

**Brandon Board of Sewer Commissioners
May 27, 2014**

NOTE: These are unapproved minutes, subject to amendment and/or approval at the subsequent board meeting.

In Attendance: Maria Ammatuna, Ethan Swift, Blaine Cliver, Dave Atherton, Devon Fuller

Also In Attendance: Robin Bennett, Tracy Wyman, Richard Baker, Cindy Bell, Linda Stewart, Jeff Stewart, Arlyn Bloodworth, Jack Fillioe, Steve Bissette, Bernie Carr, Wayne Rausenberger, Kathy Rausenberger, Judy Bunde, Sarah Carrara

The meeting was called to order at 9:47PM by Chair – Maria Ammatuna.

1. Call to Order

a) Agenda Adoption – Motion by Devon Fuller/Blaine Cliver to adopt the agenda as presented. **The motion passed unanimously – 4 to zero.**

2. Consent Agenda

a. Sewer Commissioners Minutes –May 19, 2014

Motion by Devon Fuller/Ethan Swift to approve the Sewer Commissioners' minutes of May 19, 2014. **The motion passed unanimously – 4 to zero.**

3. Fiscal

a) Line of Credit

Maria Ammatuna read the resolution submitted by the Town Treasurer for the Sewer Commissioners' consideration. The line of credit for the Town of Brandon would be in the amount of \$137,000.00 from the National Bank of Middlebury with an interest rate of 1.85% for a 12-month period. The line of credit is for the purpose of funding emergency wastewater repairs and shortfalls.

Motion by Dave Atherton/Blaine Cliver to approve the Line of Credit resolution as written. **The motion passed unanimously – 4 to zero.**

4. Public Forum

Sarah Carrara expressed concern over the large increase in the sewer rates when the town is trying to collect delinquent sewer bills that will make it more difficult for people to pay their bill. She noted between the town and school tax increases, adding increased sewer bills will cause people to go further to debt.

Maria Ammatuna advised the base sewer rate was not increased, but what was increased is the usage portion, which is based on consumption. In the past, there had been minor incremental increases and there is consideration in developing a tiered plan with increased rates for higher users. There are six or seven pumps that are in need of repair and Board was not able to include the funds in the budget and the Town is still playing catch up. There needs to be a long-term maintenance plan put in place and the rate had to be increased, as the town cannot afford to not have a sewer plant.

The delinquent sewer rates are about \$285,000.00. Robin Bennett reported there is going to be a tax sale and the Town will combining the delinquent sewer taxes with the delinquent property taxes and it will be an aggressive process. Ms. Bennett will also be working with the Water District in an effort to collect delinquent taxes from all three entities. Mr. Bissette stated that he is tired of paying more to make up for others who are not paying their taxes. Ms. Bennett stated it becomes a cash flow issue and the rates are not reflective of the people who are not paying. The rates are being raised to cover the operational expenses. It was noted that many lines are very old and are in desperate need of replacement. Sue Gage and Robin Bennett are working to eliminate the debt balance that has been rolled forward in the past.

Cindy Bell had contacted the Public Works Department and the person who is in charge of Public Works for Rutland County with regard to a pipe that goes under her driveway and down a bank to a stream. For the past two years, there has been raw sewage that intermittently comes out of the pipe and runs into the stream. Ms. Bell's system has been dye-tested and it is not connected to her house and she was advised that the pipe could be plugged; however, she is concerned with the possibility of it backing up into her cellar. Mr. Swift stated there is a process of using smoke to determine where the pipe is coming from. Ms. Bell requested someone look into this issue.

Judy Bunde asked where funds for the Sewer Department are coming from; if it has been running in the red. It was noted that the Town has been borrowing money. She stated with regard to the delinquent sewer taxes, it is her understanding that a particular chunk of money is from mobile home parks. Ms. Bunde asked if this is the case and whether mobile home owners could be billed directly, rather than the individual mobile home tenants. Robin Bennett stated the mobile home parks are a significant problem and there had been efforts made to resolve this, but it reverted back to non-payment. This is a joint problem with the Water District and will take effort from both the Town and the Water District to resolve it. Ms. Bennett is committed to resolving this issue now and for the future. It was asked how much is likely to be collected and Ms. Bennett stated the amount is difficult to determine. It was noted the water could be shut off to the trailers until the taxes are paid. Dave Atherton stated anything that is a rental situation; the landowner is the responsible party and how they distribute the cost to their tenants is their issue.

Phyllis Reed asked how the Town can borrow from the General Fund for the Sewer Department when there is an issue with having enough funds. Robin Bennett advised it is a cash flow issue and everything is funneled through the General Fund. Ms. Reed stated at one point there was \$320,533.00 in the unrestricted Sewer Account and questioned what happened. Devon Fuller stated the audit reflects the amount of money billed, not what was collected. It was explained that the Town transfers funds from the General Fund to pay for items and once the sewer bills are collected it pays back the General Fund. Ethan Swift stated this is how the Town has been run for many years in taking from one fund to pay another fund and it is all about cash flow. It was noted that there was an emergency need with families that had a sanitary issue and the money could not be borrowed for the repair, as the bank would not lend money to the Town without an approved budget.

4. Adjournment

Motion by Dave Atherton/Blaine Cliver to adjourn the Board of Sewer Commissioners' meeting at 10:14PM. **The motion passed unanimously - 4 to zero.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary