

June 05, 2023

**South Amherst Board of Public Affairs
Storm & Water Minutes**

PUBLIC HEARING (PUBLIC NOTICE POSTED 05/08/2023)

Monday, June 05, 2023, at 6:45 PM

RE: Water Rate & User Fee Increase to be effective 06/28/2023.

Role Call: Zoltan Zoltai (Z); Mark Leshinski; Tom Pellittieri; Dennis Hevener, Water Operator; Stephanie Koscho, Water Clerk; Jeri Leigh Siss, Village Council Liason

Visitors & Attendees: Mayor Leshinski; Chris Gallagher, 390 Annis Rd.; Paulette Gargas, 208 W. Main St.; Michelle Jeffers, Council Member; Jeanne Maschari, Council Member

Meeting called to order at 6:45 PM.

Visitor Chris Gallagher emailed a list of questions to Zoltan Friday, June 2, 2023 at 7:15 PM. She said she also emailed Mayor Leshinski and passed out a copy of her email to everyone. (The reply email is attached to these Minutes. The Minutes will reflect discussion above and beyond the answers to the questions.)

1. How many customers in South Amherst pay for water?
2. What is the average monthly bill a South Amherst resident currently pays?
3. What will the new monthly bill cost on average for a South Amherst resident with the planned increase?
4. What is the current balance of the "user fund"?
5. What is the "user fund" being used for?
6. What are the plans for upgrading/replacing the South Amherst water lines?
7. It has now been almost 6 years since the sentencing of former clerk Kim Green. What restitution has been paid to South Amherst? Where has the restitution money gone?

Regarding #4 & 5 - Tom reviewed the outstanding loan projects multiple times. Mrs. Gallagher offered to help write a grant to the state for waterline replacements because she wrote a 57-page grant for \$100,000 for a Veterans' Memorial. Tom & Z thanked her and graciously accepted her offer and invited her to the next work session which will be scheduled at the end of this meeting.

Z reminded Mrs. Gallagher that all outstanding loans as well as plans for the waterlines have been openly discussed at past SABPA meetings and she is welcome to come to regular meetings to discuss these items further.

Mrs. Gallagher asked about the restitution from Kim Green and suggested that it could be used to pay for waterlines. Tom told her that everyone needs to get over the Kim Green situation because the restitution will not benefit SABPA. Jeanne began to entertain her question and then Z called "Point of Order" because this is a Board of Public Affairs meeting to discuss the water rate increase. Mrs. Gallagher is welcome to come to a Village Council meeting to have her Kim Green concerns addressed. She said this was aimed at Mayor Leshinski, and again, Z reminded her that this is not the time or place for this question. Mrs. Gallagher at this time also asked why the Pledge of Allegiance was not recited at the beginning of the meeting. Z explained that this is a Board of Public Affairs meeting, not Village Council, we have never said the Pledge and she should've addressed this 10 minutes ago when it was appropriate. Z told her that we will get all the answers she is looking for, to which she responded, "What are you going to do? What part do you play in this? I mean, [Stephanee] is going to give me the answers. What part do you play?"

Z: "I am part of the water board. We make decisions on how the water is managed, the funds, the work, and handle any issues that come up."

Mrs. Gallagher: "Even though you don't own any property in South Amherst?"

Z: "Now that is a personal attack. And again, I will take point of order. We're moving forward. We've entertained your comments on the water rates and that's it. If you wish to speak to me outside of this meeting, I'll be in the parking lot afterwards or I can meet with you with the mayor, but I will not entertain a personal attack on myself. Is that clear? Who I live with, where I live, and what I own is really none of your business. It's point of order again. Do we have any other questions regarding the water rate increase?"

Mrs. Gallagher: "Just what I've laid forth here."

Z: "Well, we will address that and you will have it in due course based on the workload that our clerk has. Is there any of our other visitors here tonight that have any questions regarding the rates and by the way, just as a matter of record, these are all positions that are voted on. If you're running for any of these seats in these positions for the next election this fall two of them will become open. We hope that you will participate."

Mrs. Gallagher: "Absolutely."

Z: "If we do not have any other questions regarding the rate increase at this time...."

Mrs. Gallagher cut Z off with "It takes effect June 28th?"

Z then explained the process of BPA's two Public Hearing/Readings and the Council Public Readings in order to create a new Ordinance. After three readings at regular Council meetings and once the Ordinance has been established by Council, it is scheduled to take effect June 28th. The next Council meeting and final reading for the proposed water rates increase is Monday, June 12th.

The Water Clerk then read proposed Ordinance No. 1768-23 in its entirety and supplied copies to Mrs. Gallagher and Ms. Gargas.

REGULAR SABPA STORM & WATER MEETING

Meeting Called to Order at 7:05 PM.

