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VERNON TOWN CLERK

19 JAN 24 PM 1:49

The Bolton Lakes Regional Water Pollution Control Authority (BLRWPCA) held a meeting on October 24, 2018 at the Bolton Town Hall with Chair Robert Morra presiding. Also in attendance were: members Richard Hayes, Noel Gessay, and Daniel Champagne; alternate members Joyce Stille and Michael Purcaro; Robert Grasis, Vernon WPCA Director; and approximately 45 members of the public.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
   R. Morra called the meeting to order at 7:03 P.M. Alternates M. Purcaro and J. Stille were made voting members.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT**
   R. Morra: opened the floor for public comment.

   Don Pesci, 157 Grier Road, Vernon: inquired as to how the fixed quarterly user fee of $100 came about, how it was approved and notification to public.

   R. Morra: stated that the hearing was noticed in the papers; prior fees were based on Manchester's bill plus a percentage that was divided by number of EDU's; Manchester rate has increased yearly; over the last two years as authority tracked different costs including maintenance and determined the authority did not have sufficient funds; and as a result, Towns were picking up maintenance as well as operational costs which could not continue.

   J. Stille: added that beyond maintenance costs, the authority pays for bioxide service/chemicals and engineering costs; and noted that no personnel costs or funding for insurance, audit and legal would be paid by the authority at this time.

   Lance Chernack, 50 Cubles Drive, Vernon: felt that nobody attended since they did not know about meeting and stated that the sewer was to be cheaper than pumping out the septic yearly.

   R. Morra: shared his system was pumped out for $375.

   Robert Preston, 1 Plymouth Lane, Bolton: asked about the loss of power for an extended period of time; what happens; does the authority come out; and what is the emergency alert system for?

   R. Morra: shared that the grinder pumps can hold up to 24-48 hours of usage depending on occupant's water usage and last time pumped out, and people without home generators will be pumped out by the authority, but we need to know the power is out from residents since different electrical feeds are in the sewered area.

   D. Champagne: added that the Towns often are unable to determine specific houses that are without power and we need residents to help us when this occurs.

Edith Chernack, 50 Cubles Drive, Vernon: asked if the possible Coventry expansion would help with the costs incurred by the authority.
R. Morra: stated yes, that an expansion such as this would increase users and help to cover some of the infrastructure costs.

Patricia Covino, 12 Sycamore Road, Vernon: asked how the rates were noticed and who oversees authority's changes.

R. Morra: responded that the changes were listed on the back of the bills and set by the authority following the approval by the authority after the advertised Public Hearing.

Janine Gelineau, 28 Anchorage Road, Vernon: stated that she felt increase was "snuck by" with no advertising in Vernon; costs so much higher; asked why people not charged if still not tied in; did not favor the Coventry expansion; asked why initial estimates for operating costs seemed so far off.

R. Morra: responded that in 2008, the authorities information on the project estimated the quarterly cost to be $130 and we are now at $100 per quarter; Manchester's bill greatly fluctuated, a history was needed to determine average costs to the authority of repairs, maintenance, service calls, etc. and to create a set aside for future capital expenditures; the 2 towns' taxpayers had been subsiding operations which is not fair; goal is to be operationally functional; and added that notice for the Public Hearing was in the newspaper.

R. Hayes: stated that besides being advertised in the paper, it was on Bolton's website and posted in each Town with the Town Clerk; over the course of authority meetings, rarely does any public attend; and noted that the discussion on fees had been included on at least 3 agendas.

Paul Sink, 34 Llynwood Drive, Vernon: expressed concerns about notification.

D. Champagne: shared that authority is trying to include more information on the bills sent out but not sure people read them; an email system could be set up; shared that there are vacancies on the board if people are interested; and added that the expansion into Coventry is still in discussion.

Sandra Stratton, 144 Grier Road, Vernon: understands the variances in Manchester bills and supports the savings of capital and necessity to pay maintenance; and asked what the capital set aside total desired amount is.

R. Morra: stated that it will take at least 4 years to have a self-sustaining operational budged.

D. Champagne: added that the Vernon WPCA has $9 million set aside for capital expenditures.

Kenneth Smith, 73 Grier Road, Vernon: asked about including more information on bills, especially on meeting dates.

R. Morra: responded that agendas are on the website and the authority will consider the suggestion.

Laura Dimauro, 65 Llynwood Drive, Vernon: stated her concerns are about Manchester's rates going up and down; perceived lack of transparency with the doubling or tripling of rates; and how properties are being charged and liened.

D. Champagne: explained how in the past, the quarterly fees were based on the usage bill.

R. Morra: stated how quarterly fees had ranged up to $247. He further explained that only property owners that have not tied in are being fined and liened. The authority has tried to work with all residents to connect over the years.

Margaret Girardi, 72 Llynwood Drive, Vernon: shared that she had received a letter and bill for 3 years of back charges stating that due to a clerical error no billing had previously taken place. She said she was told at one of the Town Halls not to pay. They had connected years ago but had never been billed.

