

January 20, 2010 Minutes

Present were WATER Commission members Interim-Chair Sandra Finizia, Wayne Battey, Robby Brown, Peter McNerney, Cliff McGinnes. Alternate Frank Leslie and District Clerk Janet Ziegler. Absent was alternate Rally Migliaccio.

Present were SEWER Commission members Interim-Chair Robby Brown, Tom Doyle, Sandra Finizia, Peter McNerney, Cliff McGinnes. Alternate Frank Leslie and District Clerk Janet Ziegler. Absent was alternate Rally Migliaccio.

Also present were Public Works Director Nancy Dodge, Finance Director Amy Lewis, Superintendents Ray Boucher and Dave Simmons, Attorney Elliot Taubman and Howell Conant of Omni Electric.

S. Finizia called the meeting to order at 4:34 P.M

### **JOINT MEETING WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT**

1. Welcome New Member.

The Commissioners welcomed new Water and Sewer member Cliff McGinnes to the meeting.

Since N. Dodge was not in attendance, the Commissioners agreed to postpone the 2nd agenda item.

3. Energy Grants (E. Taubman).

E. Taubman stated that he has been exploring various potential projects and financing that could produce savings in fuel and electricity for both plants. After receiving a go-ahead nod from the Commissioners, E. Taubman said that he would likely have proposals and a financial analysis ready for the commission's review by the end of the month. Two projects mentioned were photovoltaic and 'smart meters' to measure electricity usage. Mystic Solar has volunteered to produce numbers regarding cash flow and pay back.

The sewer superintendent responded that there was adequate real estate on the grounds with southern exposure and that he could provide any of the numbers needed. The water superintendent stated that BIWC (BI Water Company) had no available real estate for the installation of solar except for the roof; additionally all available capital was tied up in the water main expansion project and redevelopment in the well field.

(N. Dodge arrived at 4:45 PM)

2. Director of Public Works and Engineering.

- Status of Alarm Systems.

N. Dodge stated that the Fire Department requested that all alarms be relayed through the police station and that the Honeywell Alarms, promoted by Conant Electric, were not compatible with the new receiver installed at the dispatch office. She has already purchased four Adam alarms (\$3,500 each) for sewer pump stations.

H. Conant said that C. McGinnes and R. Boucher had asked him to attend the meeting and answer questions regarding the Honeywell alarm boxes. He offered that 10 alarm boxes have already been installed at other sites on Block Island and the tested response has been instantly. Although the alarm signal goes off-island, the return relay has an option to send a text message to a cell phone; additionally the system can be accessed through a laptop or smart phone where items can be turned off/on.

C. McGinnes stated that he was installing a \$500 Honeywell at Sharkey's and inquired why the pump stations needed such expensive equipment. Boucher reported that a Honeywell alarm had just been installed at the Boat Basin and is being tested. Simmons reported that BIWC installed both alarms; they felt it was important that a fire signal went directly to dispatch and also wanted to receive information by text message.

H. Conant explained that All SMS (Short Message Service) signals go to long island first; the relays allow an operator to remotely reset the Honeywell alarms. Monthly charges for commercial accounts would be ~ \$30/month each unit.

N. Dodge stated that with the Allen boxes, the Town is expecting annual charges of ~\$300 to \$400 to cover all units – the individual alarm monitoring cost will depend on how many commercial customers sign up. N. Dodge asked that a sewer commission meet with her and R. B Allen to discuss the pros/cons and crunch numbers since they were on-island.

S. Finizia and sewer superintendent R. Boucher volunteered to meet.

- **Seawinds Update.** N. Dodge reported that Seawinds has been given the allocation numbers and costs. Additionally, a municipal lien had been filed on the one affordable unit which is expected to close shortly. A. Land added that all Seawind fees must be settle at the time of closing.

Winter Vacation Schedules – Quorum.

With the BI School vacation scheduled for the same week as the February monthly meeting, there was a brief discussion of winter vacations and whether a quorum would be available for the next meeting.

**MOTION:** by S. Finizia to move the February 17 scheduled water and sewer meeting to the following week, February 24, to accommodate the island vacation schedule. The motion was seconded, a quorum was present and the vote to move the monthly meetings to February 24 was:

Water Commission: AYE: 5 (Battey, Brown, Finizia, McGinnes, Mc Nerney). NAY: Ø. ABSTAIN: Ø.  
Sewer Commission: AYE: 5 (Brown, Doyle, Finizia, McGinnes, Mc Nerney). NAY: Ø. ABSTAIN: Ø.

