

West Windsor Utility Advisory Committee Meeting by Teleconference, February 6th, 2015. Draft minutes.

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 4:02 p.m. Present: Glenn Seward, Brian Quirk, David Leavitt, Ralph Bailey, Gina Halsted, John Bossen, Jeff Nelson, Tom Kennedy, Steve Hawko, and Clerk Connie May.

Changes or additions to agenda: None made.

Public Comment: No public present.

Discuss and consider special assessment and 2015 water rate. Glenn said that Town is very close to having control over water system, after which bills need to be send out quickly. System needs to be funded. At this point, money is being taken out of escrow account to operate system, which concerns Select Board members as it reduces money available for sewer-system problems that might (but hopefully not) arise. Glenn initially proposed a rate of \$495 for 2015, plus \$150 special assessment. John Bossen two other options: \$474 rate and \$454 rate – in both cases, eliminating special assessment. Glenn comfortable holding off on special assessment, because Town should be able to collect past receivables. Given bills due and expenses system will face in future, however, (including base-lodge security measures, legal bills, electricity costs, possible work system will need, engineering costs, etc.), Glenn wants to stick to \$495 proposed rate. Information should be sent to users regarding start-up costs of Town's acquisition of system; hopefully, in the future the rates may be able to be decreased. Engineering company will give recommendations in a month or so for water-system rates going forward.

PSB should execute order soon to make Town the Receiver of the system, so Town can send out invoices, pay bills, and otherwise manage the system. Select Board members meeting Monday to discuss committee's recommendations and set rates; bills will hopefully go out Tuesday. People will have the usual 30 days to pay. In the past, dues went out mid-year for calendar year: 6 months behind, 6 months ahead. Future plan is for bills to go out at end of one fiscal year for following fiscal year (ie early in December, if not earlier, in 2015 for 2016). Question asked about last time water – company experienced a rate increase. Answer: Users charged for first time around 2007, and rates haven't increased since then.

Once Town takes ownership, it can put tax liens on properties owned by people who do not pay in a timely fashion going forward. Town hopes to collect bulk of outstanding dues, even though it cannot put tax liens on properties for bills that piled up prior to the transfer. Could take owners to small claims court. Town hopes that POA and other association will put out strong messages to owners to pay outstanding dues. If collection proves to be a problem, then special assessment may come back into play.

Question asked as to how much might be collected from past dues receivable. Guesstimate is about \$43,000. Town will also calculate system for penalties and interest on outstanding dues.

Question asked about usage calculations. Meters too expensive to install, but flow-chart calculations made for sewer system that could be useful with water system. Sewer ordinances did not distinguish between commercial and residential usages in setting rates. Committee might be formed in the future to consider usage issues for both water and sewer systems. Water ordinances needed. POA will look in records to see if older water-system ordinances existed. Engineering company can draft ordinances which would then be reviewed by lawyer.

Question asked about \$300,000 loan. If the loan is granted, the money should be supplied quickly, but Town cannot apply for loan until it owns the water system. A great portion of that money may be used to replace the two storage tanks above Ski Tow Road. Condition of those tanks will be assessed by engineers. Question asked about connection of Fire Department to water system. General feeling was that in everyone's interest that Fire Department not be charged for water. Question asked about potential costs of future connections to water system. Person requesting connection should pay costs, including fees to cover system personnel's time processing application, etc. Such issues will be part of future financial planning.

Question asked if water pressure could be increased locally; some concern expressed about this issue on part of Mountainside. Town will work with engineers to research. Such deficiencies need to be known for capital planning. Search is on to find water-system plans. Plans that could have existed may have been damaged in base-lodge fire. Engineers can work to put together a plan based on information at hand. Question asked about hydrants – which connected to domestic-water system and which to snow-making system? Mountainside hydrant served by snow-making system. The purchase requires that the pump(s) next to Fire House be included. Research will be done to see if the hydrants connected to the snow-making pumps can be tied to the domestic water.

Question asked when final draft of engineering study of water system will be available. Hope is in a few months. Glenn has asked engineers for now to focus on booster-pump issue for now – to either get pumps out of base lodge, or better yet, eliminate need for those pumps, to distance Town from that property.

System in need of cash for the short term, until billings go out and collections begin. *Motion* made to allow Town to borrow funds for water system expenses from sewer escrow account up to a maximum of \$25,000. Seconded.

Discussion: It will be about 2 to 3 months before dues begin to roll in, and system faces expenses due to fire, engineering work and other start-up costs. Heretofore, committee approved loan of \$10,000. Town already in need of \$11,000 to \$12,000, with more expenses ahead. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion: To approve a user rate of \$495 for 2015, subject to rate review at end of year, and possible special assessment during the year. Seconded. No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Other business: Question asked if Town will have easements it will need for access to equipment connected to water-system that is on resort land, such as transformers? Are such easements included in the Water-System Purchase Agreement between Snowdance and the Town? Answer: These easements are in place.

Consensus reached that next regularly scheduled meeting (February 16th) should be postponed, but if necessary, another special meeting can be held. Next regularly scheduled meeting on Monday March 16th at 4 p.m. by teleconference.

Adjournment. *Motion* made at 4:45 p.m. to adjourn. Seconded. No discussion. Motion passed unanimously. Glenn thanked for all his work.