

**WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY  
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2012**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Steven N. Wawruck, Jr., Jeffrey Ives, Denise Balboni, Kevin Brace, Robert Crochetiere, Dennis Gragnolati, William Hamel and Gary Laurito

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Dana Steele, Town Engineer, Ex Officio

**ALSO PRESENT:** Scott C. Lappen, Director of Public Works, Ex Officio  
Gary Kuczarski, Superintendent  
Heather Kane, Recording Secretary  
Joseph Paoletti, Resident  
David Griffin, Property Owner  
Christopher Burke, Property Owner

**CALL TO ORDER:** Steven N. Wawruck, Jr. called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**MINUTES: July 10, 2012 Regular Monthly Meeting:** Gary Laurito made a motion: **TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF JULY 10, 2012 REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING** - Seconded by Robert Crochetiere. Without further discussion, the motion to approve the minutes passed 6 – 0 with two abstentions for Denise Balboni and William Hamel.

**PUBLIC INPUT:**

William Hamel made a motion: **TO MOVE ITEM 7a (APPEALS) TO THE NEXT ITEM OF BUSINESS** – Seconded by Dennis Gragnolati. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**a. Appeals:**

1. **Joseph Paoletti, 278 Mary Webb Road:** Mr. Paoletti finds the \$244.72 sewer user rate he was charged as a well user to be unfair. Under the Freedom of Information Act, he obtained 20 pages of a report that listed the sewer user fees for residential properties on Connecticut Water. Mr. Paoletti calculated that 257 users out of the 762 listed were being charged the minimum rate of \$147.28. That is about 1/3 of residential users that are being charged the minimum rate. Mr. Paoletti was told that Windsor Locks has 244 well users. Per his calculations, Mr. Paoletti believes one-third of the well users (82 wells) should be charged the minimum rate. Mr. Paoletti informed the Authority that he lives alone, is retired, does not own a pool and does not water the lawn. Therefore, per Mr. Paoletti, there is no way that he is using the water that he is being charged for by the WPCA. If the WPCA wants to put a meter on his well line, he would be happy to oblige but he will not pay for it. If the WPCA charges people for a meter (which Mr. Paoletti has been told is required to determine his actual water usage), why isn't everyone in Windsor Locks being charged for their meters. Mr. Paoletti stressed that all he is asking for is to be charged a rate that is fair and accurate.

Dennis Gragnolati asked Mr. Paoletti what he would consider to be fair. Mr. Paoletti suggested sending out a questionnaire to well users asking questions like how many people are in the household, what are their ages, and the age of the toilets in the household (as newer toilets use less water). William Hamel stated that one's age has nothing to do with their water consumption; Steven N. Wawruck, Jr. added that a single person may be unaware of a dripping faucet and have more water usage than a house with more people. In his particular situation, Mr. Paoletti feels the minimum residential amount of \$147.28 would be a fair fee. Mr. Wawruck stated that the WPCA procedures have been that if a resident is looking to have their well rate reduced, they need to install a meter on their well line (at their own cost) to determine their actual water usage. If their water usage falls below the minimum residential rate set for those on Connecticut Water, then they would be charged the set minimum rate.

Mr. Paoletti is looking for the WPCA to incur the cost to put the meter on the house but the WPCA policy is that the homeowner is responsible to acquire the meter. Mr. Paoletti feels the \$147.28 is more reasonable than being charged \$244.72 (the well user rate for this fiscal year). Mr. Paoletti asked if Jeffrey Ives considered the rate of \$244.72 fair for a single person. Mr. Ives shared that as a single person in a house he was paying about \$178.00 this year.

Mr. Paoletti had another resident sign his appeal because this resident stated that he was leaving Windsor Locks after living in the Town for 42 years due to the taxes. Mr. Paoletti stated that it is getting too expensive to live in Connecticut, in Windsor Locks or any other town around here, as a retired person who lives on a fixed income. Mr. Paoletti asked if there was anything more he could say to persuade the WPCA.

