

VILLAGE OF MORRISVILLE
WATER AND LIGHT REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

June 7, 2023
Wednesday

5:30PM
MW&L Office

PRESENT:

Trustees: Tom Snipp, Travis Knapp and Robert Heanue

Staff: Scott Johnstone, Penny Jones and Kevin Newton

Guests: Ron Stancliff, Jessica Zehngut and Judy Bickford (via Zoom)

Public: Mike Green

Absent: Brad Limoge and Carl Fortune

1) CALL REGULAR MEETING TO ORDER:

Chairman Snipp called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

2) CONSIDER AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS: Scott recommended deferring Agenda Item #5 (Special Project Requests and Approval) until the next meeting as we have not heard back from the Library yet.

On a **motion** by Trustee Heanue and seconded by Trustee Knapp, the board approved (3-0) deferring Agenda Item #5 until the next regular board meeting.

3) APPROVE MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING HELD MAY 17, 2023:

On a **motion** by Trustee Heanue and seconded by Trustee Knapp, the board approved (3-0) the minutes of the regular meeting held on May 17, 2023.

4) CHECK REGISTERS:

On a **motion** by Trustee Heanue and seconded by Trustee Knapp, the board approved (3-0) the check registers.

5) SPECIAL PROJECT REQUESTS AND APPROVAL:

Deferred until the next meeting – see Agenda Item #2 above.

6) OTHER BUSINESS:

a. Bugbee Springs Discussion (Ron Stancliff request):

Scott introduced Mike Green who has been discussing possible timber harvest on the Bugbee Springs property. Ron has surveyed the property and found only 75 acres, not the 82 acres listed on the tax maps. Ron hoped to “do the Village a favor” by transferring the land from the Village to the Town so the Village no longer has to pay town taxes on the property. He also sees it as a resource that needs to be kept in public use. Ron offered to head up a site visit for the Board, Trustee Heanue declined. Chairman Snipp reiterated that the Village is not interested in giving land away. Ron has already been to the Selectboard where they see the loss of taxes in addition to paying for the land if the property was sold by the Village to the Town. Trustee Heanue also reiterated that the Village is not interested in giving away land. If Village residents raise a legal petition for the Trustees to give the land away, then they will consider it. It was asked what Ron’s purpose was and he stated it was to keep this land public and not sold to a private entity. Trustee Knapp stated that if the Village sold to the Town, the Town could then turn around and

sell the property (after a Town vote). With all the current turmoil surrounding the town budget, now is certainly not the right time. The reappraisals have come in and taxes on this land are going up but the land is overdue for timber harvest and proceeds from timber can pay taxes. Scott recommended that Ron's next step, if he was looking for one, is to try to figure out if there is some sort of offer on the dollar side. Is there a land-trust that wants to partner with the Town, are there other processes such as conservation funds available? Chairman Snipp agreed that now is not the right time for such discussions with the Town. If the land was transferred/sold to the Town, the Village would lose all control over it. Ron's goal is to have a discussion at the Annual meeting.

Mike has proposed a sustainable timber harvest on this property. Scott verified that the Trustees would be interested in this route before doing more work on a contract. Mike has also recommended having the Brigham Meadows brush hogged.

b. Electric Utility Financial Planning Update:

Last time we had five options on the table due to the reduced rate case. In the short term, we are going to have to do take out a short-term line of credit. We have already had a preliminary meeting with the Union Bank. We have always had the policy that small capital projects were paid out of cash and we borrow for larger capital projects. When we upgraded Substation #3, we paid cash at the time even though past practices said we should have borrowed for that. A way to free up cash that would be consistent with our historic practices would be to take out a long-term loan on this project which would free up almost a million in cash. These two actions buy us time. For longer term, we are exploring this 2%/year rate increase Trustees are "allowed" to implement without State regulation. Apparently the Trustees have the authority but they have to get the DPS to agree. VPPSA reports that the State has not been too terribly difficult with these requests. The other option is to file another rate case in a few months, even though the DPS is likely to beat us up the same way. The third option is to actually develop a financial policy on borrowing and put it in our Integrated Resource Plan that the PUC would approve. This would give us a PUC-approved policy in place that would be harder for the DPS to say we can't do it. We're thinking these two borrowing mechanisms buy us enough time to get to a sustainable way forward. The Board was in favor of proceeding this way. The earliest we could refile for a rate case is December if they decide to go that route.

c. Management Update

Trustee Heanue asked if we were going to appeal the new appraisal on the Cady's Falls power plant as it has gone up 10x. Penny informed that when we went through the appraisal process with our insurance carrier, it was a crazy, ridiculous number. Penny does not think a \$1.2 million value on that property is unreasonable but we will look at it.

Chairman Snipp verified that we have not had a chance to revisit our sewer connection fees. Scott stated that developing a water ordinance is on the agenda for this year, too. The patch to the pavement on Brooklyn Street will be done in conjunction with paving Hutchins Street. Scott wants to get something on our Facebook page about the loons at Green River as we are always getting beaten up about not caring for the environment. Remind people of our stewardship of the reservoir and our protection of the loons. There are three nesting loons but one

built their nest too high. With the coming rain, the water level may rise enough to make that nest viable.

Electric customer work has picked up.

Penny is having weekly calls on the new online payment platform. We hope to go live August 21st. Also working through the FEMA process for Storm Elliott. Until the rate increase is finalized, we are continuing to collect the 11.25% and will have to deal with refunds later.

d. Any other Business to come before the meeting. With the turmoil at the Town offices, Trustee Heanue asked when our Union contract rate increases went into effect, which was January 1, 2023. Non-union employees see rate increases on their anniversary date.

7) PUBLIC COMMENT: None

8) EXECUTIVE SESSION: None

12) ADJOURN REGULAR MEETING:

On a **motion** by Trustee Heanue and seconded by Trustee Knapp, the Board adjourned (3-0) the meeting at 6:21 PM.

Attest: Robert Heanue, Clerk