

**MARION BOARD OF SELECTMEN
WATER/SEWER COMMISSIONERS
MEETING MINUTES
August 25, 2015**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Stephen Cushing, Chairman
Jonathan Henry
Jonathan Dickerson

ALSO PRESENT: Paul Dawson, Town Administrator
Jon Gregory (Tata & Howard)
Judith Mooney
Rob Zora
Rebecca Carvalho
Frank "Jay" Ryder III
Edward Sefranka
George Tinkham
Al Muren
Jim Stewart
John Garcia (Standard Times)
Matthew Bernat (Sippican Week)
Marylou Newell (Wanderer)
Christine Reagle (Sentinel)
Debra Paiva, secretary
And others who did not sign in

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Music Hall. Mr. Cushing announced that the meeting would be video recorded by ORCT and audio recorded by Town of Marion staff and Standard Times staff.

ACTION ITEMS

7:05 p.m. Discussion regarding setting of water and sewer rates

The Board met to discuss the request of the water rate review committee to set fiscal year 2016 water and sewer rates.

Mrs. Mooney provided the following information:

- Review of the water rates is done every year
- In 2004 Town Meeting voted Enterprise funds for sewer and water (anything that is an expense to the water should be spent through water rates and anything spent on sewer should be spent through sewer rates)
- In 2007 there was a huge rate increase and it was agreed that each year the current expenses and rates would be evaluated
- In 2013 the committee used reserves to hold off rate increases
- Last year the committee told the selectmen a rate increase would be needed this year
- Tonight's recommendation is for **FY16 only**
- Costs have been going up approximately 2.5% each year

Proposed Rates

- A 2.5% increase is recommended in water base rates and sewer base rates

- Water – No increase is proposed for the bottom tier and 3% increases are proposed for the second and third tiers
- Sewer – A 10% increase is proposed for all tiers

Cost (Usage, not base rate)

The approximate costs of the increases would be:

- Average household size (2.5 people) - \$1 per quarter for water and \$8.73 per quarter for sewer, total \$9.69 per quarter.
- Family of 4 - \$4.19 per quarter for water and \$22.70 per quarter for sewer, total \$26.89 per quarter

During the conversation that included audience members, selectmen, and staff the following issues were discussed:

- Quarterly billings, which have resulted in more abatements and lower collections
- What would happen if the increase is not approved (a larger increase in the future)
- FY17, 18, 19 estimated budgets
- Impact of the draft NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) permit
- I&I (inflow and infiltration)
- Buzzards Bay Coalition, Hammett's Cove
- Wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) capacity
- PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes)
- The rate increases recommended tonight are for FY16 only; the increases mentioned at the last meeting will not be addressed until next year, when the costs associated with the NPDES permit are known.

An audience member who did not state his name had several questions and observations regarding the volume that flows through the treatment plant, the Buzzards Bay Coalition, the treatment plant's impact on Hammett's Cove, and inspection reports. He asked if the treatment plant is doing what it is supposed to be doing and was told it is currently meeting the permit but probably would not meet the new rigid standards proposed in the draft NPDES permit.

An audience member who did not state his name compared Marion's water rates with Mattapoissett's; it was explained that Marion has a much larger infrastructure than surrounding towns and when those towns upgraded their infrastructure the rates paid by the residents would rise as well.

Audience member Jay Ryder referenced a report by Tighe & Bond that contained a range of water rates in similar towns. He noted that Marion has the third highest water rate in Massachusetts and the second highest sewer rate. Mr. Ryder asked if there was an option to pay water and sewer costs out of something other than water and sewer revenues and was told no. Mrs. Mooney recommended PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) from Tabor Academy. When he recommended collecting \$273,000 owed by derelict water/sewer users the collection process, including placing liens on the properties, was explained to him. Mr. Ryder commended the Town for not raising the rates since 2007. He asked about a second meter option offered to residents in other towns; Mrs. Carvalho and Mr. Zora explained the requirements of the water withdrawal permit. Prior to leaving the meeting, Mr. Ryder said he wanted to make sure that the increases will be what they are presented to be and also that he wanted to see the Finance Committee involved.

An audience member who did not state his name voiced dissatisfaction with the costs associated with living on a private road, paying a developer to tie into a private sewer line, and the condition of the roads.

Mr. Henry explained that the Town has vast expenses and not enough people to pay for them. He suggested requesting State legislation to sponsor regional water and sewer companies and explained the process. He provided information regarding the PILOT program and explained that the Tabor trustees have appointed a subset to deal with local issues and an agreement would be negotiated at the Trustee level.

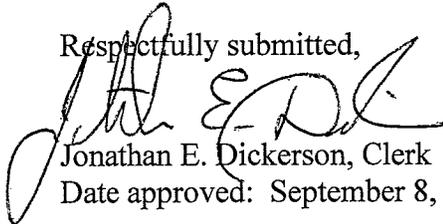
Mrs. Mooney noted that the information from the Tighe & Bond study referenced by Mr. Ryder does not match Town of Marion calculations.

Mr. Dawson summarized the rate study committee's request - for the Board to consider increasing the base rates in both water and sewer by 2.5% for FY16. In addition, with regard to the water rates for FY16, the request is that the rates in the second and third tiers be increased by 3%, and that in the sewer rates all tiers be increased by 10%.

Moved by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Dickerson that the recommendation of the rate study committee be adopted as proposed as just described by Mr. Dawson for FY2016. VOTE: 3-0-0

Moved by Mr. Dickerson and seconded by Mr. Henry at 8:13 p.m. to adjourn. VOTE: 3-0-0

Respectfully submitted,



Jonathan E. Dickerson, Clerk

Date approved: September 8, 2015

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