The motion carried.

## WATER DISTRICT

5. Accept December 14 Water Minutes.

**MOTION:** by Motion by P. Mc Nerney to accept the December 14 water minutes as distributed. The motion was seconded, a quorum was present and the vote was unanimous.

6. Election of a Water Commission Vice-Chair.

**MOTION:** by S. Finizia to elect R. Brown as Vice-Chair since he has been leading the sewer commission meetings and has the most experience. The motion was seconded, a quorum was present and the vote was:

AYE: 5 (Battey, Brown, Finizia, McGinnes, Mc Nerney). NAY: Ø. ABSTAIN: Ø.

The motion carried.

7. Director of Public Works and Engineering.

- **Water Main Extension Project, Expansion of Water District, USDA Water Application and Projects.**

N. Dodge stated that Geremia is in the process of making application to USDA for funding of the water main extension proposed for Ocean Avenue and West Side Road and the well # 4 rehabilitation projects. The proposed extension resulted from requests for municipal services (E. Searles Ball and Interstate Navigation); the area is already serviced by sewers.

**MOTION:** by McGinnes to authorize J. Geremia to proceed with the formal funding request for the two projects as a single combined application; interest rate is to be determined by USDA, but not more than 3.5%. The motion was seconded, a quorum was present and the vote to authorize was:

AYE: 5 (Battey, Brown, Finizia, McGinnes, Mc Nerney). NAY: Ø. ABSTAIN: Ø.

The motion carried.

N. Dodge stated that a Public Notice would in posted in the Block Island Times regarding the \$785K request for funding of the water main and well.

- **RI Project Priority List.** N. Dodge reported that the projects would be put on the State's priority list. If chosen for refunding, an appreciable savings could be realized. The USDA loan term is 40 years, while the State is 20 years and with lower interest rate. The last time the Town refunded through the State, a 50% saving of the original costs was realized.

8. Finance.

December Financials, Aging Report.

A. Land reported that water revenues was 41% of budget which compares favorable to last year's figure of 36% for the same time. Expenses can not be compared relatively because last year's budget contained a loan pay-off. There is \$465K in reserves. A recap of the Audited FY 2009 finances, relative to water and sewer, will be presented at the March meeting.

Aging. A. Land reported that 30 utility customers were sent letters for past due accounts.

## 9. Water Plant Operations.

The current 'service area' census data will not be redone until after the 2010 has been completed and accepted, probably two years down the line.

C. McGinnes inquired as to the concern of BIWC with Sands Pond height. Simmons replied that the company has buried tanks between the building and pond and are monitoring the levels as well as Geremia's office. The last ten years have had high rainfall events, but the level has changed little over the last three years. Noted of interest was that the old US Geological Maps showed similar heights to where the Pond is presently. The topic will be considered for the March meeting.

## 10. Correspondence.

- December 18, Geremia to USDA requesting use of existing Service Area Income Survey in 2010. *Covered earlier.*
- January 12, 2010, Town Manager's documentation for RI Project Priority List (various projects). *Covered earlier.*

## 11. Announcements and Public Comment.

## 12. Discussion of Real Property Acquisition for Public Purpose; May Go Into Closed Session Pursuant to RIGL § 42-46-5(5).

**MOTION:** by C. McGinnes to go into closed session to discuss a possible property acquisition that may become available and its funding. The motion was seconded, a quorum was present and the vote to go into closed session was:

AYE: 5 (Battey, Brown, Finizia, McGinnes, McNerney). NAY: Ø. ABSTAIN: Ø.

The motion carried.

The meeting went into closed session at 6:22 PM.

S. Finizia reconvened the open meeting at 6:27 PM and reported that there were no votes taken in closed session.

**MOTION:** by C. McGinnes to seal the minutes of the closed session was seconded and unanimously approved by all members present.

**SEWER DISTRICT**

## 13. Accept December 14 Sewer Minutes.

**MOTION:** by T. Doyle to accept as distributed with minor changes. The motion was seconded, a quorum was present and the vote was:

AYE: 4 (Brown, Doyle, Finizia, McNerney). NAY: Ø. ABSTAIN: (1) McGinnes.

