

## Town of Edgecomb Selectboard

### Minutes: May 22 2017

**Present:** Jack Sarmanian, Ted Hugger, Mike Smith (Selectmen), Katie Wurtzell (Secretary), Chris Cossette (Wiscasset Water District), Claudia Coffin

Call to order 6pm

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

**2. Approval of Minutes**

- a. Mike made a motion to approve minutes from May 8, 2017 as presented and Ted seconded the motion. Vote: 3-0 in favor.

**3. Introduction of new Select Board Secretary: Katie Wurtzell**

**4. Election of Select Board Chairman**

- a. Ted made a motion to nominate Jack as Chairman for the coming year; Mike seconded. Vote: 3-0 in favor

**5. Chris Cossette, Superintendent, Wiscasset Water District**

Chris presented information on potential increases being proposed by the Wiscasset Water District (WWD). There is an official public hearing May 23, 2017 at 6pm at the district office. An audit process was undertaken at the WWD. General increases in the cost of insurance and the cost of water have occurred. Rate increases proposed are: 17.7% increase to residential customers; 20% for commercial customers; 20% for government and fire protection. The average residential customer would see an increase of \$43.16 per year and the average commercial customer would see an increase of \$278 per year.

The case for increased prices will be presented to public on May 23 and there is a 30 day public comment period. The Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC) will authorize this rate adjustment July 1, 2017. Chris noted that Wiscasset buys water from Bath Water District and starting next year they are in a long term agreement for annual 3% increases in the price of water.

Underneath American Water Works, certain proportion of water mains should be replaced each year. There are currently many water mains over 100 years old in the WWD system. In 2008 WWD capitalized on low interest rates and replaced 7,200 feet of Water Mains. The district is investing \$9.1 million into upgrading infrastructure, including \$2.89 million in grants. WWD will be replacing 14,000 feet of water mains this summer including all 100+ year old water mains and preparing for potential growth. The average cost per foot for pipe replaced is \$263. WWD decides priority for pipe replacement through the 2010 Capital Improvement Plan, which provides listings of streets and assets, identifies issues and weaknesses in pipes, identifies critical pipes (to schools, hospitals, water treatment plants, etc), and helps define priority projects. Summer

projects will include a new supplemental line to Edgecomb line, which will provide water to Edgecomb in the event something happens upstream.

Wiscasset Water District is currently 2.5 FTE employees and they rely on nearby communities. They are part of the Five Rivers Regional Water Council - together they share best practices, analyze efficiencies, and look at the regional water system. When there is an issue (such as a water main break), they often help each other out and they partner with each other to keep expenses down on expensive equipment.

Ted remarked on short lead time of increase. Chris mentioned audit ended in March; WWD did not know rate increase was necessary until mid-April and could not share information until then. Information was shared within a few days. There is a petition going through town against rate increases; Chris says if enough support from town, rate increase will just be delayed. Petition would make the PUC take additional time to review request for rate increase and review audits.

Ted questioned how often the rate audits are. Chris said that rate audits are annual. Why is rate increase so substantial? Things have been extremely tight the past few years with expenses.

Mike asked where else has public water? Newcastle. Boothbay has concerns about long term needs, but currently OK. 15/20/50 year range they may need to look to get water from Bath (would need to flow through Edgecomb). This would require substantial investment. In this case, if water main goes down Rt 27, old homes would not be required to tie into water main (grandfathered in). New homes would be required to. However, old homes would have the option to get water service to property while infrastructure is being put into place, which would be much more cost effective and better for property values.

Jack asked for responses from floor. Question: Town of Edgecomb has one hydrant, who pays for Davis Island hydrant? Answer from Chris: they are privately owned. Public hydrants are tested each year, private are not. However, there is a maintenance service agreement which private hydrants agree to and therefore are tested by WWD. This is important for fire department.

Edgecomb town budget has been already been passed for next year - what is process? New additional cost for fire hydrant (increase of approximately \$270) would typically come from general government expenses fund. Mike proposed that next year this expense should be separated out. How should the town address this \$270 shortfall?

Jack thanked Chris for very comprehensive overview of audit and rate increases. Chris remarked that for WWD, Edgecomb is not considered separate entity, it is included in service territory and therefore is held to same standards as Woolwich and Wiscasset. All

customers are treated the same. WWD has had great relations with local fire departments and provided hydrant training. Chris thanks the board for the open discussions provided at select board. Chris will come to Economic Development Board meeting sometime in upcoming months to discuss potential water main extensions. WWD does not pay to extend water mains. Grants available from federal government, possible private investors.