Mr. Wawruck stated that the WPCA understands Mr. Paoletti's appeal. Mr. Ives stated that the reason the well rate is calculated by taking the average of all residential users on Connecticut Water is because the WPCA does not have any documentation on how much water is being used from the wells. Over the years more well users started appealing the rate due to an increase in knowledge about the appeal process. Since the WPCA did not know how much water was being used by those appealing their bills, they determined that a homeowner looking for a reduction on their rate would need to install a meter on their well so there would be some data as to their actual water usage. Mr. Paoletti is fine with the policy as long as the homeowner can afford to install the meter. Scott Lappen shared that over the past two or three years the WPCA has routinely informed homeowners who use a sprinkler system that a meter must be installed on their irrigation system in order to receive a reduced bill. A WPCF operator goes out and reads the meters. The irrigation system usage is then deducted from their actual water usage since that water is not being treated by the WPCA. Mr. Hamel stated that it is the homeowner's option to install a meter; it is not the Town's option. If a homeowner does not want to pay the well user rate, the homeowner has the option to install a meter to ensure they are being billed on actual usage. Mr. Paoletti asked why the WPCA doesn't charge other people in Town for their meters. Mr. Wawruck stated that the Connecticut Water Company (CWC) indirectly charges homeowners a fee for the meter through their rates. Denise Balboni stated that the only way to measure true usage is with a meter. Mr. Paoletti asked about receiving a break on the cost of the meter. The meter is obtained through the CWC not through the WPCA. There would be a payback period where the homeowner would see a savings in their bill if they are using less water. It may take three to four years to recoup the cost of the meter but there is an opportunity to experience long-term savings. Mr. Paoletti does not believe he would be able to experience any long-term savings due to his ailing health.

Mr. Ives stated the WPCA should look at how they determine the well user rate though he was unsure how they could alter it since they do not have any data to back up any changes. Mr. Paoletti suggested using the data from the CWC usage reports. Mr. Ives replied that those are the reports currently being used to determine the well rate. Mr. Wawruck spoke to Mr. Paoletti about his request for the WPCA to pay for the well meters after Mr. Paoletti just stated that taxes were too high. The WPCA is unable to absorb the cost of the meters without passing it on to the homeowners through an increase in rates. Mr. Paoletti said he is only asking for himself. The WPCA would need to do it for all if they do it for one. Gary Laurito stated if Mr. Paoletti chooses not to put a meter in then that is his choice. Mr. Paoletti does not think this policy is fair.

Mr. Wawruck promised Mr. Paoletti that the WPCA will deliberate on this issue. Though they cannot do anything for this year's bill, the WPCA will pour over the data regarding their pricing structure and how the minimums are set. Depending on what comes from that dialogue, they will determine whether they need to bring in their consultant or talk to other facilities to obtain a new perspective on the matter. They hope to come up with something that is more agreeable. Mr. Paoletti asked those in attendance if they think the rate is fair. Mr. Ives stated that, with what they have to work with, the policy to charge well users the average of all residential users is reasonable despite the fact that there will be some people that will get away with paying less than their actual usage and there will be some people that will be charged more than their actual usage. The WPCA would need additional knowledge and data to deviate from using the average to something else that may be considered fairer. The

WPCA believes that Mr. Paoletti made a good point. Mr. Wawruck stated that the WPCA will take action on this and thanked Mr. Paoletti for taking the time and effort to come to the meeting. Mr. Paoletti thanked the WPCA for their volunteer service and left the meeting.

