



Water/Wastewater Commission

Meeting Minutes

January 13th, 2021

J.A. Provenial Building
1200 Rindge Rd, Fitchburg MA 01420

A meeting for the City of Fitchburg Water/Wastewater Commission was held on Wednesday January 9th, 2021 via Zoom and FATV.

The meeting commenced at 5:04 pm

Members present: Rick Healey, Chairman
Steven Bodurtha, Commission Member
George Seiner, Commission Member
Nicolas Bosonetto, Commissioner of Public Works

Others present: Jeff Murawski., Deputy Commissioner of Wastewater
John Deline., Deputy Commissioner of Water
Jennifer Lambert, Head Clerk Water Division
Nathan Glenny, FATV

Absentees: Michael Mclaughlin, Commission Member

Item #1

Approval of meeting minutes: Motion to approve minutes from December 9th, 2020 meeting was granted by unanimous vote.

Item #2

Public Forum: None

Item #4

Water Division:

- Water Rate Study – City Auditor Calvin Brooks received some feedback from DOR about our water rate revenues for FY20. We were a bit low, but not as bad as we thought though. COVID of course played a role as some of our biggest water users were shut down, and all backflow test were out on hold. Meeting last week about this very and Calvin would like to do a water rate study and increase the rates sooner than later. Right now in our current fiscal year our water revenues are ahead by 3.5% compared to last fiscal year. Information is being gathered by our Business Manager along with the Mayor, Auditor and DPW Commissioner. We will meet again in the next few months to discuss more in depth. We will be looking at the schools and possibly city departments paying for water because at this time they do not, and one good thing is that we have a \$900,000 loan payment going away this year. We are hoping we can push the rate increase out until 2022.
- 245 River St – Several months ago we received a letter from the owners of 245 River St. stating they feel we had been over charging them because since their meter was changed their bills are significantly lower. Brand new meter installed in September 2019. After a lengthy investigation, the meter was found to be defective on the low side. The meter at this facility is a compound meter which means it has a high side for large flow and a low side for lower flows. We installed a new meter to investigate the difference of the billing for the next few months and found that we had actually under billed them for approx... \$74,000 combined for water/sewer. We will need to figure out our next steps moving forward on how to go about billing them. We will reach out to City Solicitor for legal advice on this matter.
- Meter upgrade project – Approximately 85-86 hundred new meters installed which leaves about 28 hundred left to go. Meter installation has picked up after the holidays but we will be sending another round of letters to our unresponsive customers. Once this projects comes to an end our software for our old metering system Badger will be gone. This means we will have to enter customers' homes every month to read the old meter manually. We would like to propose a fee of \$50 for customers who have not had their meter changed in this last letter that will be going out. We are hoping this will get customers attention when they receive a higher bill.

Item #3

Wastewater Division:

- Sewer Ordinance, City Code Chapter 147 – Ordinance was approved by City Council on December 15th, and then was signed by Mayor DiNatale on December 18th. We are still waiting on City Solicitor Pusateri for comments and feedback on the revised DRAFT “ Sewer Rules and Regulations” I am hoping to have his comments and feedback at our next meeting come February.
- Construction Projects- CSS project contractor J.A. Polito & Son’s commenced work on November 24th. They addressed a failing sewer on lower South St and installed approx... 80 linear feet of replacement sewer. Work has continued through the winter with spot excavation work and plans to include trenchless rehabilitation portions of the work. Our on call construction contract work with Blue Diamond has completed the Highview St open cut excavation work. They have not yet conducted the trenchless rehabilitation portion of the work. Wastewater has requested a price proposal from Blue Diamond for sewer separation work on Boulder Dr. This work is planned to be done in the spring on 2021.

- WMP, Consent Decree Submission #2 – This submission was submitted to EPA & MassDEP on December 30th. Prepared by Weston & Sampson and approved by Wastewater. We have made this publicly available on the City Website Wastewater page.
- Joint Water & Wastewater ‘Rates Study’ – The wastewater department of course has two more increases (FY22 & FY23) for the approved 5-year period of increased rates that were approved in April of 2018. Of course rates are strongly correlated with capital improvements and the city cannot walk away from the consent decree. It does make sense that if we were going to do a rate study that we should combine our efforts and savings for both departments and have same consultant do the work.

Item #4

Other Business:

- The Water/Wastewater Commission will next meet at 5:00 pm. on March 10, 2021 at the J.A. Provenial Building, 1200 Rindge Rd. Fitchburg MA, 01420.

Meeting adjourned at 5:55 pm