

Water Study Committee & Master Plan Subcommittee
Joint Meeting Minutes – August 21, 2014

Note: Draft Minutes are subject to review, correction and approval. Review and approval of Minutes generally takes place at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

The August 21, 2014 joint meeting commenced at 4:05 p.m. at Swanzey Town Hall. Present were: Glenn Page (MP & WSC), Scott Self (MP & WSC), Don Skiba (MP & WSC), Steven Bittel (WSC), and Sly Karasinski (WSC). Also present was Sara Carbonneau, Director of Planning and Community Development.

Minutes: Motion by Page to approve the July 31, 2014 Minutes. Second by Bittel.
Vote: All in favor.

Skiba stated that he was unable to meet with anyone at NH PUC (he was told that he needed to speak with Mark Naylor; Mr. Naylor was on vacation at the time). Skiba recounted his conversation with Sarah Pillsbury at NH DES regarding what would happen in the event that the West Swanzey Water Company should fail or decide that it no longer wanted to operate the water company. Pillsbury stated that the Public Utilities Commission would put it in receivership. The PUC would then pursue three options: offer it to the town to take it over and operate the system; have the affected property owners create a co-operative to operate; or encourage the creation of a water precinct. Page questioned whether the PUC would have the ability to follow through, due to budget cuts.

Skiba also discussed grants and other funding sources. Pillsbury informed him that there was no money available through DES for hiring consultants to assist the town in evaluating the West Swanzey Water Company.

Pillsbury informed Skiba that the operating requirements for a water company are the same whether it is owned privately or by a municipality.

DES is in the process of conducting its sanitary survey on the water system. West Swanzey Water Company is scheduled for review in the fall. It was suggested that Karasinski and Self accompany the reviewer when the sanitary survey is conducted. Skiba will contact DES to arrange to for Karasinski and Self to accompany the DES reviewer.

It was noted that there is a great deal of information on NH DES's website (one stop data retrieval). Karasinski stated that there are no recent well water violations. Noted that the system does not treat the water with anti-corrosive agents. Self stated that the most recent lines are plastic.

Water rates were discussed. A NH PUC document on their website showed that the West Swanzey Water Company's rates are among the lowest in the state (WSWC - \$489./Pennichuck \$1,300.).

Self reviewed the map of the WSWC's system that he is putting together. Self noted that he is not exactly sure which properties are connected to the system. In order to get that information, he would need to access information directly from WSWC. However, location of lines, wells, etc. were shown on the plan. Additional information will be added as it is discovered.

Committee members noted that it appears that the WSWC's system is functional, as is. However, there are limited funds currently being put aside for infrastructure repairs and improvements. Rate adjustments may be warranted. Also, it is clear that funds will need to be put aside to expand the system in the future – including a storage tank (which will be beneficial for fire protection, as well as water reserves) and getting well #3 (off California Brook Road) operational. The condition of the WSWC's hydrants was discussed briefly. It was stated that these hydrants have not been maintained, as needed.

Existing rate structures were discussed – it appears that units in multi-family housing are paying \$115. versus the \$300. charged to single family homes. In addition to re-evaluating the rate structure, it was also suggested that regulations could be put in place to require homeowners who are not hooked up to the system to do so (thus expanding the income to the company).

Committee members discussed the various options for ownership... town owned, town-operated, water/sewer commission combination (similar to what is done in Troy), new precinct, merger with N. Swanzey Water & Fire Precinct, etc. Carbonneau and Skiba will research options.

Next steps: Karasinski and Self to accompany Dan Dudley from NH DES on the sanitary survey of the West Swanzey Water Company. To inquire what is needed for bare-bones, to identify immediate needs/improvements to the system; to identify what would be needed/desired within 5 years; what would be needed to get well #3 up and running.

Karasinski and Bittel will put together information about what would be needed (financially) to operate the system – bare bones.

Skiba will follow up with NH PUC.

Decided that the next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 18th, at 4 p.m., again as a joint meeting. Meeting will be held at Town Hall.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Submitted by,
Sara H. Carbonneau

Secretary to the Committee