

TOWN OF AUBURN
Minutes of the Board of Sewer Commissioners Meeting
Town of Auburn D.P.W. – 5 Millbury Street
June 8, 2023 – 4:30 P.M.

In-person and by remote participation in accordance with Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022

The Auburn Board of Sewer Commissioners held a regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, June 8, 2023 in the Conference Room at the DPW Office, 5 Millbury Street, and remotely via <https://global.gotomeeting.com>

Those attending in person were:

Department Staff:

Ms. Joanna Paquin, DPW Director
Mr. Nicholas Schwartz, Assistant DPW Director/Sewer Superintendent
Mrs. JoAnne Donahue, Principal Clerk

Board Members:

Mr. Thomas Healey, Chairperson
Mr. Mark LaPlante, Secretary

Also Present:

Mr. John Capuano, 2 Rice Road, Auburn, MA

ITEM ONE-CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:48 P.M. by the Chairperson, Mr. Thomas Healey.

Mr. Healey announced that the meeting was being operated as a hybrid format under Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022. For the public to join the open meeting remotely by telephone, they can call 1-872-240-3311 and enter Access Code: 244-343-037, or the public can join via computer at: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/244343037> All supporting materials that have been provided to members of this body are available on the Town's website www.auburnguide.com and the public is encouraged to follow along using the posted agenda. Mr. Healey stated that the meeting was being recorded by global.gotomeeting.com.

ITEM TWO –APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. (This item was handled out of order after Item Three A)
April 6, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes: The Board reviewed the minutes of the April 6, 2023 Regular meeting. Mr. LaPlante motioned to approve the minutes of the April 6, 2023 regular meeting, as amended. Mr. Healey seconded and it was so voted.

ITEM THREE- NEW BUSINESS

A. Public Comments: Mr. John Capuano of 2 Rice Road was present at the meeting to discuss the sewer billing rates, charges and consumption. He explained that at his typical annual sewer usage, he pays more per cubic foot of wastewater than somebody who has a higher usage, due to the fact that our minimum charge covers usage up to 5,000 c.f. He explained that other elderly residents may also have low usage, but pay the same minimum fee as someone with higher usage, and would therefore similarly be paying a higher per cubic foot cost. The Board explained that the user charge system is set up to be as equitable as possible, with special consideration being made for the low income and lower use customers. It was also explained that costs are not all directly related to flow, but that there are fixed costs that must be accounted for. Mr. Capuano asked that the Board consider alternative systems as a basis of payment such as tiered rates. The Board indicated that they would take that under advisement and discuss at subsequent meetings.

B. FY2022 Sewer Use Abatement Applications: The Board reviewed the Fiscal Year 2022 sewer use abatement applications for 10 Westlund Avenue, 35 Burnap Street, 42 Berlin Street, 60 Pinehurst Avenue and 10 Manor Road. Mr. LaPlante motioned to approve the abatement applications as submitted for 10 Westlund Avenue, 35 Burnap Street, 42 Berlin Street, 60 Pinehurst Avenue and 10 Manor Road. Mr. Healey seconded and it was so voted.

C. Fiscal Year 2023 Sewer Use Billing Rates: Mr. Schwartz presented the Board with the projected budget for FY2024 and the projected revenues, which are based on the revenues generated from FY2023. Based on those projections, it was expected that there would be a budget deficit of \$204,864. Mr. Schwartz completed a rate analysis and presented the Board with 8 different rate scenarios, based on a combination of changing the base rate and variable rate, to make up the budget deficit. After discussing the various possible rate changes, Mr. LaPlante motioned to maintain the fixed minimum annual charge of \$200 for up to 5,000 cubic feet of water usage per unit, and to increase the variable rate for water usage above 5,000 cubic feet from \$9.38 to \$10.62 for each additional 100 cubic feet per unit. Mr. Healey seconded and it was so voted.

ITEM FOUR - I & I SEWER REHABILITATION

A. Sewer System Evaluation Study: Mr. Schwartz stated that they will continue working on the implementation of the recommendations from the previous study.

ITEM FIVE - UPPER BLACKSTONE CLEAN WATER

A. Ms. Paquin briefly updated the Board on the various in-house projects that Upper Blackstone Clean Water has been undertaking.

ITEM SIX - REVIEW OF BILL SCHEDULES

A. The Board reviewed the Sewer Division Bill Schedules for Fiscal Year 2023 which had been processed since April 6, 2023.

ITEM SEVEN - NEW SEWER CONNECTIONS

A. The Board reviewed the updated list of new sewer connections through June 8, 2023.

ITEM EIGHT – SEWER DIVISION/D.P.W. WORK LOG

A. The Board reviewed the DPW Work Log that Mr. Schwartz had prepared which included the work done by Sewer Division employees for the Highway Division, and the work done by the Sewer Division Employees for the Highway Division through June 8, 2023.

ITEM NINE - BUDGET REVIEW

A. The Board reviewed copies of the monthly operating budget reports prepared by Mr. Schwartz as of June 8, 2023.

ITEM TEN – CAPITAL PLANNING

A. Pinrock Pump Station Bypass Force Main: Mr. Schwartz advised the Board that the project met substantial completions, and that the contractor was working on punch list items. Additionally, Mr. Schwartz requested a change order to replace an existing air release valve on the force main, for which the contractor is waiting for parts.

B. Warren Road Pump Station Replacement: Mr. Schwartz advised the Board that the project was out to bid. Filed sub-bids for electric were received on June 7th, and were under the engineers' estimated cost. General bids will be received on Wednesday, July 14, 2023 at 2:00 p.m.

C. VFD (Variable Frequency Drive) Replacements at Holstrom and Sword Street Pump Stations: Mr. Schwartz stated that there were no updates on this project since the last meeting.

D. SCADA Upgrade: Mr. Schwartz stated that he was working on the procurement aspect of this project, which he was hoping to resolve in the near future.

ITEM ELEVEN – OLD BUSINESS

A. Board of Sewer Commissioners Membership Status: Mr. Schwartz stated that they are actively searching for new Sewer Commissioners. Mr. Healey stated that he is willing to stay on the Board while waiting for a new Commissioner to be appointed, but only for a short term.

B. I&I Fees: Mr. Schwartz provided the Board with a copy of Draft Regulation Changes that he had prepared in connection with the ongoing discussion of I&I fees and Sewer Regulation changes that need to be made. Discussion of the Regulation changes will continue at the next meeting.

ITEM TWELVE – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

A. The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for Thursday, August 17, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.

ITEM THIRTEEN – ADJOURNMENT

A. Mr. LaPlante motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:39 P.M. Mr. Healey seconded and it was so voted.

DOCUMENTS:

The following documents were part of the Board of Sewer Commissioner's Meeting on June 8, 2023 and are maintained in the Sewer Division office:

- Agenda
- Minutes of the April 6, 2023 Regular Meeting
- FY2022 Sewer Use Abatement Applications for:
 - 10 Westlund Avenue
 - 35 Burnap Street
 - 42 Berlin Street
 - 60 Pinehurst Avenue
 - 10 Manor Road
- Sewer Rate Sensitivity Analysis Tables – 8 cases (DRAFT)
- Sewer Division Expenditures & Revenue Estimates worksheet
- Copies of Sewer Division Bill Schedules dated April 10, April 18, April 24, May 1, May 4 (2), May 9, May 15 (2), May 23, and June 6, 2023
- Sewer Connection List as of 6/8/2023
- DPW Work Log through 6/8/2023
- Monthly Budget Reports as of 6/8/2023
- DRAFT REGULATION CHANGES dated 6/8/2023