



TOWN OF MEDWAY COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Department of Public Works

Medway Department of Public Works
45B Holliston Street
Medway, MA 02053
Phone (508) 533-3275
Fax (508) 321-4985

Director

David D'Amico

APPROVED 11/10/2020

Deputy Director

Peter Pelletier

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Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, no in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted at this meeting. Board members will be participating remotely. For public hearings, access via Zoom is provided for the required opportunity for public participation.

In attendance via Zoom: Michael Callahan, Chairperson
Leo O'Rourke, Commissioner
Steven Burke, Commissioner

Also in attendance via Zoom: David D'Amico, DPW Director, Barry Smith, Water & Sewer Superintendent, Paula Lawless, 6 Vernon Road, Joel Cutler, 3 Spring Street and Jill Karakeian, Program Administrator and Recording Secretary

Commissioner O'Rourke called the Water & Sewer Commissioners meeting to order at 6:07 P.M.

6 Vernon Road – Sewer tie-in cost

Ms. Lawless is interested in connecting her home to town sewer, expressed her concern on the filing fee to connect, stating \$4,000.00 was a lot of money – they've lived in Town since 1987 and if they knew it was \$100.00 before they would have tied in then. Hoping for some assistance and feels that maybe a senior discount should be in place for this type of cost. Planning on selling the home in the near future and feels it will be worth more if it was hooked up to town sewer.

Commissioner Callahan asked to understand the current infrastructure in place at 6 Vernon Road. Director D'Amico explained there is an existing sewer line and possible stub that goes by the property. Commissioner O'Rourke asked if any, what is the obligation and cost of the town's responsibility. Superintendent Smith states that he confirmed there was a stub, but the homeowner would need to hire a contractor to connect to the current sewer system and bring the line to the home.

Commissioner O'Rourke questioned our capacity and if this tie-in would be effected. Director D'Amico stated we may need to look at that but we are in the middle of a major I&I. CRPCD reserves capacity for homeowners so they can tie in. The moratorium is in place for large projects.

Superintendent Smith confirms that the town has homeowners tying into the sewer system quite often without recourse. Director D'Amico explains that if the Board wants to do something with regards to the hook-up fee of \$4,000.00, it should be a matter of policy not to just help out one resident.

Commissioner Callahan suggests the Board re-visit at the next meeting after speaking to and hearing Ms. Lawless's concerns.

Commissioner O'Rourke made a motion approve the minutes from the 7/14/20 meeting. Commissioner Burke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the remote Zoom meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Callahan abstains. Commissioner O'Rourke made a motion to approve the minutes from the 8/18/20 meeting. Commissioner Burke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the remote Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

Abatement Requests

3 Spring Street

Sewer only account. Watering plants from private well – asking for an abatement on the sewer charges since the water used didn't go into the sewer system. There was 3,158cf used during this billing period. The average of same periods is 2,182cf with the difference of 976cf. Breakdown of cost is 500cf @ minimum of \$38.19 and 476cf @ \$7.64(Tier 1) is \$36.37 with a total of \$74.56 that could possibly be abated.

Commissioner O'Rourke suggests Mr. Cutler hire a plumber to put a spigot on before the meter to avoid further need for abatements. Superintendent Smith suggests Mr. Cutler call and make an appointment for the Water/Sewer Department to come and give him direction on a spigot prior to the meter.

Commissioner O'Rourke made a motion to abate \$74.56 in sewer charges. Commissioner Burke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the remote Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

4 Howe Street

Water only account. The Board asked Mr. Carr why the delay in filing for the Abatement. He said he was trying to find the problem out and was waiting for a few cycles to see if the bill would go down. The original bill was dated 8/29/19 and the Abatement was filed on 5/6/20. Based on their average consumption of the same like August bill cycle it appears that the leak represents 6,683cf. The breakdown is as follows: 6,683cf @ \$14.11(tier 3) = \$942.97 that could potentially be abated.

Superintendent Smith confirms that in the Rules and Regulations, it states you have 30 days from the bill date to file for an abatement. Commissioner Burke asked if we have always adhered to the 30-day to file from the bill date, Superintendent Smith confirmed.

