



86 Bridge Street, P.O. Box 20, Baldwinville, MA 01436-0020

TEL: 978-939-5323

FAX: 978-939-4309

John M. Driscoll, *General Manager*

WATER DIVISION

Water Commissioners' Meeting November 17, 2015

Members present were: Dana Blais, Gregg Edwards, Chris Stewart

Employees present were: John Driscoll, Ron Davan

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Dana.

The agenda was approved on a motion by Gregg, seconded by Chris, 3-0 in favor.

New Business:

The Robillards from #649A Baldwinville Road were in attendance at the meeting over a water billing dispute that had begun over their September 2015 water bill for \$921. Several water employees had spoken with them over the phone and had gone to the residence to check the water meter and look for what may have caused the high water usage in June, July and August 2015. The Manager stated that for several weeks their average gallons had increased to 1,000 gallons per day from their normal 143 gallons per day, returning to normal usage on or about September 9, 2015. He had sent their water meter out to Regan Testing in Brockton, MA for an independent accuracy test; he felt more comfortable having a third party perform this test as the water bill in question was so out of the water customers' normal range (the meter tested at 100.04% accuracy at 0.75 GPM).

The Superintendent made the case that some type of fountain that the Robillards had in their back yard was connected to the house water via some underground piping. He felt that the only explanation for their high water usage was a break or leak somewhere in this piping. Since the piping was the homeowners' responsibility there was not much that the Water Plant could do in the way of a bill adjustment since the water had in fact gone through the tested meter. The Superintendent did offer the Robillards an opportunity to have someone from the MWRA come to the house and locate the backyard leak and they seemed open to that idea. The Board as a whole agreed that although the water usage was not deliberate it was still water through the meter, thus the \$921 water bill would stay. The Manager had offered to the Robillards, like the Water Plant has in the past to other water customers who go through this, a full calendar year to pay the balance off.

Old Business:

The Manager and the Board had a discussion on the status of the USDA funding opportunity for the Water Plant and where they were in the process. The Water Plant would have to come up with about \$80,000 for February 2016 to May 2016 to pay T&B to do the engineering and design

work for the water tank project on Johnson Avenue. The Water Plant, on a similar note, would also have to come up with another \$35,000 or so to cover the second half of FY 2016 for the cost of the new full-time water employee with benefits (whom the Manager had hired already to start next week). It was apparent to the Manager and to the Board at this point that another water rate increase was necessary to fund these new budget line items that had materialized within a few months' time. The Manager had distributed copies of the original T&B water rate study with an increase schedule thru FY 2018 of 23%, 4.5%, 4.5%, 4.5% and 4.5% for FY 2014 thru FY 2018. He felt that if the Water Plant raised its usage rates by 9% that it would cover these new expenses adequately as long as the water sales remained at least as much as FY 2015.

The Manager stated that this would increase the average residential water bill in town from \$140 to \$153, or by \$13. The increases along the other water rate classes varied due to their using many more quarterly gallons of water than the residents did. This meant the average water bill for ANY water customer in town would go from \$151 to \$165, an increase of \$14.

Gregg asked the Manager if he had already hired the new water employee and he responded yes, that Shane Murphy would be starting on Monday, November 30.

A vote was then taken as follows:

*"On a motion by Chris, seconded by Gregg, 3-0 in favor the Board voted to increase the Water Plant's usage rates by the 9% amount that, according to the Manager, would bring the Water Plant revenues to the level in FY 2016 recommended by the T*B rate study."*

Dana – Aye

Gregg – Aye

Chris - Aye

There being no other Open Session business to discuss, on a motion by Chris, seconded by Gregg, 3-0 in favor the Water Commissioners' Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

John M. Driscoll



General Manager