- 2. David Griffin and Christopher Burke, 12 North Street:** This property is a multi-family home that is run by a non-profit agency as a group home. Since this property has historically had a problem with water in the basement, Mr. Griffin and Mr. Burke installed an electric sump pump. After renovating the basement, they did not want to rely solely on an electric sump pump should there be a power outage. Therefore, about five years ago, they installed a vacuum pump that operates on city water as a back-up. The way it works is that when the power goes off the vacuum pump run by city water kicks on and then when the power comes back on the vacuum pump goes off and the city water shuts off. They had no problems with it for years. During the winter storm this past October, the power went off and the vacuum pump went on to keep the cellar dry. The vacuum pump, though, never shut off once the electricity was restored. The residents also never called Mr. Griffin or Mr. Burke in regards to hearing water running. Mr. Griffin and Mr. Burke then got a water bill from the CWC for \$10,000.00. Mr. Burke called the CWC saying that the bill must be a mistake. The CWC zeroed out the bill also thinking it was a mistake due to the history of the property. Since the CWC thought it was a mistake, Mr. Griffin and Mr. Burke did not investigate at that time. The next quarter they got another bill for the same amount. The CWC stated the bill was based on actual usage. This prompted Mr. Griffin and Mr. Burke to go to the property to investigate which led to the discovery that the pump was stuck on. They called the pump company and found out that there are now two alarms that the company sells for this very reason. (These alarms were not offered when they purchased the pump.) The company offers a sound alarm and a light alarm; both of which have been installed on the pump at 12 North Street.

Mr. Burke and Mr. Griffin asked the WPCA to consider reducing their sewer use bill to an amount that is consistent with the previous years' figures on this property. Mr. Hamel asked what their understanding is of how the sewer user fees are calculated. Mr. Griffin did not know how so Mr. Hamel informed him that the highest quarter of water usage gets thrown out and it is the average of the other three quarters that constitute the adjusted water usage that the WPCA uses to calculate the sewer user bill. The issue is that the vacuum pump was running for more than one quarter. Heather Kane passed out a worksheet that listed the four quarters of water usage that the CWC reported for this property as well as the adjusted water usage amount that the sewer user bill was based on. The actual usage reported for 06/01/11-05/31/12 was 1656 thousand gallons. The WPCA billing system adjusted that usage to 953 thousand gallons for a total bill of \$4,517.22. (The prior year's usage was 182 thousand gallons.)

Mr. Kuczarski asked where the pump discharges the water. Mr. Griffin believes it goes into a perimeter drain and then out to the woods in back of the property. Mr. Kuczarski asked if the WPCA could verify where it discharges so they would know if the water did not go into the sewer system. If it did not go into the sewer system, that water was never treated. The WPCA could then look at what the previous usage for the property was over the past four years and reduce the current bill to the average sewer usage over those past four years. Mr. Lappen stated that they would like to go out there, kill the power to the pump, let the vacuum pump take over and see where the water is draining. If it is not draining into the sewer system, it puts a whole new spin on it.

Mr. Wawruck stated that with all fairness there were probably power outages that happened throughout the year. The water readings for some of the quarters were inflated because the pump was running on city water. Mr. Wawruck suggested that Mr. Burke and Mr. Griffin put a meter on the pump so that an actual reading of the water used by the pump could be taken. Mr. Griffin and Mr. Burke thought that was a good idea and they would not mind paying for it. The readings from this meter could then be deducted each year from the CWC readings to create a reduced sewer bill (should it be proven that the water does not enter the sewer system).

CWC did do an adjustment to the water bill for 50% of the estimated amount of water used by the vacuum pump. The non-profit group home is responsible for the water and sewer

bills. They are fighting the water bill still. Mr. Ives suggested that whatever the CWC adjusted, the WPCA follows suit using the CWC as precedence. Mr. Hamel stated that the WPCA has done that in the past. First, the Mr. Kuczarski will investigate where the water is discharging to and he will update the WPCA at next month's meeting. The WPCA thanked Mr. Griffin and Mr. Burke for coming to the meeting and, in turn, Mr. Griffin and Mr. Burke thanked the WPCA for their time. Then Mr. Griffin and Mr. Burke left the meeting.

3. **Kibble-n-Stuff LLC, Dexter Plaza Unit #26:** Kibble-n-Stuff LLC was charged the minimum commercial rate for a property (which is \$473.72 this year) after using only 2 thousand gallons of water for the full year. Mr. Ives stated that Kibble-n-Stuff has a valid argument; they are only using 2 thousand gallons a year but being charged for about 100 thousand gallons ( $473.72/4.74 = 99.94$ ).

