lounsbury and passed on a voice vote.

d.) Proposed write off of bad debt, and new "Deposit" policy.

Ms. Anop explained in detail a report included in the board's packet. Apparently there are several old uncollectible accounts, some dating before 1995, remaining in the water company's system that she proposes to close out. She answered questions from the board. President Murphy questioned the process to handle CO's and Superintendent West explained the policy presently in place. President Murphy commented on the importance of choosing good employees and capable people, expressing his appreciation for Ms. Anop's work. He is somewhat appalled at finding that these accounts have been "carried", some for 16 years, possibly for non-existing claims. Uncompleted COs raises a red flag for him but it is good to clean this up. Murphy asks who is responsible for tracking current COs. West answered that this responsibility falls to different employees and explained it to him. Commissioner Domian made a motion to write off

the old accounts receivable, as listed, in the amount of \$14,011.77. Commissioner Semmel seconded his motion and it passed on a voice vote.

Superintendent West explained a memo outlining a project done with the State of Connecticut, the I-84 expansion. The state never paid an invoice submitted in the amount of \$6,864.83. In the final audit the state determined that the water company owed the state some \$19,000, in addition to the \$6,864. The state was paid. There will be no funds forthcoming from the state and staff asks that the \$6,864.83 be deleted from the books. Commissioner Lounsbury made a motion to write off the \$6,864.83 charged to the State of Connecticut. Commissioner Semmel seconded the motion. It passed on a voice vote.

Superintendent West explained the deposit policy. When someone makes a deposit for proposed work, it remains on the books until the work is done. Sometimes the work never does get done. West proposes a policy that allows any deposit not used within three years be returned to the payer. No interest is involved. This was discussed and questions were answered. The board expressed a positive consensus to pursue this. It will be addressed again at the next meeting.

8.Executive Session Anticipated for Personnel and Negotiation Matters.

Commissioner Lounsbury made a motion to enter Executive Session, barring the public and press, but including Superintendent West and Assistant Superintendent Rogers and Office Supervisor Ann Marie Anop at 8:44 PM. Her motion was seconded by Commissioner Semmel and passed on a voice vote.

A contract negotiation matter was discussed.

A personnel matter was discussed

The Board left Executive Session at 9:38 PM

Commissioner Domian made a motion to allow the Superintendent to hire two Maintainer 1's. Commissioner Lounsbury seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Commissioner Lounsbury made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Semmel seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 PM

Attest:

Robert M. Berkmoes, Secretary & Treasurer