

Minutes
Select Board Public Hearing
Water and Sewer Rates Presentation
Wednesday February 11, 2009
7:00 pm

Chair Person Paul Santaniello opened the Public Hearing at 7:06 pm.

Present: Select Board Persons Paul Santaniello, Kathleen Grady and William Scibelli.

Absent: Brian Ashe and Robert Barkett.

Town Manager Robin Crosbie, Finance Director Paul Pasterczyk, DPW Director Mike Wrabel, Town Engineer Thom Martens and Assistant Director of Public Works for Water and Wastewater Operations Peter Thurber, made a power point presentation those in attendance detailing their recommendations, as well as other options, regarding water and sewer rates. LCTV was present and the entire presentation was televised as well. Copies of the report presented by the panel can be found on the Town's website (www.longmeadow.org), in the Town Clerk's office and the Library.

Chair Person Paul Santaniello opened the floor for public question and comment.

Mr. Roger Wojcik (57 Parkside) complimented the panel for their thoughtfulness and thoroughness with their report. He questioned the circuit breaker terms. Town Manager Robin Crosbie answered that the panel used the same formula that the CPA uses for abatements. He questioned the value of the fixed component of the rate structure. TMRC stated that the panel used several resources to come up with a base number for a foundation in stead of estimating. Mr. Wojcik then asked why the rate would be set and fixed instead of variable, if the improvement of the system itself is going to change over time. He inquired if the \$400k for Capital would be per year, or one time.

Mr. Larry Star (Williamsburg Drive) shared his comments with the panel and the Board. He stated that the Debt service costs are fixed costs and should be reflected that way in the base rate. Some may argue that the 'don't use the system' however; all residents pay taxes thus paying for the schools, even if they don't have children in the system. He was very pleased to see the Capital side. He believes that the cut off should be eliminated and requested actual facts regarding rules and requirements from the State regarding water conservation. He had a brief discussion with Select Person Kathleen Grady regarding a sewer cap for commercial users. Select Person William Scibelli asked him what he thought a reasonable increase would be from FY09 – FY10. Mr. Star responded that if the increase in the budget is 25% than the increase should be 25%. He added that it is time to make up for the years of mistakes that past Water and Sewer commissioners have made over the last 20 years. He stressed again, that variable costs need to be kept variable and fixed need to be fixed.

Ms. Diane Nadeau (Shaker Road) was confused about the CPA formula used for abatements. Town Manager Robin Crosbie addressed her concern. She then inquired about water usage at Bliss and Greenwood Parks, and then asked who pays for that water. (Parks and Recreation pay for that water at the resident rate, as does every other Town building, Fire, Police and Schools). She requested a break down of water usage for Town Buildings and added that if the Town was practicing water conservation it should be publicized to the residents and may stimulate conservation.

2/11/2009 - Select Board Public Hearing Water and Sewer Rates

2/23/2009- Accepted as Presented.

- 2 -

Mr. Starr addressed the Board and panel once again, regarding the statistics of usage portion of the presentation. He stated that he would like to see different breakdowns of the top 20% of users. He mentioned the 20% decrease in usage from 08 and cautioned the Board to keep in mind what effect that decrease in usage fees would have on revenues. He also has concerns with the tax deduction option of the proposal. He stated that not all people would be able to take advantage if that, those who would need it most may not itemize their taxes and questioned if it was truly fair.

Select Person Kathleen Grady stated that this presentation was created prior to the “global economic meltdown” happening now. She added that the Select Board has a lot of information to review; there are large increases across the board and about \$5million in Capital expenditures in the first year. Although she agrees with the concepts in the proposal and the need to continue with capital improvements, she questions if this is the year for such a large commitment.

Chair Person Paul Santaniello thanked those in attendance and those watching at home. He thanked the panel for their efforts. The Select Board will be having several more meetings about the proposal and is still interested in public comment.

Chair Person Paul Santaniello closed the Public Hearing at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stacy Wieners
Recording Secretary