

**TOWN OF EAST HADDAM  
WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY  
May 1, 2011**

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

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

**2. ATTENDANCE:**

**PRESENT:** Andrew Lord - Chairman, Richard Fiala, Arthur Merrow

**ABSENT:** Fred Myers, John Russell

**OTHERS PRESENT:** James Ventres, Grant Weaver

**3. MINUTES**

Motion by Mr. Merrow, seconded by Mr. Fiala to approve the minutes of March 6, 2012 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

**4. PUBLIC HEARING**

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

Mr. Lord opened the public hearing and explained this was being held so the WPCA could get public input on the proposal to increase the sewer rate fees. He noted the last increase was in 2005. The WPCA is currently not generating enough revenue to maintain the system and capital reserves.

Mr. Lord explained that the Water Planet Company is run by Grant Weaver, and that the WPCA contracts with the Water Planet Company to operate and manage the plant.

Mr. Lord stated they want to maintain a capital improvement fund in the event that something breaks and needs to be repaired or replaced. This fund eliminates the need to borrow from the town, or to go back to the townspeople to obtain these funds.

Mr. Lord stated that the WPCA has done some upgrades to the systems, and has had to dip into this Capital Improvement (CI) fund for grinder pump repairs. The grinder pumps are now 15 years old.

Mr. Lord noted that the WPCA is being awarded a STEAP grant, but has not received it yet. Mr. Ventres explained the STEAP grant. After a meeting with the Board of Finance, it was decided to keep the \$60,000 in the WPCA's fund and to pay back the Town gradually. A few years ago, the CI fund had \$125,000. Over the past few years, this CI fund has dwindled due to grinder pump repairs, other repairs, and some maintenance items. Currently, this reserve is at \$17,000. He explained that \$17,000 on a \$2 million system is not sufficient.

Mr. Lord reviewed the EDUs. He stated if the WPCA goes up \$100.00 per EDU, it will put money back into the reserve.

Responsive to inquiry by the audience, Mr. Lord explained that EDU stands for equivalent dwelling unit. A single family residence accounts for one EDU.

Responsive to inquiry by Mr. Amara, Mr. Lord explained that the sewer system was begun to solve an existing problem. While they are not looking to expand the area served by the sewer system, they are interested in infilling, such as from the new actor housing.

Mr. Ventres noted that the WPCA still needs DEEP input on any expansion of the service area. He stated there are some lots going up Landing Hill Road that are tightly spaced, and they might benefit from connecting to the sewer system.

Mr. Merrow stated there is a plan to move the Town Offices out of the area for a more intense use, but this has not yet happened.

Mr. Merrow stated there is a plan for it, but the Selectmen have not yet moved on it.

Ms. Schwenzfeier asked where the plant is located. Mr. Lord explained where the plant is located. Ms. Schwenzfeier asked about septic haulers, and if revenue could be generated in this way. Mr. Lord stated they actually have to take their sludge out.

Mr. Ed Blaschik asked if the Goodspeed had not added the actor housing, which added 13.2 EDUs, if these rates would have been higher, to which Mr. Lord stated it would have been higher. Mr. Blaschik stated he has received comments from people who believe it is the Goodspeed's fault the rates are increasing.

Mr. Amara stated he has a package store with a bathroom, and the toilet gets flushed twice per day. He asked how EDUs are assigned. Mr. Ventres stated this package store was assessed at 1.5 EDUs. It was originally a deli as well. Mr. Amara stated this has not been a deli in years. Mr. Ventres stated a public hearing is when this could be addressed. If the usage was changed, they could make an adjustment. Mr. Ventres explained that the rate was originally set up for the use, as well as the potential use. If Mr. Amara converts his unit to a single use as the package store, they could re-assess the EDU.

Mr. Casner inquired about the cost of the operations to handle additional EDUs.

Mr. Lord stated that the handout shows the fixed operations cost at \$80,000. It is efficient to add more EDUs to keep the costs lower. Mr. Casner stated then the best way to keep rates lower would be to get more EDUs. Mr. Lord stated they would like to get more EDUs, but within the specified area.

