

# **SEWER COMMISSION MINUTES**

**March 8, 2006**

**Mrs. Briggs - The regular meeting of the Town of North Smithfield Sewer Commission meeting was called to order on Wednesday, March 8, 2006 at 7:09 pm.**

**Roll Call - Mrs. Paul - In attendance was: Thomas McGee, Paul Nordstrom, Linda-Jean Briggs, Michael Connolly, Manny Alvarez and Patricia Paul, Secretary. Also present the newest member is Leon Tikoian.**

## **1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Mrs. Briggs -Approval of Sewer Commission February 8, 2006 minutes. Are there any corrections, additions, and deletions?**

**MOTION made by Mr. Connolly and seconded by Mr. Nordstrom and voted unanimously on an eye vote to accept and approve the February 8, 2006 minutes.**

**Mr. Connolly – the ayes have it. Motion carried 3-0 on an eye vote. Mrs. Briggs didn't vote due to her not being present at last months meeting.**

## **2. REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT**

**Mr. Alvarez – February’s Report-Met with Joe Lavin RH White Construction Company in regards to the grinder. He was working on getting three quotes. He met with him at Pound Hill and Branch River. Had an alarm at Belcher Avenue and one pump had failed. The top of the motor head was shorted. The cable that runs into the pump the water was leaking through and came down and that is what shorted out the pump. The cost of a pump verses a new pump was a few thousand dollars and ordered a new pump. Once the new pump is installed the wiring will be outside of the wet well and put a junction box on top with a new conduit. Hired Inlandwaters to do grease removal at Branch River, Pound Hill and Lorraine Avenue stations and which is part of the preparation for the grinders. The person who is working with Mr. Alvarez is not certified but mentioned that he is scheduled to attend a compliant class in March. Mr. Fernando Tavares from Liz Development called the Town Administrator and wanted to know the status of his bond. The Administrator called Mr. Alvarez and asked if Mr. Tavares had done what he was supposed to do back in November? Mr. Alvarez inspected the manholes in Briden Street, manholes along the Elizabeth Avenue metering station. A manhole was found the same way they were back in November. Mr. Alvarez called Mr. Hencler from Geremia & Associates and explained to him what had happened and scheduled a meeting that same day. At that point he came down and called Mr. Tavares and the same day, Mr. Alvarez showed him the manhole. Mr. Tavares said to Mr. Alvarez that he would take care of the manhole. Mr. Alvarez stated that was a week ago. A letter will be**

sent to Mr. Tavares from the Town by Monday to clean those manholes. If not cleaned, the town will call a company to have them cleaned and will send Mr. Tavares the bill and because those manholes can't wait. It is just piling up with debris.

Mr. Alvarez – Stated the Dowling Village and Slatersville Mill has resubmitted their plans with their corrections with the sewer.

Mrs. Briggs – Will those copies be placed on next month's agenda along with April's packets?

Mr. Alvarez – Yes

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Mr. Alvarez – Stated that he has just had his second budget meeting with the town and waiting to be put on with the Budget Committee. In the budget, a request was put in for a sewer jetter. If everything goes well, we'll probably get one. It also comes with a camera. Just in a cost of years of bills from Woonsocket helping the town out, accumulated a little over \$4,000.00 just in service calls.

### **3. CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATIONS**

Mrs. Briggs – Apologized for her absence at last month's meeting regarding the discussion on Facilities Plan Update. The facilities plan update has gone to Geremia and it has been submitted. He is aware

that there are individuals to help support to bring the bond referendum out during the November election to potentially bond areas that are in need of public sewers. The contract was signed at the end of January. Mrs. Briggs spoke to the Town Planner and he stated that he had a grant for a wastewater management removal district. What this grant that was set up to do was to identify areas within a specific town that would not readily benefit from bringing in public sewers to them and would help to bring in resources to the those folks to bring alternative systems in place to them. He stated that he had already had the money for the study. Mrs. Briggs immediately called the engineers and asked if they can incorporate it into the facility plan. They are and have modified the contract and they are going to look at where it is feasible to sewer and where is it feasible to get some funding to those people who in turn can pay it back to the town. They will probably be attending the April meeting and let everyone of where they are with the facility plan.