**6. 2017 Town Meeting Re-cap**

- a. Jack presented recap of Town Meeting. He said it was lively and debatable. There is an issue of involvement of people participating in their community, however a good number of people showed up. There was participation from various committees, especially school committee. Mike mentioned that a representative from each board should be required to be there as many issues are outside of the role of the selectmen.

**7. 2017/2018 Board Goals**

- a. The 2017/2018 goals will be worked on every meeting and in sub-committees. The Selectboard will work on what new policies and structures need to be developed to enhance the quality of the community and future selectmen.

**8. New Business**

- a. Claudia presented new policies
  - i. A new municipal office policy to disperse municipal education costs that is required by State. Policy states that Selectmen signature not needed to issue warrant if they are unavailable (due to a storm, meeting cancellation, etc). Claudia stated that this is particular important for payroll purposes and that the selectmen approve the warrant once they are available.
  - ii. A new municipal office policy to approve dispersement of municipal wages. Policy states that Selectmen signature not needed to issue warrant if they are unavailable (due to a storm, meeting cancellation, etc). Claudia stated that the selectmen do approve the warrant once they are again available.
  - iii. Mike made motion to approve dispersement of municipal education funds policy. Ted seconded. Approved 3-0.
  - iv. Mike made motion to authorize the delegation of authority for municipal wages and benefits policy if selectmen unavailable. Ted Seconds. Approved 3-0.

**9. Corning Townsend Email**

- a. Corning Townsend out of the country currently.
- b. Corning will appear at next Selectmen meeting to discuss Harbormaster budget.

**10. MDOT - Ernest Martin to Appear at June 5th Select Board Meeting. Re: Route 27 Intersection**

## **11. Warrants**

- a. Ted presented general warrant #25: \$127,053.41
- b. School Payroll: \$31,803.44
- c. School Payables: \$49,912.56
- d. General Expenses: \$45,337.41
- e. Mike made a motion to approve warrant. Ted seconded. Approved 3-0.

## **12. Old Business**

- a. Tax acquired properties
  - i. Edgecomb's policy is Article 7. Historically, for payment of back taxes plus interest has been charged on foreclosed homes. Property owner has offer of first refusal. Abutters of property have second refusal. Then sales is open to the public. Claudia has checked with other towns and they have the same policy.
  - ii. Ted remarked we have liability covered for 60 days after the tenant has vacated the property. Claudia remarked that historically, handling of this issue depends on circumstance. Mike remarked we should define a policy on how to handle this going forward.
  - iii. Mike and Claudia agreed that there are currently rules about foreclosed property. Ted remarked there probably is room for a guideline with room to adjust depending on circumstance.
  - iv. Jack remarks we need to find out who is aware property is being foreclosed on, who town is dealing with, if rent is being charged, etc.
  - v. Ted will call MMA about process and best practices on what should be done. Mike stated that next step is to determine direction for potential policy.
  - vi. Claudia presented figures on property of interest, how much town lost on property before it was foreclosed. Suggestion is to add 2017 approximate taxes onto back taxes for price, even though home could be sold tomorrow. Mike stated conversation must be had with MMA prior to action.
  - vii. Claudia added that town is not in business of being a real estate broker; town is meant to cover their costs; neighboring selectmen stated they were not comfortable making money on another's misfortune. Claudia mentioned another option is to keep property people are living on, sell surrounding property. Jack remarks it is to town's advantage to determine guidelines.

## **13. New Business**

- a. Mike attended Schmid Committee meeting. Stakes have been removed marking trail have been removed. Committee does not know who removed them.
- b. Scott Griffin should be invited to a select board meeting June 5th. He has done a superb job on road construction.
- c. Code issues with trailer on McKay Rd. COE needs to be informed.
- d. There are concerns about property debris.

- e. Jack has contacted other applicants for recording secretary.
- f. Ted is starting new town tradition. Edgecomb Eddy students will be coming to Town Hall 10am May 23 to place flags in yard and learn about history and learn citizen involvement.

**14. Public Comment**

- a. Question on tax acquired lots. Mike informed that nothing will happen until next fiscal year, and will be on agenda, which will be posted on website.

**15. Motion to Adjourn at 7:45pm**