Ms. Beth Legnani was told that the entire town can be hooked up. Mr. Lord stated this was not the case. Mr. Weaver stated the plant was designed for 55,000 gallons per day. Mr. Ventres explained the areas served by the sewer system. Ms. Legnani asked if the units could be lower if there were more houses. Mr. Ventres stated there are a few properties at the end of the sewer line. There was one house that had a coffin for a septic tank. This property owner paid the fees to hook into the sewer system. There are opportunities with the Town Office site, etc. in the future.

Mr. Ron Legnani asked why the rates have not gone down with the increased housing. Mr. Ventres stated they helped bring down the EDUs somewhat, but it did not solve all of the problems.

Ms. Jackie Wahl, Lumberyard Road asked why the Town did not share in this cost. Mr. Lord stated there are two components. There is a benefit assessment for the value of having the sewer there. Because there was a benefit to the town as a whole, the Town picked up the initial construction cost, and the users picked up the operation and maintenance costs. He stated the Town is paying the debt services for the \$2 million plant and collection system.

Ms. Mary Ellen Klinck questioned if a property was close to the footprint of the sewer area, and a property owner wanted to tie into the sewer system, they could as long as they wanted to pay to connect. Mr. Ventres stated if there was a vacant lot without a pollution problem, just outside of the sewer system, the DEEP might have a problem with that. Mr. Ventres stated there are a few houses on Landing Hill Road that were tightly spaced, and were built in the 1700's. These septic systems would not be Code compliant to today's standards. If

they had an issue and wanted to connect, the Town would still have to send notice to the DEEP, but it would be more likely to be allowed.

Ms. Klinck asked if any thought had been given to a meter system. Mr. Lord stated this would be difficult, as it would be an additional cost for the meter systems.

Ms. Klinck asked what the WPCA did to try to increase the systems so the cost would be less. Mr. Ventres believed they need to develop the center of East Haddam. The thinking was always that they needed to add a new theatre, actor housing, etc. He stated this WPCA does not have the authority to promote development.

Mr. Merrow stated the Town pays the loan, and the users pay to operate it. Mr. Casner suggested when the lines go by a house that is not hooked up, there is a benefit. The WPCA could charge people for the benefit. Mr. Ed Blaschik stated this was also a deterrent. The Gelston House has to pay \$28,000 to operate. This equated to a lot of meals to pay for this.

Mr. Casner stated there were two choices – rates or benefit assessment. Mr. Lord explained this may not be a win-fall.

Mr. Kevin Nee, 54 Creamery Road, stated he lives in a multi-family, which has an in-law apartment. It is just his family. His wife uses the in-law apartment to make jewelry, etc. He stated the toilet is flushed approximately twice per year in the apartment, which would make it \$425.00 per flush. Mr. Lord asked if this was on the books as a two family. He stated it was on the books, but was not hooked up. Mr. Ventres stated this house was purchased during the transition. He stated this was in a known area of potential problems. If they declare the use as a single family, this commission can consider that. Mr. Nee stated he has lived there for 13 years.

Mr. Dave Johnston, 63 Main Street stated the proposed increase was approximately 12% increase. He stated he would be much more amenable to an increase of 2-3%. He believed they were paying a disproportionate increase to what the rest of the town was paying. He asked what would preclude the Commission from increasing this again in the next few years. Mr. Lord responded that this is the second increase in 15 years. He stated it is the WPCA's responsibility to operate the plant in a responsible manner. He stated he did not have any plan to come back next year and ask for more money. Mr. Johnson suggested the commission find the additional \$14,000 elsewhere.

Mr. Nee asked if there was a way to get grants for some of this. Mr. Ventres stated the DEEP has funded problem resolution. He stated there has been no assistance for

maintenance. Mr. Ventres stated the DEEP has given a \$100,000 grant for the proactive steps to help alleviate emergency measures.

***TAPE CHANGE (1B)***

Mr. Ventres stated East Haddam typically does not get these types of grants. East Haddam was told at the beginning of the year that they would get the \$100,000 grant. They need to submit the bid package for approval before it goes out to bid.

Ms. Klinck agreed with Mr. Johnston and suggested that instead of \$100 additional per year, that they decrease it to \$50 additional per year, and increase it over a period of time.