Commissioner Burke made a motion to deny due to the time frame to file the Abatement was not met. Commissioner O'Rourke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

47 Gorwin Drive

Water & Sewer account. Homeowner is seeking abatement - claims usage unreasonable given history, no leaks, no pool, no watering. Research was done showing the meter to be working properly - stopping, as it should, for periods of time during the night (typically when people are sleeping). Questioned about any toilet leaking, to check the flapper, making sure hoses are shut completely. It was explained that during this bill period, we are in the middle of a pandemic, everyone is home a lot more than usual, it has been a very hot few months and the rates went up. After having a number of conversations, the homeowner admitted to watering sometimes 5 days a week for an average of 45 minutes a day.

Commissioner Callahan made a motion to deny the request for an abatement as the water was used in violation of the water ban. Commissioner Burke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

2-3 Pine Ridge Drive

Water & Sewer account. Homeowner is seeking abatement - claims usage spiked with no changes to the home. Research was done showing the meter to be working properly - stopping, as it should, for periods of time during the night (typically when people are sleeping). It was explained that during this bill period, we are in the middle of a pandemic, everyone is home a lot more than usual, it has been a very hot few months and the rates went up. The time period from 7/8 - 7/13 had very high usage. Average usage for this period is 1,298cf - this period there were 3,199cf used. 1,901cf over what is normally consumed - breakdown of cost is as follows: Water 500cf @ \$46.14, 1,401cf @ \$10.61(Tier 1) = \$148.65 TOTAL \$195.79. Sewer 500cf @ \$38.19, 1,401cf @ \$7.64(Tier 1) = \$107.04 TOTAL \$145.23. The amount that could possibly be abated is \$341.02.

Superintendent Smith spoke to the homeowners, asked them if they had checked all 3 toilets to make sure there are no leaks. The homeowner's claimed they are all working properly.

Director D'Amico states some general information about the summer water usage (August bill). The town pumped 9.7 million gallons during the last quarter, we sold 9.4 million gallons. Our forecasted sales for this period, based on the same period a year ago was 8.1 million gallons. Everyone is home, lawns, gardens, more laundry.

Superintendent Smith explains that the town switched out their current meter to be tested – the homeowners requested that to be done.

Commissioner O'Rourke made a motion to table this abatement until the next meeting. Commissioner Burke seconds the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

15 Holliston Street

Water & Sewer account. Homeowner is seeking abatement - claims even with a 16% rate increase bill is excessive. Research was done showing the meter to be working properly - stopping, as it should, for periods of time during the night (typically when people are sleeping). It was explained that during this bill period, we are in the middle of a pandemic, everyone is home a lot more than usual, it has been a very hot few months and the rates went up. Average water use for this time frame is 1,252cf - this billing period there were 2,074cf used. The pattern in June/July showed higher usage. Consumption shows a significant decrease in usage after this past billing period.

Commissioner O'Rourke made a motion to deny the request for an abatement as the water was consciously used by the customer. Commissioner Burke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

1 Howe Street

Water only account. Homeowner is seeking abatement - claims usage must be incorrect. Research was done showing the meter to be working properly - stopping, as it should, for periods of time during the night (typically when people are sleeping). It was explained that during this bill period, we are in the middle of a pandemic, everyone is home a lot more than usual, it has been a hot few months and the rates went up. Water usage last year for this time period was 2,093cf, this time period was 4,302cf. Consumption shows a significant decrease in usage after this past billing period.

Commissioner Callahan made a motion to deny the request for an abatement abatement as the water was consciously used by the customer. Commissioner Burke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

7 Birch Bark Road

Water only account. Irrigation leak 5/26- 6/20 fixed. Water usage still 3x what is was last yr. See attached repair invoice. The additional water that was used due to the leak time period is 4,272cf. The breakdown is as follows - using the average water use during the months of the August billing is 5,028cf - from the current billed usage of 9,300cf = 4,272cf. Cost of possible abatement is as follows: 500cf = \$46.14, 1,500cf x \$10.61(Tier 1) = \$159.15, 1500cf x \$12.88(Tier 2) = \$193.20, 772cf x \$17.07(Tier 3) = \$131.78 - TOTAL \$530.27 could possibly be abated.

Commissioner Callahan questioned the usage of their irrigation system. Recording Secretary Karakeian states that their usage spiked during the August bill period. Superintendent Smith shows graph of daily usage. If it was a leak the meter would show constant use and this was not the case.

