

**TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY
September 9, 2015**

**SPECIAL Meeting Minutes
(Not yet approved by the Authority)**

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Andrew Lord called the meeting to order at 7:00p.m.

2. ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT: Andrew Lord, Edward Blaschik, Robert Casner, Arthur Merrow, Richard Pettinelli

ABSENT: Richard Fiala, John Russell

OTHERS PRESENT: James Ventres and 6 members of the public.

3. PUBLIC HEARING:

A) Proposed increase in the East Haddam Village District sewer usage fees

Mr. Lord explained to the audience the proposed increase in the sewer district usage fees. The proposal would increase the user fees from \$975.00 per EDU to \$1025.00 per EDU.

Mr. Lord opened the hearing to the public.

Mr. Dave Johnston, 63 Main Street, recalled at a previous meeting several years ago, there had been a 20% increase. Now the Authority is proposing approximately another 5%. He asked if there has been a significant increase with Goodspeed's new actor housing. Mr. Ventres reviewed the sewer fees over the years. In 1997, the fee was \$700; it rose in 2012 to \$950, and the new proposal is \$1025. He added that in 2012, the sewer district gained approximately 18 new units with the actor housing.

Mr. Johnston asked about new EDUs. Mr. Ventres stated there are plans to eventually move the town offices into the former middle school, and there is a building committee to do so. This would free up the town office site for development.

Mr. Johnston asked if there were any other ways to increase the sewer district. Mr. Ventres stated there is a study that has been done, and the Authority is waiting for that report.

Mr. Lord explained that the sewer plant was built at the CT DEEP's direction using state and federal funds. If the town can move out of its current site, it should help more EDUs to be created on that site. The town office building currently only accounts for 1 EDU.

Mr. Johnston asked if the sewer plant was oversized. Mr. Ventres explained the rates, peak flows, etc. He stated the operator of the plant can carry larger peak flows if there are large scheduled functions, but they can only do this on a short term basis. The DEEP previously cautioned that if the town hits 45,000 gallons per day on a regular basis, the town will have to look at expansion. They typically carry around 30,000 – 35,000 gallons per day on peak flow days. Mr. Lord added that the treatment plant is approximately 20 years old. He stated the DEEP requires factors built in for safety, so there is plenty of capacity within the plant for our use.

Ms. Nikki Sahagen, 20 Liberty Street, Chester stated she owns #4 and #5 Hem Street. She indicated there is a strip of property that goes down to the village. Mr. Ventres noted this subdivision was approved in the 1970's. He stated a few years ago, test pits were done, and it was determined at that point that there were issues with the septic area.

Ms. Sahagen stated the district has been redistricted from 2-acre zoning to 1-acre zoning. She asked about a possibility of a third lot. Mr. Ventres explained that this commission can only act on approved parcels in front of them. Mr. Lord explained there is a proposal as part of tonight's public hearing to add 4 and 5 Hem Street to the sewer district. Although they need to proceed with some caution, the Authority believes it is prudent to add these lots to the district. He further noted that unless they hear testimony against it to change their minds, they would likely be inclined to approve this addition tonight.

Responsive to inquiry by Ms. Sahagen, Mr. Ventres suggested she proceed with these two lots this evening. Ms. Sahagen asked about fees upon approval. It was noted that the customers are typically charged the fees when the hook into the sewer. Mr. Lord explained that there is only one property that isn't connected to the system because the property owner did not sign any of the necessary easements. Although the committee moved forward without this parcel at the time, it will become a problem for a future owner. Mr. Ventres explained that when Ms. Sahagen connects, she will be responsible for running the lines.

Mr. Lord explained that the commission is looking at this issue from a very "macro" view right now. The issue now before this commission is whether to add these two lots to the sewer district. Ms. Sahagen asked about the option for her children or someone else at some point who might want to put a septic system on Lot 4. She stated Lot 5 was the only issue. Mr. Ventres believed the most options at this point would be gained by adding both Lots 4 and 5 Hem Street to the district.