D. Champagne: stated that he was not aware of this but that the 3 year period is by statute.

R. Morra: added that the bill would need to be paid.

J. Stille: explained that 4 properties had recently been identified as connected some time ago but had not been billed. Part of these were discovered when the fines and lien letters were sent.

R. Hayes: stated that if he had received a service and had never been billed, he would have questioned why.

Lisa Brooks, 21 Beechwood Road, Vernon: asked if the increase to $100 per quarter would be stable for a year or two.

R. Morra: stated that the authority will review at budget time but hopes to keep it flat for 2 years barring any unforeseen issues.

Philip Blazawski, 1 Tolland Road, Bolton: shared that he lives in Coventry but has a rental house on Tolland Road in Bolton. He cannot afford to connect and does not qualify for aid in Bolton for the house since it is not his residence. He asked what could be done and if he moved in to the house would that help.

R. Morra: stated that for financial aid in either town, must be a full time resident. To avoid fines, action had to be taken prior to the December 2017 date. J. Stille will follow up with Mr. Blazawski.

Bettina Bronisz, 19 Juniper Lane, Vernon: inquired as to if the minutes and audit are posted and other expenditures such as insurance and debt as well as what reserve the authority currently has.

J. Stille: shared that the agendas and minutes are posted on both Town's websites and the audit is on file with both Town Clerks.

R. Morra: stated that the authority does not have a reserve now for any catastrophic event which is, in part, a portion of the quarterly increase.

D. Champagne: added that for insurance, only above ground coverage is available, no below ground insurance.

Donna Gerard, 6 Sunset Lane, Bolton: questioned how things add up; how is there a fair balance for charging a one bedroom house the same as a five bedroom house.

R. Morra: stated that since there was not public water for the sewer area; we could not measure water in like most sewer fees; early on we had looked at a flow meter for every property but it was cost prohibited; and have no staff to read.

Lori Vernier, 50 Llynwood Drive, Bolton: asked if everybody in Vernon pays for sewer operations.

D. Champagne: responded that they do not; only people on the sewer pay a use bill; it is the same principal in Vernon and this authority; and, residents only pay for debt service such as upgrades to sewer plant.

Leslie Hartl, 15 Plymouth Lane, Bolton: questioned the EDU flat rate and stated that her bill had only been $39.

D. Champagne: stated that the quarterly charges had been based on flow fluctuations and we would need to investigate the $39 charge.

R. Morra: added that the quarterly charges are the same amount per EDU and there was never a $39 quarterly charge; it was always higher.

Daniel Zielenski, 15 Colonial Road, Bolton: said that he told us that he was connected when we got the last notice to connect and then received back bill for $800.00.

R. Morra: shared that this was due to the clerical error.

Andrew Maragliano, 13 Juniper Lane, Vernon: expressed his disapproval of the increase; wanted it to be based on outflow; he would rather pay Vernon's flow charge; and asked what Vernon's charge is.

R. Grasis: responded that Vernon's charge is currently about $76 per quarter but is larger and has more customers to spread the costs over.

R. Morra: shared that the flow meter was considered at the beginning but the cost of meters, installation, maintenance and personnel to read them simply was going to cost too much and DEEP would not fund any part of it.

J. Stille: added that 500 EDU's were expected originally but really at 459 EDU's which also means fewer customers when discussing the budget; and lower EDU's is result of less commercial and some demolitions.

Lori Vernier, 50 Llynwood Drive, Bolton: asked about the lake house and that they should have 30 or more EDU's.

R. Morra: stated that the lake house is classified differently since part of it is like a boarding house.

Holly MacDonald, 52 Llynwood Drive, Bolton: asked how commercial properties are assessed, for example the new dentist office.

R. Morra: responded that commercial are assigned EDU's just like a dwelling unit but based on use; and the dentist office is one EDU since it uses a non-water system.

Sarah Zalewski, 1020 Boston Turnpike, Bolton: asked if there was any limit as to the amount the authority could increase fees.

D. Champagne: shared that while there is not a limit on the increase the authority could pass, residents are encouraged to attend meetings; it is important for people to understand that the authority is trying to mitigate a large issue by building up reserves just as Vernon has done.

Robert Preston, 1 Plymouth Lane, Bolton: expressed his concerns about the grinder pumps and loss of electricity.

R. Hayes: in response to Ms. Zalewski's comments added that input by public comment would be considered by the authority.

Lance Chernack, 50 Cubles Drive, Vernon: asked if Vernon paid user fees for Camp Newhoca and if no, why not.

R. Morra: explained that Vernon did not pay; it is tied back to the beginning when under a DEEP court order to install sewers; both Towns from then forward had and continue to contribute personnel and associated costs; and as a result neither Town pays for its park.

R. Hayes: added that it was the state that mandated the sewer system and setting up an 8% to 10% reserve was only prudent.

D. Champagne: agreed that Vernon did not pay as previously stated.
Patricia Covino, 12 Sycamore Road, Vernon: questioned why we are different than Vernon since Vernon has a system; and how the dentist office does not use much water.

R. Hayes: explained that this is a new authority and is not tied at all to Vernon's sewer; Vernon has its own separate system; and our waste goes to Manchester.

