

A Public Hearing was called to order by Supervisor Driscoll at 6:50 p.m. for the purpose of public discussion To Finance the Cost of Improvements to the Town of Newfield Water Districts No.1 and No. 2.

Present were: Councilperson Trask, Councilperson Laughlin, Councilperson Powers and Supervisor Driscoll. Councilperson James was absent. There were 30 members of the public present.

Public Comment:

Cindy Anderson: spoke of her concerns of the inconsistency of the meter readings.

Councilperson Trask responded that the purpose of this discussion for resolution is to pass a bond to purchase water meters for the entire Water District.

She asked if the taxes were going to go up as well. Supervisor Driscoll said that there would not be an assessment on the water district on the meters. The increase was being part of the use fee.

Amy Heffron: asked with the increase of the water rate would the water quality improve.

Brian McIlroy: questioned the reclassification of his 4 unit building to a commercial rate. Even though his water usage is approximately what a single unit uses. He does not feel that is fair that because he has a multi-unit he pays more to have the water metered. He said he has been doing research and in most communities charge a flat rate then add per usage on top of that, water and sewer are tied together with usage. He commented that his 4 unit building has less people in it than most single family homes. Councilperson Trask responded that Mr. McIlroy was right that there many discrepancies that have been found in the water billing. That would be a topic of discussion coming to the Board again because the resolution written to raise the water rate does not correctly evaluate all the properties that are using the water. He feels the system of water tables that have been used and have been changed in the past few years are convoluted and needs to be simplified in some manner. Discussions have started to re-evaluate the situation.

Supervisor Driscoll reviewed the reasoning for the need of the improvements to be made in Water Districts 1&2. The greater majority of water meters in District 1 were either nonoperational or broken. By January 1, 2014 he expects to have all of the water meters replaced and a water rate that will be set by actual usage. Because so many of the meters are broken, there is no real basis to set a water rate into the future. What has currently been done is to make small adjustments to the current situation. In order to prepare for the replacement of the meters, the larger preparation for the installation of the meters is a bond that is needed to raise money in order to start making Bond payments in 2014. For the Town to correctly measure and set rates, the Town will need at least 4 to 5 months of water experience with meters that work. The Water Dept. will be able to clearly estimate what actual water usage is so that rates could set that meet the needs to provide the service and pay the bond.

Cindy Anderson stated that the Water Supervisor knew in January 2012 that the meters were not working right, and asked how the Board could not know if he did. Councilperson Trask

responded that there was a larger picture than what is seen in front of her. It is a complicated problem that will take time to resolve and the Board is genuinely concerned about the whole thing as there are several inequalities that need to be straightened out. The first step in the process is to get the water meter issue resolved. He felt that there had always been some knowledge of the problem by past Board Members and Supervisors. The current Board is a young Board that has not been here for long term history. But the water meter issue did not come to light until this past year. In an effort to correct the situation, the Board has had several conversations in order to get to where they were now. He feels is the correct course of action. The Board is doing what should be done in order to make it fair and equitable for everyone who uses the water. How the Board gets there starts out with what the Board is doing presently, by passing the Bond, getting the new meters and then having them installed. From that point, the water department will be working with very accurate figures and will have the ability to develop a longer term plan to replace meters in the future. The Board will be able to fund the Water 1 and 2 funds properly. Knowing what the usage is and being able to match the usage to what is reported and what people are actually using. Right now, the Town cannot do that. In response to three questions that have been raised: he feels that once the system is in place, the billing should be stream lined. The inequities that Mr. McIlroy referred to; a resolution was passed in order to band-aid fix the rates. The rate is not cast forever rather something had to be done in order to keep the water fund solvent, and fund the project. He feels the rate schedule presently used is the most convoluted thing he has ever seen. He hopes that by the time the project is done, it will have a solution. He addressed the question concerning water quality. Presently there is not going to be anything done during this project to address the water quality.

Councilperson Laughlin: shared her hope was that when water could be measured properly the rates could be fair for everyone.

Supervisor Driscoll stated that the problem was institutional that went back 40 years. The decision was made not to go back and figure out what happened What the Board did know is that it needed fixing and to move forward immediately. He reviewed that this was going to be an ongoing effort for the next year and a half as the meters are read and seeing what the water consumption and rates so that adjustments can be made in order to keep things fair and equitable. This will allow the Town to maintain a good operation and to be able to adopt a long term capital line to address the problem of replacement with pipes in the ground.

At 7:27 p.m. Supervisor Driscoll declared the Public Hearing closed.

Respectfully Submitted,

April 24,2012

Karen Miller Kenerson
Newfield Town Clerk

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