Commissioner Callahan made a motion to deny the request for an abatement as the water was used in violation of the water ban. Commissioner O'Rourke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

21 Howe Street

Water & Sewer account. Sewer Charge Abatement During Lawn Seeding 5/10 thru 5/23, which is prior to the Mandatory Water Ban. This was a span between 2 billing periods. Take the average of their usage - the breakdown of the Abatement is as follows: May 2020 bill, usage overage of 674cf - calculated 500cf = \$38.19, 174cf x \$7.64(Tier 1) = \$13.29 for a total of \$51.48 and August 2020 bill, usage overage of 3,131cf - calculated 500cf = \$38.19, 1,500cf x \$7.64(Tier 1) = \$115.00, 1,313cf x \$8.73(Tier 2) = \$98.74 for a total of \$251.93. If an abatement were granted the credit would be \$303.41.

Commissioner O'Rourke made a motion to abate \$303.41 in sewer charges. Commissioner Callahan seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

3 Hawthorne Street

Water only account. The homeowner filled their pool and was hoping to have the additional charge abated. The additional water was used out of the Mandatory Water Band timeframe. The average usage in the month of May is 2,161cf. The difference from this bill is 1,524cf. If the abatement were to be granted the breakdown is 500cf = \$45.35, 1,024cf x \$9.07(Tier 1) = \$92.88 - TOTAL \$138.23.

Commissioner O'Rourke made a motion to deny the request for an abatement as the water was used in violation of the water ban. Commissioner Burke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

277 Village Street

Water & Sewer account. My monthly water/sewer and trash bill has always been around \$350. This month's bill was \$1339.27. This \$1000 increase was not an error on the Water Department but solely due to my own absent minded error. I am retired and in my late 70s so sometimes you forget things like remembering to turn off the water after watering plants. Unfortunately, I did not find my mistake until the next morning. The water ran for almost 10 hours. This of course was my mistake and I will pay the bill. However, I would respectfully ask that you reconsider the sewer bill of \$525.02 as most of this water did not go through the sewer system but out on the ground. I apologize for my mistake. Any reconsideration of the sewer charge amount on this bill would be greatly appreciated. After taking the average usage from previous August bills of 1,585cf from the current bill of 5,571cf = 3,986cf is the overage. The breakdown of sewer cost is 500cf - \$38.19, 1,500cf x \$7.64(Tier 1) = \$114.60, 1,500cf x \$8.73(Tier 2) = \$130.95, 486cf x \$11.65(Tier 3) = \$56.61 with a total of \$340.34 that could potentially be abated.

Commissioner O'Rourke made a motion to abate \$340.34 in sewer charges. Commissioner Burke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

52 Holliston Street

Water & Sewer account. The homeowner filed for an abatement back in December of 2019 for the 11/29/19 bill due to landscape work they had done (seed and aerate lawn). Due to this work that was done - he claims he would like an abatement on the sewer because of the water used to keep up the lawn, the water went into the lawn and not into the Sewer system. It has been past practice that we do not entertain abatement requests during the DEP Mandated Water Ban for lawn watering. They used 3,215cf of water and were billed \$258.87 for sewer. The average of the same August periods is 2,021cf which could be deducted. This leaves 1,194cf of water used to water the new lawn that did not enter the sewer system. The breakdown is 500cf = \$38.19, 694cf x \$7.64(Tier 1) = \$53.02 for a total of \$91.21 that could potentially be abated.

Commissioner O'Rourke made a motion to deny the request for an abatement as the water was used in violation of the water ban. Commissioner Burke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

3 Stanley Road

Sewer only account. Homeowner is looking for an abatement on their current Water/Sewer/Trash Bill. They are Sewer & Trash customer only, an elder couple with the husband suffering from dementia and the wife is unfortunately following in the same footsteps. They use minimal sewer always. There was a 4-day span May 15-18, 2020 that obviously something was running that they were unaware of. This portion of the leak represents approximately 5,027cf over their average consumption. If an abatement were granted the breakdown would be: 500cf @ \$38.19, 1,500cf x \$7.64(Tier 1) = \$114.60, 1,500cf x \$8.73(Tier 2) = \$130.95, 1,527cf x \$11.65(Tier 3) = \$177.90 - TOTAL \$461.64

Commissioner Callahan made a motion to abate \$461.46 in sewer charges. Commissioner O'Rourke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

1 Meryl Street

Water & Sewer account. Homeowner is seeking an abatement on the sewer charges for the water used for the pool. In the past, we do not entertain pool top off abatement requests or pool fills during the DEP Mandated Water Ban. Research was done on the usage during the billing period and the meter looks to be working correctly.