Mr. Casner stated it appeared that they would have to run a line for Lot 5 through Lot 4. Discussion ensued and Ms. Sahagen and the commission reviewed the plans.

Mr. Blaschik stated his assumption was that if you were in the sewer district, you had no option but to connect to the sewer. Mr. Casner stated that was his understanding as well.

Ms. Sahagen stated she would like to only add Lot 4. Mr. Blaschik asked the acreage, to which it was noted it was 2+ acres. Mr. Pettinelli stated if only Lot 4 is added to the district, then if she planned to subdivide in the future, only Lot 4 could be used. Mr. Ventres stated the 2014 correspondence from Ms. Sahagen asked for both properties.

Mr. Casner asked what lot or lots the property owner wanted to have added. Ms. Sahagen wished to have only Lot 4 added. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Virginia Rutledge stated she lives right next to the plant. She stated they were forced to demolish a perfectly good system. She stated at the last meeting, the rates were raised to \$950. At that time, the neighbors asked why this could not be shared by the town. She submitted an old document sent by the town entitled “6 Reasons why you should support the East Haddam sewer project.” The paragraphs were numbered and subtitled as follows: 1) Because we have a public health problem here that cannot be ignored; 2) Because these problems will ultimately affect all taxpayers in town; 3) Because the DEP has ordered us to address this issue; 4) Because the lack of a sewer system is the single largest barrier against economic development in the area; 5) Because the availability of federal and state grants right now make this project as affordable to users and taxpayers alike as it will ever be; 6) Because the window of opportunity for these federal and state grants – which total 65% of the project costs – is very small. At her request, Mr. Lord stated this document would be incorporated into these minutes by reference.

Mr. Ventres explained that the document to which Ms. Rutledge referred was sent regarding the debt service repayment. This debt has been paid by the town. This was not for the user fees.

Ms. Rutledge argued that the rest of the townspeople use this sewer system by using the libraries, go to the theatre, use the boat launch, etc. She stated she does not have children going to the school, but she still pays taxes.

Mr. Gary Bogan stated there is a very low turnout this evening, which he found discouraging. He stated the village is a sensitive area. He noted that the town offices will be moving to a new area with ample parking, etc. He asked this commission to think about inviting business here. The village is beautiful, but you have to think about what will be put here.

Mr. Bogan recalled that 6 months after his system went in, it failed. He stated he has given 35 years of his life to this village. He was the first to say there was a problem and was ecstatic when the sewers came. He believed the costs will discourage businesses. He asked if expansion was the ideal solution to control the costs. He did not believe special events

overload the system. He believed they need to start chopping some costs here. He referred to the recent cost of the steps at \$4,000. He asked why there was not more town involvement. Mr. Ventres stated they were originally put together with metal plates on the steps, and they are coming apart due to salt and chemicals getting under the plates. The metal plates put there to protect them are deteriorating. The products that advertise being safe for concrete are not. He stated if they don't put material down, it could be a liability issue if people get hurt. When you put material down, it takes its toll on the concrete.

Mr. Lord explained that they put a lot of work into the rehabilitation of the plant by way of grant money. These were just items that were identified that were not covered under the grant. This board takes cost efficiency very seriously. They recently went out to bid for the maintenance contract. No one else even bid because they could not touch what the current operator is doing for the fee. It was not worth their time to bid.

Mr. Bogan stated there are only a handful of businesses in the village. He was concerned about restaurants, etc. failing here due to runaway costs. He stated the sewer fee is a large bite for businesses and residents. He asked if any thought had been given recently to expanding to Haddam. Mr. Lord stated it has been discussed and considered. It was decided that the Town of East Haddam built and paid for this plant, and is responsible for managing that plant the best we can. The town owns the capacity of the plant.