She also stated that there are two things that can be done. They can go to Bond in November. The good thing is that it is out there. The bad thing is that everybody thinks that they are under an obligation to pay back that bond. Whereas in fact that it will only be the users that are connected that are under the obligation. Unless there is a default.

Those are general obligation bonds. The other thing is a revenue bond. Those do not require the vote from the town. She also asked if there had to be enabling legislation to establish something like a water authority and was told that they would not. That maybe another

option that is available. The obligation of the town is to put up the last payment 1/20th of the total bond as insurance.

Mrs. Briggs-After speaking with Geremia, Mrs. Briggs received a phone call that DEM and someone from SRF (State Revolving Funds) was coming in to talk with the Administrator about an outstanding \$500,000.00 and what they were going to do with it? Manny, herself, (Linda-Jean), Jill Gemma the Finance Director, and the Administrator Robert Lowe, Jay Manning who works for DEM had all met. Mrs. Briggs wasn't made aware of the fact that they are paying on that money. They have been paying for that \$500,000.00 right along. That money was earmarked for Park Drive/Warren Avenue folks and wasn't enough for them and what is going to be done? Mr. Alvarez shared with everyone his wish list that is a Comminunator, ie (grinder pumps, muffin monster) and also upgrading the pumping station and replacing the existing SCADA system with an updated new skater system. All those things mentioned could probably fall under the \$500,000.00 to basically upgrade and fix what they already have. Also mentioned on Mr. Alvarez's list was the new jetting system that will probably get also. Once spoken with DEM, the engineers, Germia and Associates was called again and made sure that they understood what was on Mr. Alvarez wish list and those items could be targeted into the facility plan. The following day, Mrs. Briggs sat with the Budget Committee and was told that the Sewer Commission never had anything to do with the budget and was never involved in developing the sewer budget. She sat down with the Town

**Administrator and the Finance Director. In October, 2005 the Commission sent a letter to the Town Administrator and the Town Council identifying three potential OSHA violations as a result of letting go the**

**Assistant to the Water and Sewer Superintendent. They had not resolved that and in fact it was brought to their attention that there was someone who was not trained working with Mr. Alvarez. As a result of that, the superintendent will no longer or until a trained individual is there with him will no longer enter into any**

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**confined spaces. That is a positive thing for Mr. Alvarez's well-being and also for the potential liability for the town in the event of an accident. Mrs. Briggs stated that going into the budget process for 2006-2007 she has gotten a little more knowledge and more leverage to get Mr. Alvarez the person he needs. And they are requesting a full-time second person. The other thing she was advised to look into is to building up a contingency fund and based on nearly a \$1,000,000 budget, the idea over the course of the next decade is to try to build into the users fee or O & M fee enough to collect \$25,000-\$50,000 per year that eventually it could get up to \$500,000. Due to the fact that the system is aging and if a road has to be open, they would have to pay for that. She stated that right now there is not enough money for that. That was the advice that was given to Mrs. Briggs by the engineers and that is something that they will try to incorporate into the budget.**

**Mr. Nordstrom – Stated that there use to be a contingency fund. Mr. Yazbak had asked where the money went and if it was going to be escrowed and they couldn't match the bills when they were coming in. She was having a hard time coming up with a balance sheet to figure it out. So it probably was never escrowed.**

**Mrs. Briggs – Was that about \$600,000?**

**Mr. Nordstrom – No it use to be a general 5% of the budget. Every year Jimmy Decelles use to come to them with the budget, and they would get it approved by the Sewer Commission and it would go to who ever would basically approve it thereafter. It was more of a formality than anything because it was an enterprise fund.**

**Mrs. Briggs – I don't know where it is going.**

**Mr. Nordstrom – It was probably never collected. It would be probably three administrations ago and four Finance Directors ago. And now they understand and know that the capital budget is no longer part of the CAP.**

**Mr. Alvarez – Yes. He stated that they are doing capital within their budget.**

**Mr. Nordstrom – Stated that it is broken down in four parts. There is**

the general, what is paid to Woonsocket, then the O & M that includes the salary and then the capital and the contingency (replacement/reserve).