Roll Call:

Board Members Present: Zoltan Zoltai; Mark Leshinski; Tom Pellittieri

Operator of Record: Dennis Hevener

Clerk: Stephanie Koscho

Liaison/Council Representative: Jeri Leigh Siss

Visitors: Mayor Leshinski; Council Member Jeanne Maschari; Council Member Michelle Jeffers

Agenda Amendments: Mark -- New Business Water: RLCWA Break May 26; Tower chlorine issue May 21

Approve Agenda: Motion to accept the agenda by Zoltan Zoltai with amendments. Seconded by Mark Leshinski. Motion passed unanimously.

Previous Minutes: 05/15/2023: Motion to approve the minutes from May 15, 2023, as written, by Tom Pellittieri. Seconded by Zoltan Zoltai. Mark abstained because he was absent on 6/05. Motion passed unanimously.

Storm

Operator's Report: Dennis Hevener

- Flushing hydrants.
- Watching 217 Annis – work has not begun. Stephanie then informed everyone that she received an email today from Mr. Davis and work is scheduled to begin June 12.

- Holding tanks have received 2 bids to become stormwater compliant for washing vehicles. Although, this is not a SABPA funded project, we are just the middleman for EPA compliance. Stephanie will forward the bids to Jeri Leigh.

Clerk's Report: Stephanie Koscho Nothing at this time.

Completed Tap-ins: None

Pending Tap-ins: Davis, 217 Annis. Paid in full. Permit issued. Start date June 12.

Financial Reports (Exhibit A): Mark Leshinski moved to accept the financial reports as written. Seconded by Tom Pellittieri. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

- **(M) Operator Worklist:**
 - Mark - Between 156 & 162 East Main St. there is a trench and pile of stone. Looks like it could be some type of drain. Not sure if it needs a permit. Dennis said the property houses a Columbia Gas pump station and that Sexton's have complained of flooding since the sidewalks were replaced so maybe it is a drain to alleviate that.
 - Jeri Leigh then suggested that BPA members use the Hey Gov app on the website to report anything that may need investigated so that all of Council and Committees are aware and the proper chain of command can handle the situation instead of sending our Operator out to look at something that may not even be water related.
 - Catch basins at road in front of the cemetery are not draining and could be contributing to the flooding within the cemetery.
 - Jeanne – recommends to Liaison to clarify at the next Council meeting whether those catch basins are a Storm responsibility or a Cemetery responsibility.
 - Jeanne – Mr. Pignatella(?) is in town and he may know the direction of those drains.
 - Z – The Cemetery flooding and financial responsibilities have been discussed at length during SABPA meetings beginning more than a year ago. Once upon a time, the cemetery funds paid for cemetery drains. Storm doesn't have money to maintain drains in front of houses, nor is there money to investigate cemetery drains.
 - Jeanne – And that is why we need direction from Council so that SABPA can determine how to manage the situation.
 - Mark – Can this go on the Operator worklist? Z – No. He's too busy. Dennis – If it rains, I'll ask David to drop dye in the drain and see if we can determine where the water is moving to.
 - Mark – Where is the line of what our Operator can and cannot do on Village property? Z – It depends on the location of storm drains and the extent of work.
- **Vac truck reappropriations** – Michelle needs a number ASAP. Tom will look into a secondary company for Vac Truck rental. Dennis will reach out to County Engineer regarding assistance with side streets.

New Business:

- None.

Water

Operator's Report: Dennis Hevener

- In process of flushing all hydrants. Will supply Excel spreadsheet at next meeting. Will also have guesstimations of gallons used for flushing and lost due to the RLCWA break.

Clerk's Report: Stephanie Koscho

- Dennis was mistaken about the proper procedure for mileage reimbursement. [Stephanee will correct it at the next meeting.]
- 209 Oakdale is turned off. Bank owns home and contractors are currently there.

- Leak at the Community Park used about 155 gallons.
- Corey Timko received another violation report from Ohio EPA.
- Law Director Mishak follow up re: Mr. Harper – total cost to pursue Mr. Harper for collections will be approximately \$1800 + \$300(+/-) and the statute of limitations is 6 years.
 - Jeanne suggested discovering if Mr. Harper has filed for bankruptcy. Jeri Leigh will follow up with Mishak and the scope of his work and if that includes any of this Mr. Harper process.

Financial Reports (Exhibit B): Tom Pellittieri moved to accept the financial reports as written. Seconded by Mark Leshinski. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

The Board signed the Adjustments report at this point.

Jeri Leigh – Has BPA had a recent discussion with the Fiscal Officer about if we are in the “safe zone” with the Unincumbered Fund balance. There will be a budgetary work session coming up and that will be addressed.

Old Business:

- **(M) Operator Worklist:**
 - GPS mapping? In process.
- **Hydrant Flushing** – discussed previously.
- **Vehicle sharing** was to be discussed at the Buildings & Grounds meeting on 5/16/23. Stephanie never received a follow up after that meeting. Jeri Leigh will reach out to them again and CC Stephanie on the emails.