R. Morra: shared that the dentist office, by using a vacuum system, uses very little water.

Janine Gelineau, 28 Anchorage Road, Vernon: asked about charging a daily fee to individuals working on their connection even though not connected yet.

Laura Dimauro, 65 Llynwood Drive, Vernon: inquired as to where the $100 is going and what information is on bills.

Donald Pesci, 157 Grier Road, Vernon: asked where to find information.

J. Stille: responded that the Town of Bolton's website has information posted including meeting dates, agendas and cancellations.

R. Morra: added that to date the authority has not had funds to invest since operating costs have not been met; and that when the authority has funds to invest, it is limited, by statute, as to what we can invest in.

James Carrara, 22 Lakeside Lane, Bolton: said that people may not flush as much if monitored and that could cut down on waste.

R. Morra: shared that conservation of water has already occurred based on the actual flow being lower than projected.

Kerry Fuller, 1055 Boston Turnpike, Bolton: suggested that what to do in an emergency be sent out on the back of bills again; she had just received a nice reminder letter since she called grinder pump company directly.

Lori Vernier, 50 Llynwood Drive, Bolton: stated not to put on back of bills for fear will not be seen. She also shared information on alarm batteries can be purchased at England's.

R. Morra: thanked all for coming and took a 15 minute recess.

3. **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:**

   A. **July 25, 2018 Public Hearing Minutes**

   R. Hayes, seconded by M. Purcaro, moved to accept the minutes of the July 25, 2018 Public Hearing of the BLRWPCA as presented. Motion passed. Vote: Yes – R. Morra, R. Hayes, N. Gessay, D. Champagne and M. Purcaro and Abstain – J. Stille.

   B. **July 25, 2018 Meeting Minutes**

   R. Hayes, seconded by D. Champagne, moved to accept the minutes of the July 25, 2018 meeting of the BLRWPCA as presented. Motion passed. Vote: Yes – R. Morra, R. Hayes, N. Gessay, D. Champagne and M. Purcaro and Abstain – J. Stille.

4. **PENDING BUSINESS**

   A. **Report on Connections and Seasonal Users**

   Based on prior action, 1 Tolland Road, Bolton was fined and liened for not connecting by July 1, 2018.

   A motion was made by R. Hayes, seconded by N. Gessay, to grant an extension to connect for 104 Wildwood Road, Vernon until January 30, 2019 based on the extension request submitted with a user fee to be paid as of November 1, 2018. Motion unanimously passed.

   A motion was made by R. Hayes, seconded by M. Purcaro, to authorize J. Stille/M. Purcaro to grant an extension to connect for 100 Wildwood Drive, Vernon, if requested, until January 30, 2019 with a user fee to be paid as of November 1, 2018.
   Motion unanimously passed.

   A motion was made by R. Hayes, seconded by M. Purcaro, to authorize J. Stille/M. Purcaro to grant an extension to connect for 92 Tolland Road, Bolton, if requested until January 30, 2019 with a user fee to be paid as of November 14, 2018.
   Motion unanimously passed.

   The group discussed seasonal use and whether or not to permit seasonal billing. One concern is the authority's ability to verify dates and appropriate billing now that it is a flat rate per quarter. A motion was made by R. Hayes, seconded by N. Gessay, to not approve any seasonal dwelling shut offs/exceptions, all dwellings will be billed and expected to pay the $100 per quarter user fee.
   Motion unanimously passed.

   B. **Consider and Act on 2019 Meeting Dates**

   A motion was made by R. Hayes, seconded by M. Purcaro, to approve the following 2019 meeting schedule: January 30 (Bolton); April 24 (Vernon) Budget Meeting; July 24 (Vernon); and October 23 (Bolton). Motion unanimously passed.

C. **Status Report on Operations**
The group discussed the revenues and expenditures. Not all user fees are paid on time. The bioxide usage has fluctuated year to year based on timing of deliveries and there is a $100 per month service fee. Some of the first installed grinder pumps are beginning to require extensive repair or replacement work. For the first quarter, the cost of bioxide, repairs, engineering, and Manchester's invoice left about $3,000 towards a fund balance if the entire user fee is paid. In a year's period of time, $10,000 or more in users' fees has not been paid.

D. **Expansion to Sewer Service Area:**
Town of Coventry
J. Stille informed the group that Coventry WPCA is now looking to connect as another user and is not interested in becoming an actual member of the BLRWPCA. The engineering study done by Coventry demonstrated the ability of our system to handle the flow.

5. **REPORT OF THE CHAIR**
Nothing additional to add at this time.

6. **ANY ADDITIONAL MATTERS/OTHER BUSINESS**
The group discussed the four (4) individuals that were back billed when it was discovered that the houses had connected years before now. Out of 459 EDU's and all of the different individuals that are involved in the installation process, these few had slipped through until the thorough record check combined with the proposed fine/liens occurred. The group also discussed ways to increase information to users.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**
A motion was made by R. Hayes, seconded by N. Gessay, to adjourn the meeting at 10:13 P.M. Motion unanimously passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce M. Stille
BLRWPCA Administrator

Please see minutes of subsequent meetings for approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.