Mr. Wawruck referenced an appeal that came before the WPCA a few years ago from Atlas Travel. The owner of Atlas Travel appealed the rate because he claimed that he did not use that much water as a small business. The argument the WPCA took at that time for the minimum charge was that it is a price of doing business. The minimum fee can be viewed as exorbitant by small business owners. Mr. Ives asked how many commercial accounts are paying the minimum. Mrs. Kane stated that she would need to look it up as she did not know the figure off the top of her head. Mr. Ives would like to know what that figure is. Mr. Wawruck stated that, with what was heard tonight, it would be beneficial for the WPCA to get a better perspective on the minimum charges. If one takes the minimum charge and extrapolates it out, as the Kibble-n-Stuff owners did, it comes out to be a lot. Mr. Wawruck understands that the minimum is set to cover the cost of running and maintaining the Plant. This provides an opportunity though to discuss the process of how the minimum charge is determined.

Ms. Balboni stated that people do not understand the cost of operating the Plant and sewer system. Ms. Balboni would like to find out how other plants bill. Mr. Wawruck asked the WPCF staff to gather information from other facilities prior to the discussion. Mr. Lappen stated that a report is received every year regarding the sewer user bill rate for other municipalities in Connecticut. It is difficult though to compare oranges to apples because some towns charge per cubic feet measurement while others charge per thousand gallons. Ms. Balboni requested that the WPCF ask other towns how they respond to appeals.

Mr. Wawruck would also like to find out how much the meters would cost the WPCA if the WPCA was to buy the meters in bulk for well users. The WPCA may get a discount below what the residents would receive if they purchased one on their own. The WPCA could then pass on that discount to the residents and somehow assess the property for the cost of the meter. The residents would have a set period of time to pay the assessment. Mr. Laurito stated that the ideal situation would be to mandate that residents put a meter on their well and then find a method for the residents to purchase the meters at a reduced rate. That way everything is metered. Mr. Ives stated that people who are using more water than the well rate would not want to put a meter in because it would cost them more. Mr. Wawruck stated that in all fairness the WPCA would like to get a true measure on what is being used for water.

Mr. Ives stated that he feels this business owner's pain. There is a big difference between the minimum charge for residential properties and the minimum charge for commercial properties. Mr. Hamel stated that the WPCA cannot change the bill for this year because it then becomes unfair for everyone else but it is something the WPCA should look into for the future. Mr. Gragnolati agreed that the WPCA should certainly look into it. Jeffrey Ives made a motion: **TO DENY THE APPEAL FOR KIBBLE-N-STUFF AND THAT THE WPCA WILL CERTAINLY LOOK INTO IT IN THE FUTURE TO SEE IF WE CAN MAKE IT FAIRER FOR EVERYONE** – Seconded by William Hamel. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

#### **FINANCIAL REPORTS:**

- a. **July 2012 Cash Reports:** Gary Laurito made a motion: **TO ACCEPT THE JULY FINANCIAL REPORTS INCLUDING THE CD INVESTMENT UPDATE AND CHANGES** - Seconded by Jeffrey Ives. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.
- b. **CD Investments – update and changes:** Please see item (a) under Financial Reports.

- c. **Reconciliation of accounts for FY 2011-2012:** This is the year end reconciliation to close the books. William Hamel made a motion: **TO ACCEPT THE RECONCILIATION OF ACCOUNTS FOR FY 2011-2012** – Seconded by Gary Laurito. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**OLD BUSINESS:**

- a. **Greif Update:** Mr. Kuczarski stated that NEPCCO completed the cleaning of the lines to his satisfaction. A letter was sent to Greif confirming the completion of the project. Greif will monitor the tank and pump it when needed.
- b. **Bickford Health Care Center update:** Mr. Kuczarski informed the Authority that the 1000-gallon exterior grease interceptor is installed and functional.

At 6:25 p.m., there being no other business to discuss, William Hamel made a motion: **TO ADJOURN THE MEETING** - Seconded by Steven N. Wawruck, Jr.. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Kane  
Recording Secretary