Commissioner O'Rourke expresses concern with the pandemic going on and everyone is forced to stay home.

Director D'Amico spoke to Town Manager, Michael Boynton about the number of abatements and comments, explained with the pandemic and forecasted 8.1 million gallons, we sold 9.4 million gallons. We could do something across the board, not an abatement but a reduction or rebate and his opinion was not to do that – there will be another increase this coming year and any extra money we collect now goes towards that.

Director D'Amico explained that all these abatements that were denied should have also been fined for using the water illegally, but the fines were not enforced.

Commissioners tabled this abatement until the October meeting.

3 Steppingstone Drive

Water & Sewer account. Abatement on bill due to nobody living there - passed papers on 2/27/20, stayed at son's house in Mendon that night then flew to Florida the next day until 3/31 and then stayed with relatives until 4/3, then went to our NH home. First night to stay at the condo will be 9/15 to 9/16. Outside spigots weren't even on until 7/1 - that's when furniture was moved in. Minimal use is visible on the dates they say they had made day trips to the condo but can't explain the high usage on 5/16, 5/17 and 5/18. There was 2,293cf used on the current bill. Using the previous bill of 329cf, that's a difference of 1,964cf. The breakdown of the water usage 500cf - \$46.14, 1,464cf @ \$10.61(Tier 1) - 155.33 = Total Water \$201.47. The breakdown of the sewer usage 500cf - \$38.19, 1,464cf @ \$7.64(Tier 1) - \$111.85 = Total Sewer \$150.04. The total is \$351.51 that could be possibly abated.

Commissioner O'Rourke suggests checking meter. Superintendent Smith agrees and will check meter.

Commissioners tabled this abatement until the October meeting.

9 Holbrook Street

Water only account. Seeking abatement for a toilet leaking due to manufacturer's defects. There was a total of 3,456cf used this bill period. I took the average of their usage from similar periods which is 1,254cf. The cost breakdown is 500cf - \$46.14, 754cf @ \$10.61(Tier 1) - \$78.00 = Total of \$124.14 that could be possibly abated.

Commissioner O'Rourke made a motion to abate 50% = \$62.07 in water charges as the customer should bear some of the responsibility. Commissioner Callahan seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.

98 West Street

Water & Sewer account. Homeowner requests abatement - 75% of the water used on this bill was to water grass, no sewage needed. It has been past practice that we do not entertain abatement requests during the DEP Mandated Water Ban for lawn watering. There was 8,004cf used this bill. The average of the same like periods of 2,745cf which could be deducted. The breakdown of the sewer charge is as follows: 500cf - \$38.19, 1,500cf x \$7.64(Tier 1) = \$114.60, 745cf x \$8.73(Tier 2) = \$65.04 - Total of \$217.83 that could be possibly abated.

Commissioners tabled this abatement until the October meeting.

Board Reorganization:

Commissioners tabled until October meeting.

Water Treatment Plant Discussion & Satellite Well at Populatic Discussion:

Superintendent Smith states the leak detection is finished and found 2 service leaks and a small hydrant leak. Director D'Amico explains we are running at 5% unaccounted for water – looking good.

I&I Update:

Superintendent Smith gave a status update on I&I. We've been working with GHD and have some stuff in the works to try and fix the leaks that were found. We are out doing some investigating ourselves but with no rain, it's been a challenge.

Directors Report

Commissioner O'Rourke asked about the online customer meter portal program. Director D'Amico explains that we are at a point that we could advertise and start collecting email addresses for the AquaHawk program so they can access it themselves. We still have 50ish meters that we can't read but that will always be the case with those unfortunately.

The next meeting has been scheduled for October 13, 2020 at 6:00pm.

Commissioner O'Rourke made a motion to adjourn at 7:37pm. Commissioner Burke seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken due to the nature of the remote Zoom meeting. The motion carries unanimously.