Mr. Bogan asked the capacity of the plant, and what we use. Mr. Ventres stated the town typically runs around 17,000 – 19,000 gallons per day (GPD), but goes up to around 29,000 GPD during the summer, and sometimes to 32,000 GPD when there are double shows at the Goodspeed. Mr. Lord stated the town is somewhat bound by the DEEP, and cannot just expand wherever they want. Another townsperson stated the cost factor for Haddam to bore underneath the river would not be worth it. Mr. Lord stated our system was built to address an issue through the DEEP.

Mr. Bogan asked about someone coming to review each house. Mr. Ventres stated no, they received guidebooks on what to do if your system fails, as well as stickers. He plans to drop these off at each house/business in the district.

Mr. Bogan stated the commission needs to keep this topic on the horizon. The village is a sensitive area right now, and the additional burden of the increases could discourage growth. Economic development is essential to their growth.

Ms. Rutledge asked how many users there are, to which Mr. Ventres stated there are 102 users. Ms. Rutledge asked why the rates were not going down. Mr. Ventres stated the grinder pump repairs and replacements were the second largest expenditure. They received a \$100,000 grant, and they continually look for new grants. Mr. Merrow did some research and discovered that 20% of the pumps have not been touched.

Ms. Rutledge stated there is a large hose by the door. It has been capped, but it still emits an odor. She asked why the hose is there. Mr. Ventres will talk to them about it.

Mr. Merrow asked if the bond would be paid off in two years. Mr. Ventres believed it was two years. Mr. Merrow stated if he was a member of the sewer district, he would lobby the Board of Finance to put that money back into the WPCA.

B) Proposed addition of 4 & 5 Hem Street to the East Haddam Village District

Mr. Lord stated there are two yet undeveloped lots the Authority is proposing to add into the sewer district. The discussion with Ms. Sahagen earlier this evening related to these lots.

The public hearing was opened to the public, but no further comments were offered.

C) Discussion of EDU assessment on individual properties

Mr. Ventres read into the record a letter dated August 12, 2015 stating that his house has been reduced from a two family to a single-family residence, resulting in a decrease from 2 to 1 EDU, and has been inspected by the East Haddam Building Inspector. This letter was sent from Kevin Nee, 54 Creamery Road.

No public comments were offered for this hearing.

**Motion by Mr. Casner to close the public hearings for Items 3A, 3B, and 3C.
Motion seconded by Mr. Pettinelli, and carried by unanimous vote.**

A) Discussion: Mr. Lord stated he did not hear any strong testimony that the proposed fees are extraordinarily high. The commission briefly discussed the comments.

Motion by Mr. Merrow to move forward on the proposal to increase the sewer usage fees from \$950.00 per EDU to \$1025 per EDU. Motion seconded by Mr. Casner. Voting: All unanimous aye, except Mr. Blaschik, who abstained from voting.

B) Discussion: Mr. Casner believed it would be beneficial to have Mr. Ventres talk to Mr. Nemergut before making a decision on this issue.

Motion by Mr. Pettinelli, seconded by Mr. Casner to table Item 3.B. until the next meeting. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

C) Discussion: Mr. Lord noted this has been an issue for this homeowner for some time. Mr. Ventres added that the property owner had to take steps to change his home from a two-family back to a single-family structure.

Motion by Mr. Casner to approve the decrease for Kevin Nee, 54 Creamery Road, from 2 EDUs to 1 EDU. Motion seconded by Mr. Pettinelli, and carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Blaschik noted that 32 Main Street has ½ EDU. He noted that 8 Norwich Road has been converted to a bed and breakfast, and bed and breakfast across the street is assessed at 2.5 EDUs. Mr. Pettinelli asked when the assessments are done. It was noted that these are done on October 1. Mr. Lord asked Mr. Ventres to look into this. The Authority could schedule a special meeting to discuss this. Mr. Pettinelli stated these people would have to be noticed.

The commission discussed EDUs and flows. Mr. Ventres will look into this and report at a future meeting.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Pettinelli to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. Motion seconded by Mr. Casner, and carried by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Pattavina