New Business: None.

- Vehicle Bids – The Records Clerk kept the bids and just informed the Water Clerk today that the SABPA has in fact received 2 sealed bids on 5/25 and 5/30. The Water Clerk has not actually seen these bids nor did she know they existed before a few hours ago. They will be opened tomorrow morning (June 6) at 8:00am by Stephanie and Z.
- May 26 – RLCWA Break coming into South Amherst: Caused water discoloration for a significant portion of the Village.
 - Mark – Why did the break only effect some of the Village? Dennis – Only found out about the break because he received an alert that the tower was low on water. He called RLCWA to be told (by Andy) that it was just about all repaired. Had Dennis had more information, he could have opened a hydrant to flush the brown water before it came into the Village.
 - Tom – RLCWA needs to communicate breaks with us so we can be more proactive in the future. Mark – Why were we not notified? Dennis – Because we are a regular customer and they do not have to inform us.
 - Tom – Communication needs to be better. This wasn’t actually a South Amherst problem that became a South Amherst problem.
 - Dennis flushed several hydrants overnight to help alleviate the discoloration.
 - Z – Three opportunities for teachable moments:
 - 1) SABPA [Dennis] needs a written process of LCRWA notifications process.
 - 2) WENS notification escalation hierarchy – Water Clerk is #1. Water Operator is #2.
 - 3). There needs to be a backup after Dennis who is an employee in the event that Dennis is not available. Corey. And everyone needs to know if someone is not available over a weekend.
 - Mark – Why was Council calling the Mayor instead of SABPA? Mayor – We all should have access to the WENS system because you can’t be sure who citizens will call when a situation arises.
 - Tom – It’s more about the content of the WENS notification. No one knew it wasn’t our fault. If the residents knew it was a RLCWA problem, things would not have looked so bad for the Village.
 - Stephanie – The least experienced in the Water Department was being told what to send out from others, through texts, and didn’t actually know what was happening until the office opened again on Tuesday. If the BPA is concerned about releasing accurate information, then the least experienced person should not be sending out the messages without first having all of the relevant information.

- Jeanne – Would like to clarify some comments: WENS is the Village’s program and not the Water Board’s decision who has access to sending out notifications. “I will tell you, I called you first,” as she gestured at Mark. Mark said he never got a message from her. [Tuesday, Mark said he found a missed call from Jeanne on Sunday, but no message.] Jeanne said then he must not have checked his voicemail. She then continued with “I then called Z and left him a message and he never returned my call. I purposely called Tom last. And I didn't call Dennis. Because brown water to me indicates that there's a break in the line someplace and I didn't want to call somebody out there fixing the problem there because they're usually the ones that work on it. But I called both of you. And yes, I called the mayor, and I will call the mayor anytime I think that there's a problem that's not being addressed. Anytime.”
- Jeanne – “It was very unfortunate that residents had to go for so long without knowing what to do about it. It wasn't just muddy water. It was significantly sandy, muddy, dirty water that gets into their refrigerator icemakers, gets into their water tanks, and so people are running the water not knowing that all it's doing is bringing more in. So you're right we really have to do a better job the next time even though it's not our fault and we know that there's not an instant resolution. I will tell you that I will be the first to call if it's not addressed.”
- Jeri Leigh – It’s important that mayor, Council, SABPA are all on the same page. In these types of situations, maybe an email explaining what we do know and where to redirect residents if they call someone other than the BPA is necessary. That way everyone can be giving the same answers and Village officials are sharing the same, accurate information lessening the confusion across the board.
 - Z suggested a shared Google sheet to share information about the situation and who to call next, and who has talked to who because residents will call someone else when one person doesn’t answer and then BPA members are not returning calls that have already been returned by someone else.
- Dennis – Responded as quickly as possible and everyone can always call him and he will get back to you if he cannot answer.
- May 21 – Tower / Chlorine Incident: Mark – received a call from the Mayor about chlorine levels spiking. Dennis – When there is a rapid rise and fall of water level in the tower, automatic chlorine levels can spike. It was detected before it went to any residents. They then de-chlorinated the water as it was draining before it reached the creek.
- First Work Session: Budget. Chris Gallagher has been invited to attend this session. **TUE., JUNE 13, 6:00PM**
- Second Work Session will be to identify WENS, escalation, SOP, and how to improve. **THU., JUNE 29, 6:00PM**
 - Dennis – REMINDER: Water Department has a Contingency Plan for emergencies such as this RLCWA break.
 - Jeri Leigh – Admin Committee should oversee a template for one master document for all the Boards to have the same hierarchy process.

Zoltan Zoltai moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Tom Pellittieri. All in favor.
Meeting adjourned at 8:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie Koscho, Water Clerk