

# WATER AND SEWER COMMITTEE MINUTES

For Thursday, January 22, 2015, 8:30 AM

## Water & Sewer Department Office

### 1. Call to Order & Freedom of Information Requirements

Freedom of Information requirements having been met, the meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM.

Those present were: Committee Members Susan Middaugh (Chair), Chauncey Clark and Jerry Kaynard; Administrators Greg Gress, Andy Benke and Jason Blanton; Sullivan's Island resident, Sheran Rittenberg.

### 2. Appeal of W&S bill: Sheran G. Rittenberg 2668 I'On Ave.

Mr. Sheran, 2668 Ion, requested relief from a high W&S bill due to a leaky toilet while the home was unoccupied during a trip. The total bill was \$842 (9.60 CWS capital charge, 399.45 water & 422.78 sewer) in comparison with the 6 month average sewer bill was \$72.57. The W&S policy does not allow for reductions in the water bill because this is billed to the Town by CWS. However, reductions in sewer charges can be appealed. After discussion, during which Susan Middaugh pointed out that (1) the leak was indoors so all of the water was processed through the sewer plant at a cost to the Town; (2) this cost is borne by the residents, so relief granted to one resident is paid for by other residents; and (3) the W&S Committee has not granted relief in the past for indoor leaks except in instances of substantial hardship such as an elderly resident on fixed income.

Jerry Kaynard suggested that we include a line item in the next budget, with a \$ amount that can be used for relief, up to a set percentage of the bill. CWS handles such situations in this manner. Greg Gress requested that if this is decided upon, then requests for relief should be handled by staff as part of the routine bill appeal process, instead of the current process that requires a W&S Committee meeting for such an appeal. The Committee consensus was that this would be a good idea and would be discussed as part of the budget process for the coming fiscal year.

**MOTION:** by Chauncey Clark to grant relief in the amount of \$175 (50% of the amount of the sewer bill above the average sewer bill. Second by Jerry Kaynard. The motion passed 2 to 1 with Susan Middaugh dissenting.

**3. Status report on I&I project with regard to sewer laterals**

A question of interest is the extent to which leakage due to inflows from laterals on private property may be contributing to total I&I. This information is relevant because the Town owns the laterals from the main pipeline to the private property line connection and the homeowner owns, and is financially responsible for, the laterals from the home to the property line connection. As part of the current I&I project, the first two joints (approximately 6 feet) of all Town laterals are being cleaned, TV'd, pressure tested and grouted if necessary.

After this is completed, and as funds allow, laterals up to a length of 60 ft. from the mains will be inspected by TV. This distance will be sufficient to inspect longer Town laterals and the private laterals up to most houses in the project area. A push packer will be used to grout selected lateral joints. Priority will be given to areas where noticeable leakage is observed and likely trouble spots such as areas where laterals cross stormwater drains etc.

83% of lateral joints connecting to mains are leaking on pressure testing and being grouted - a higher percentage than expected. At the same time, fewer pipes than expected are needing to be replaced. It remains to be seen now these findings will affect the budget.

The question was asked whether the contract can be amended, if desired, to add funds for additional work. The answer is no, under the conditions of the SRF grant. However, it would be possible to have additional work done, if desired, under a separate Town contract.

**4. Policy on I&I due to sewer laterals on private property.**

Under Sec. 18-13 Connection of sources of surface runoff or ground water to building sewers and Sec. 18-18 Discharge of storm water, cooling water, etc., into sewers prohibited property owners are responsible for, and required to fix, leakage from private laterals into the sewer system.

After discussion it was decided that Greg Gress would edit our current ordinance and circulate a draft to the committee. This should address the following elements:

- a. To include language in Sec 18-18 to make it clear that unintentional leakage is also the responsibility of the property owner and not only deliberate discharge.
- b. To establish a written policy, modeled after that of CWS for their lateral testing program, to ensure that needed repairs are completed in a timely manner including the following elements (approximately)

A letter will be sent to the property owner to notify them of the problem. The property owner will be given 60 days to fix the problem, and a surcharge of \$60 per month will be assessed beginning with day 61. After 12 months from the date

of notification, the Town will have the right to enter the property to fix the problem and bill the property owner for this repair.

- c. To require, at the time of a change in ownership such as a sale, testing of private property laterals and repair as needed at the owner's expense.
- d. To include a statement approximating 11.3.7 and 11.3 of the East Norton Township – Community-wide inspection program as needed for the Town of Sullivan's Island ordinance. This is another example of a policy, similar to that of CWS (see b. above) that allows the Town, after due notice, to inspect private laterals and require a property owner to repair problems that are found within a stated time period. If this not done, the language provides the Town with the authority to enter the property to repair the problem and bill the property owner for this repair.

#### **5. Software conversion problems for W&S billing**

For the past several months there have been problems with the new software system for meter reading and billing for the W&S Department. This is part of a software upgrade for the Town administrative systems as a whole. Jason Blanton explained that the conversion from the old to the new software is relatively complex for W&S and progress is being made. He will call and track progress on the W&S problems to include a date by which they will be fixed.

- 6. Update on W&S easement across residential lots, Hennessey St. to Palmetto St.**  
This item was postponed due to lack of time.

#### **7. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM on a motion by Chauncey Clark, second by Jerry Kaynard and a unanimous vote.

#### **Pending Water & Sewer Committee Topics:**

The following are other current or upcoming items:

- a) Agreement with CWS regarding contracted water use
- b) W&S easement across residential lots, Palmetto St. to Hennessy St.