

Town Commissioners' Meeting Minutes
April 9, 2013, 7:00 pm

Meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by President Robert Gell. Commissioners Gell, Capano, Letts, Confalone and Hechmer were in attendance.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by: Holden Ostrowski, BSA Troop 144

Approval of Minutes – The minutes from the March 26, 2013 meeting were presented for approval. Commissioner Confalone motioned to approve the minutes and Commissioner Hechmer seconded it. All were in favor, approved 5-0.

Accounts Payable Review - The Accounts Payable report provided to the Commissioners was reviewed. Commissioner Confalone motioned to accept the Accounts Payable report, Commissioner Capano seconded it. All were in favor, approved 5-0.

Miller Environmental March Report – Robert Corn

The total monthly water production was 2,272,000 gallons. The coliform samples collected were negative. In addition to routine and requested water service, the head on the soda ash pump was replaced and all the chemical feed lines were replaced.

Sheriff's March Report

Sgt. Ron Schmidt was not available so Commissioner Letts presented the Sheriff report that was prepared by Sgt. Schmidt. He also reported that there were three burglaries in the Trinity Woods subdivision and that they have been solved and have made one arrest and are looking for the other Suspects.

Grass mowing at the Charlestown United Methodist Church

Mr. Charlie Wilson, spoke and asked if the Town would consider mowing the parsonage for the church. He stated that he had mowed it last year and then become unable to continue due to health reasons. He stated that the church should not have to cut the grass as they do not own the land that the parsonage is located on. He also feels that it is a liability to the Town to have others cut the grass due to the chance of injury. Commissioner Letts said that he was always told that the cemetery was owned by the Town and the parsonage and church belongs to the Church. Mr. Pumpaly stated that when it came up before, what was found is that it was listed as owned by the Presbyterian Church. Commissioner Hechmer suggested that we hire an attorney to do a legal title search so that it can be determined who it is deeded to. Commissioner Confalone made a motion to approve the title search to determine who owns the parsonage, church and the land that it sits on and He stated that the Town would mow the grass at the parsonage until further notice.

The motion was approved 3-0 with Commissioners Gell and Capano abstaining. Approved 3 – 0.

Athletic Complex Ball Field – Drag Harrow

David Gordon asked if the Town could purchase a drag harrow to maintain the baseball/softball field in the athletic complex. He stated that a drag harrow would be a better way to keep grass from growing on the infield. Currently, weed killer is being applied at a cost of \$100 per application a few times a season. Commissioner Confalone stated that with the purchase, we would save the cost of the chemicals in one year. Dr. Gell also stated that using the chemicals is not good for that environment. Commissioner Letts wanted to clarify that the fields are the property of Charlestown and not North East Little League. It was determined that our maintenance staff could use this drag harrow on a weekly basis. Commissioner Confalone motioned to approve the purchase of a drag harrow and Commissioner Hechmer seconded it. Commissioner Letts stated Nay.

Four were in favor. Approved 4 – 1.

Water Service Rates – Mr. Wib Pumpaly

Mr. Pumpaly stated that the Town is generating approximately \$33,000 per quarter (\$132,000 per annum) in water service revenue from approximately 575 residential units. Additional revenue is generated from new housing connection fees and the water tower antenna rental program. This revenue, however, should be moved into the Capital Budget for anticipated and unanticipated future expenses (major repairs & water line installations, tower repainting, new tower in Cool Springs, emergency inter-connect, new wells, repairs to existing wells, etc.). Mr. Pumpaly stated that the quarterly rates for water service should maintain and pay the expense of operating the system and they do not. The annual expenses for water service to the community are approximately \$140,000 and growing.

Due to this fact, Mr. Pumpaly suggested that we lower the minimum usage from 13,500 gallons to 10,000 gallons. Additionally an increase of \$.50 to \$1.50 compounded, for 1000 gallon units over the minimum will be applied over the next (5) five years. The proposed rate at minimum (including the 5% increase) is \$60.09 quarterly total plus \$1.75 for each 1000 gallons unit over minimum. The average quarterly invoice for water service users is expected to increase \$2.86 per billing quarter or \$11.44 per annum. If expenses are controlled, the break point will occur in fiscal year 2015 - 2016, at which time, total annual revenue from usage fees will exceed the expense to manage the water system.

Commissioner Confalone stated that this plan still needs to go through the budget process and while he appreciates Mr. Pumpaly' "gathering information" the decisions are the responsibilities of the commissioners. He feels that it may not be aggressive enough in that it should be before year three that we "break even" and start sustaining our water system. Commissioner Confalone stated that we are not unlike other areas that artificially held our rates down below their costs and are now playing catch up. Dr. Gell said that he still believes that we will have the lowest water rate in Cecil County.

Sewer Service Rates

Cecil County has proposed an increase in the sewer rate at a 5.7% increase for the first 3 years of the (5) five year plan and a 3% increase for years 4 & 5. To stay "ahead of the curve" to cover our expense we are proposing an increase of 10% for the first 3 years of the (5) five year plan and a 5% increase for years 4 & 5. It is also proposed to increase the one time sewer hookup fee from \$6000 to \$7000.

Sewer service proposal would change from \$63.25 current minimum to \$69.58 and go from \$6.33 per 1000, gallons over minimum to \$6.96 per 1000 over minimum. The bay restoration fee of \$15 would need to be added to this. This increase would represent the proposed increase by Cecil County in their 2013-2014 budgets as well as, a modest increase proposed by the Town to fund maintenance & operation (M & O) and the Capital Budget. The proposed increase will be 10% each year, for years 1, 2, 3 and 5% for years 4 & 5. Mr. Pumpaly stated that this would need to be discussed at the Commissioners budget meeting on Wednesday April 10th. This increase in water and sewer rates would require a public hearing that could be done at the next Town Commissioner's meeting on April 23rd. Commissioner Capano motioned to have the public hearing along with the next Commissioner's meeting on Tuesday April 23 and Commissioner Hechmer seconded. All were in favor, approved 5 - 0

March Budget Review

The March accounts were presented to the Commissioners by Mr. Pumpaly. They were reviewed and most are favorable with a few accounts over budget but that will be addressed as the commissioners review the budget.

Building Permits

There were 6 building permits this month; three of them were from Ryan Homes. And there are already 4 building permits for next month.

March Work Order

There was 85 work orders written and 86 were completed as there was one from the month before.

Smart Meter Installation

Mr. Pumpaly explained that delmarva is going to be installing new smart meters that can be read via satellite. Each resident will be receiving a letter explaining more details and information and on opting out, if desired.

President Gell displayed a flyer for the Riverfest that is scheduled for Friday night, April 19th and tickets are still available.

Commissioner Capano advised that the Young at Heart 50+ group will be meeting at the Methodist church from 11am to 1pm on Tuesday, April 16th.

She also noted that the Charlestown Elementary School and the Town of Charlestown is having a children's event on Thursday, April 18 at the athletic field after school.

Period of Public Comment

Mr. Richardson stated that the increase in the water and sewer rates could have happened years ago. He said he had spoken to a past president and that his comment was that we should celebrate that we can offer our residents lower rates. Mr. Richardson said that this board and the town administrator are interested in raising revenue. Mr. Richardson does not feel that the Town should not be run like a business. Commissioner Letts asked Mr. Richardson "what the town was if not a business". Mr. Richardson said that he felt the Town was not a business but should stay in the "black" but not worry about revenue.

Dr. Gell adjourned the meeting at 8:05pm.

Respectfully submitted by Janine Antoshak, Town Clerk

Approved 04/12/2013