Mrs. Briggs – The other piece that came up as a result of looking at the budget was that \$80,000 was put aside and included in the O & M fee in 2004-2005. However there was significant increase in the treatment (Woonsocket portion) and all of that money got eaten up. But the \$80,000 was for the comminunator. She was thankful that she had the opportunity to look at the budget and glad that Mr. Alvarez brought it to the Sewer Commission members. She feels that on behalf of the users that it is important they are properly represented and thinks that some of the pieces are being filled in. She also stated that she still didn't know how much they are in debt. The escrowed has to be looked into and she said that they are looking for someone who is good with data bases and is good with numbers and is willing to commit 4-5 hour blocks of time a couple of times a week short term. They will take a look at resumes and forward it to the Finance Director. She stated that they wouldn't know everything until it gets put onto some type of database.

#### **4. OLD BUSINESS**

Mrs. Briggs – Referring to the correspondence received from Mr. Russo. She told him that he didn't need to attend and that it was placed on the agenda but that she would bring it up because that she did arrive at a Town Council meeting on

**Monday evening only to find that among two Liz Development issues, Mr. Russo's was on the agenda. While she understands that people have the need to resolve issues, she reminded the Council that it**  
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**is important that they recognize the volunteers who serve, should at least be given an opportunity to do what research is necessary before being called upon for an opinion. And that it was clear to Mr. Russo in the minutes from the October 2005 meeting that he claimed that he was paid in full. It was made clear in those minutes that we did not deny him but infact we told him to bring us something other than his word who she has no reason to distrust Mr. Russo but she doesn't know him and that his word is as good as some of those that she does know or is bad as she does know and to please bring the Commission some documentation. So instead of coming back to the Commission he chose to go to the Council. Mrs. Briggs refers to the letter presented to the Council of what Mr. Russo was doing. What Mrs. Briggs advised the Council that she as a Commission Chair was not ready to make a recommendation because he hadn't come back before the Commission. But because they had all of the information, they could feel free to make their determination as to whether infact he was paid in full or not. They decided to remand it back to the Sewer Commission because they didn't want to deal with it then. It will be placed on April's agenda and look at it ahead of time so they can come away with some sort of a recommendation next month and bring it back to the Council.**

**Mrs. Briggs was happy that Liz Development appealed for the next set of houses. The Council stated that they were told by their legal advisor exactly of what the Sewer Commission was told by their legal advisor of whom the town pays for as well. Mrs. Briggs stated that months and almost years ago now that infact it was a disclosure issue and they needed to resolve among the developer and their attorney's. So the Solicitor advised the Council Monday evening that infact that it was something they needed to bring and that it didn't involve them (the town). The result of that was that they had been asked to go and deal with it on their own in the courts. Because there were other people who claimed that the hardship and that they weren't told the day they signed the papers, not enough time, etc. but it is not the Sewer Commission's problem. It is a disclosure issue that they have with their attorney.**

**Mr. Nordstrom – (Referring to Mr. Russo's situation). Asked if he didn't know if he ever paid an assessment?**

**Mrs. Briggs – Correct.**

**Mr. Nordstrom – On a piece of property that he would have shown he was in the Union Village. So until he could show that, he would have to pay the regular assessment of \$5,200.**

**Mrs. Briggs – And he does not have documentation that shows he is**

**in Union Village. But what he does have is a receipt from the Water/Sewer Clerk who is no longer employed in the town saying that his payment of \$1,500.00 is paid in full. It seems that unimproved property in Union Village was \$1,500.00. But for improved property in Union Village was \$3,500. And she stated she could be wrong. But they could look into all of that. And she will call and check with legal council to find out the validity of the box that is checked paid in full. Although that property is in the Union Village area, it was never part of the Union Village Sewer district. And the way the districts were established was that every property that was part of that district whether improved or unimproved got assessed and was sent to bill. And this property was never sent to bill until he went to improve it. She will be talking to the attorney and she is unsure if it will be necessary for him to be at next months meeting. But it will be placed on April's agenda and all will have a discussion about it.**

## **5. NEW BUSINESS**

**Refer to discussion above.**

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## **6. ADJOURN**

**MOTION by Mr. Connolly and seconded by Mr. Nordstrom and voted unanimously on an aye 4-0 vote to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 P.M.**

**Respectfully Submitted By,**

**Patricia A. Paul**

**Sewer Commission Secretary**