

West Windsor Utilities Advisory Committee meeting, April 17th, draft minutes
Brownsville, VT.

Meeting called to order.

4:00 p.m. Present: Committee members Jim Bonney, John Bossen, Gina Halsted, Steve Hawco, David Leavitt, Jeff Nelson, and Mary Vitullo; Select Board members Dick Beatty and Tom Kenyon; also present Martha Harrison and Clerk Connie May.

Changes or additions to agenda.

Hydrant at Mt. Edge

Public comment.

No public present.

Minutes of last meeting.

Motion: To dispose reading of minutes and to approve. Seconded. No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Consider inclusion of conference call costs in sewer & water budgets.

Service provider identified for charge of 10 cents/minute/user. Connie knows of less expensive arrangement and will send details to Martha. *Motion:* To have sewer and water budgets cover costs of charges for committee meetings by conference call. Seconded. No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Sewer financial data, budget, collections.

\$6,385 owed in billings prior to 2014. Martha and John will clarify details as to who owes and from when with Town Treasurer Cathy Archibald. \$18,000 due for 2015, but Town has power to foreclose on those dues receivables. After some refinement, sewer financials will be presented again at next meeting.

Water financial data, budget, collections.

Legal accounting nearly double what is budgeted. Martha will discuss with Cathy Archibald. Electricity at \$3,800 for 3 months is under budget. Cost should decrease further once base-lodge operations no longer needed. Final comment: We will seek better budget comparisons for both water and sewer for next meeting.

Water telemetry issues update.

Floats no longer frozen, but still not working properly. Dennis Brown still operating by hand; we had predicted \$3,000 for this expense. Should get operational update next week on nature of problem.

Mountainside Condo water lines.

Engineers' designs to by-pass base-lodge and Mountainside booster pump system should solve cross-connection issues.

Base lodge, booster pump move, new pumps, spare pump, status of engineering proposals and plans.

Engineers have completed tentative plan; plan should be nailed down sometime in May. \$200,000 is under budget and will cover re-routed piping at Mountainside, removal of water-system components from base lodge, redesigned pump in main well, new pumps, new tanks. Not sure if that budget covers spare pump. Some confusion as to whether the system has two tanks off Ski Tow Road, or one tank there and another near tennis courts. Discussion of engineers' intent to replace two tanks off Ski Tow Road with one large tank of 70,000 gallons, divided in half so that one half could be closed off for cleaning as needed. Mention of possible well near tennis courts, and concrete tank up slope from old base lodge. Jeff Nelson will talk to engineers about location of tanks, and in the end, engineers will tell us what they recommend. General agreement that as soon as engineering plan finalized, new pump should be ordered.

Update submeter/AT&T.

Martha has contacted them; not responded. She'll keep trying.

Mt. Edge hydrant issue.

Jeff Nelson will talk to Patricia Beavers to get exact location of tree, and Jeff or Connie will get back to committee and to Mt. Edge property manager Don Jennings. Association can have that tree removed at same time another tree at that complex is being removed.

Questions arose about Mountainside hydrant. Is it dry? Is it working? Is it connected to domestic water or to snow-making? Can it be depended on for fire-fighting? Hydrants different colors depending on whether connected to domestic water or to snow-making. Engineers thought that water pressure at Mountainside hydrant too low, and their plan corrects this problem.

Fire protection should be considered part of same infrastructure as domestic water. Questions arose regarding what will be included if/when Town acquires water system. Are pumps in brook for snow-making included? Two pumps operational; third one needs work. Oil leaked out of transformer near Fire House, however, so transformer may need replacement. There's a \$25,000 budgeted line item for debt service for \$300,000 to replace transformer. Consensus reached that we need to discuss fire-fighting capabilities of system with engineers.

Consider request to disconnect Cunningham Building (tabled in Nov. 2014).

Request by MFW for property use fee equal to past due sewer charges.

MFW asks that past due sewer fees be forgiven in exchanges for their land being used for events such as VT 50, July 4th fireworks, etc. In the past, permission to use land given free of charge. \$4,377.75 is outstanding, which includes services rendered to base lodge and Cunninghams. Because of so many changes, credits, reductions, rebills, etc. confusion exists regarding date when base lodge and Cunninghams disconnected from sewer system, and during what period of time those charges accumulated.

No motion made, but many questions asked and comments made. Sewer ordinance dictates that as long as a property is connected to the system, obligation exists to pay. Connection to base lodge capped; is that also true of Cunninghams? If water disconnected, then in reality, no sewer service is present, either, so fees should be waived. If a property is disconnected and then reconnected, a new application should be submitted and connection fees should apply, just as if a new connection altogether. Point made that fee structure not related to usage but only to "right" or "privilege" to use. General sense was that Town should expect charges to be brought up-to-date before permission given to disconnect. What are regulations in VT regarding utility services to non-habitable buildings? Tom Kenyon expressed worry about keeping water in an uninhabited building in case of freeze-up.

Several committee members expressed discomfort in approving waiver of fees in return for use of land. Is this a one-time negotiation, or would we be setting up precedent for a yearly waiver? Doubt expressed about tying use of land to sewer dues receivable; different entities. We can't ask users or Town to pay for use of property by other organizations; non-profits and other organizations who use the land should pay for that use. Comment made that to barter sewer dues receivable for land use may be abuse of funds.

Town asking for guidance from committee. Group agreed that before motions entertained or advice given, more information needed, such as:

1. Background on charges: what is breakdown of charges, and for what dates?
2. Does sewer ordinance have any prohibition regarding disconnections?
3. When was base lodge disconnected? Was Cunninghams disconnected at same time?

John Bossen and Jeff Nelson will research, including conferring with Patricia Beavers. These issues therefore tabled until we have more information.

Other business.

Money for work to water system and for replacement of transformer would be part of capital budgets. Hopefully by this time next year, we will have more clarity on what work is needed and at what potential costs, for clearer budget planning. John Bossen would like to separate legal from accounting costs, for greater clarity. Collections good.

Petition to approve sale of water system has been submitted to Public Service Board. Mountainside Condo Association has moved to intervene due to booster-pump situation. We are waiting to see how that plays out. Deer Run, leading from Ski Tow Road to Mountainside Condos, is a private road. Town is adamant that it will not accept that as a public road. Options include excluding that road from the land-acquisition deal, or having the condo association take the road over. Listers could comment on any tax implications; not an issue to be discussed in this committee. Well above Mountainside that is on MFW land was mentioned as another potential complication.

Select Board will research finances for replacing transformer next to Fire House.

Next meeting. May 17th via teleconference.

Motion made to adjourn. Seconded. No discussion. Motion passed unanimously at 4:48 p.m.