Mr. Amara stated that with the current economy, everyone is struggling. He believed this could be done over time. He asked if there was ever a time when specific groups could have a fundraiser to offset the expense of this in town. He stated the village is the biggest draw in town, and this might help.

Mr. Blaschik stated he would have preferred to have had this over time. He stated this would be a \$7,000 hit, and it would be a hardship.

Ms. Legnani, Creamery Road stated that both she and her husband work, and she did not know why the entire town did not share in this cost. She suggested even a 50% of this increase would be easier.

Mr. Merrow stated when this project was approved, his wife was First Selectman, and she was very happy to get the Town to contribute to the cost of the plant. He stated that everyone believes this is a high fee, including those sitting at this table. He did not like having to raise the rates, but if the sewer system went down, people would want it back up and running. He stated if people consider the increase works out to an annualized increase of 2-3% over the past five years.

Mr. Casner asked what the town pays annually for the capital. Mr. Ventres stated it would be \$81,000 per year. Mr. Merrow added this was about a third of the total cost of the operation of the plan.

Mr. Lord stated if they only go up a little bit, they would have to increase every year. Or, they could come back as infrequently as possible and ask for the bare minimum they need to cover the upkeep. Even if they don't develop the reserve, they need to go to \$88.00 in the first year, just to pay the bills. Mr. Lord suggested they may need to change this approach.

Mr. Johnston asked if there could be an assurance that the people would not have additional increases for another 5 years. Mr. Lord stated he could not give that type of assurance.

Ms. Legnani asked if the Town gave the loan of \$60,000 because they were getting the grant of \$100,000. Mr. Lord explained that the DEEP informed us that the town would get the grant. There was work that needed to be done now, that could not wait for the grant money to come in. The Town then loaned the WPCA \$60,000 to get the work done now. Mr. Merrow explained the way this worked is that the WPCA will send the DEEP paid invoices for reimbursement. The WPCA is not simply getting a check for \$100,000.

Mr. Amara asked if the rest of the town has to pay for any of this cost. Mr. Ed Blaschik stated the townspeople pay \$81,000 per year.

Ms. Schwenzfeier stated East Haddam pays close to the highest amount for this service in the state. Mr. Ventres agreed that it was close.

Ms. Klinck stated that when Johnsonville wanted to develop this area, they claimed that they wanted to pay \$2 million to connect, and were not allowed. Mr. Ventres stated they wanted to discharge into the Moodus River and Salmon River. The state indicated they could not discharge into these rivers. Mr. Ventres stated they would have had to pay 5 million to get it to the plant, plus another \$2 million in upgrades. Mr. Lord indicated there were places where both the Town and the State were not encouraging denser development.

Ms. Klinck stated it was too bad the old Hale & Hearty could not hook into the system.

Ms. Hall stated they have been paying for this for 15 years, and she asked if the town could continue to contribute to this each year. Mr. Merrow stated if the citizens convinced the Board of Finance that the town should pay for the upkeep of the system, and the townspeople voted affirmatively for it, they could.

**Motion by Mr. Fiala, seconded by Mr. Merrow to close the public hearing.  
Motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Ventres informed the WPCA that the DEEP has to approve the STEAP bid documents before it goes out to bid.

Mr. Lord asked if the members wanted to think about the rates and the information received for discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. Ventres stated there was some money available now with the town loan. Mr. Ventres asked if the WPCA wanted to pay back the money over 7 years rather than 5 years.

Mr. Lord asked when the Water Planet Company's contract was up for renewal. It was noted that the contract was up for renewal in July, 2013.

Mr. Ed Blaschik believed people expected their fees to increase each year, but when it goes up significantly at once, people become upset.

The WPCA discussed the possibility of increasing the rates annually but at a smaller percentage. They also discussed the additional buffer the State grant would provide, and performing maintenance upgrades to alleviate maintenance costs over the next few years.

It was suggested they might want to send out a grinder pump notice with the next bill.

## **5. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Mr. Fiala, seconded by Mr. Merrow, and carried by unanimous vote to adjourn at 8:38 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Pattavina