The motion carried.

## 14. Election of Vice Chair for Sewer.

**MOTION:** by P. McNerney to appoint C. McGinnes as Vice-chair for sewer. The motion was seconded, a quorum was present and the vote was:

AYE: 5 (Brown, Doyle, Finizia, McGinnes, McNerney). NAY: Ø. ABSTAIN: Ø.

The motion carried.

It was noted that there was an annual election of officers every May when members are appointed.

## 15. Director of Public Works and Engineering.

- USDA Sewer Plant Projected Projects.

N. Dodge reported that in conversations with the Commission's engineer, they discussed putting together a USDA grant request to cover sewer needs: generator switches, muffler and spark arrestors; the roof and an overall electrical assessment.

**MOTION:** by C. McGinnes to grant authorization for J. Geremia to proceed with a USDA grant request to cover sewer plant needs including electrical and generator issues. The motion was seconded, a quorum was present and the vote was:

AYE: 5 (Brown, Doyle, Finizia, McGinnes, McNerney). NAY: Ø. ABSTAIN: Ø.

The motion carried.

(N. Dodge leaves at 6:38 PM)

## 16. Finance.

December Financials, Aging Report.

A. Land reviewed the expenses line items. Noted were improvements in the electric and gas lines. R. Boucher asked that

the gas and oil lines be revisited and questioned expenditures of \$16K in building maintenance. Responding to requests to have an additional column to express figures as a percent of budget, Land said that it would be possible to do when sewer and water move over to the new accounting system.

#### 17. Sewer Plant Operations.

- Update Roof Repairs. R. Boucher reported that the plethora of snowfall in January prevented repairs from going forward. The Commissioners expressed concern about completion.

- Engineering Recommendation for Caterpillar Generator Operations.

There was no information to report from J. Geremia. C. McGinnes volunteer to also investigate recommendations with his Cat contacts. R. Boucher stated that one of the two sewer generators would have a maintenance evaluation performed this year.

(E. Taubman leaves at 6:56 PM)

#### Credit Cards for Sewer Plant Employees.

R. Boucher stated that all of the credit cards held by sewer employees were cancelled because of problems with the firm. The cards were a necessity for purchases and for educational travel expenses. A. Land was not in favor of municipal credit cards as they are often too convenient; approval levels and controls can easily be by-passed and the paper trail, necessary to track public funds, is lacking. D. Simmons stated that he used his own credit card when necessary, and that reimbursements were prompt, but that he would not turn down a company card.

**MOTION:** by P. McNerney to authorize finance to obtain two credit cards in the name of each superintendent. The motion was seconded, a quorum was present and the vote to authorize was:

AYE: 5 (Brown, Doyle, McGinnes, McNerney). NAY: (1) Finizia. ABSTAIN: Ø.

The motion carried.

A. Land stated that a policy should be developed as to limitations and when the cards could be used; she will contact Washington Trust for applications.

(A. Land leaves at 7:10 PM)

#### 18. Job Applicant Recommendation Committee.

R. Boucher stated that he would like to have a new employee by summer, either full or part-time. Most applicants received last fall were no longer available. He proposed advertising for an operator with a Class 2 license or hire someone capable of performing lab duties.

**MOTION:** by C. McGinnes to put a classified ad in the Providence Journal for up to a Class 2 operator; the ad should also state that benefits and housing were available. The motion was seconded, a quorum was present and the vote was:

AYE: 5 (Brown, Doyle, Finizia, McGinnes, McNerney). NAY: Ø. ABSTAIN: Ø.

The motion carried.

#### 19. Correspondence.

- December 15, NSSC to Town Council requesting additions to Sewer District. *On tonight's Town Council agenda.*
- December 18, from Geremia to NSSC with recommendation for sewer gravity system for Pike. *So noted.*

#### 20. Announcements and Public Comment. *None*

#### Adjourn.

**MOTION:** by R. Brown to adjourn the meeting was seconded, a quorum was present and the vote to adjourn was approved unanimously by all members present.

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 P.M.

Respectfully submitted, Janet Ziegler

District Clerk Approved: February 24, 2010

<http://www.blockislandwater.org/minutes.html>



every drop counts

The New Shoreham Sewer Commission and Water Board are an equal opportunity providers and employers.