

AVON WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY
April 9, 2015
Selectmen's Chambers, 5:30 pm
Town of Avon

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Avon Water Pollution Control Authority was called to order at 5:33 pm by Mr. Farrell.

Present: Michael Farrell
Tom Armstrong
Eric Johansen
Chris Roy
Lawrence Baril, Town Engineer

Absent: Terry Ryan

II. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING – March 12, 2015

MOTION: Mr. Farrell initiated the motion for approval of the March 12, 2015 minutes. Mr. Armstrong made a clarification under Old Business, 2013-7 Assessment Conveyance, stating that “A two year continuance may be necessary in order to preserve the lien for **unpaid use fees** a homeowner incurs.” Mr. Armstrong, made a motion for approval of the March 12, 2015 minutes. The motion, seconded by Mr. Farrell, received unanimous approval.

III. COMMUNICATION FROM THE AUDIENCE – Mr. Farrell welcomed the audience member who introduced himself as Arnold Curry of 124 Winding Lane. Mr. Curry noted his item of interest is the planned sewers for his neighborhood and also commented he was surprised no one else was present. Mr. Farrell mentioned there was representation from his neighborhood present at the last meeting. Mr. Curry noted he spoke to a neighbor who presented him with a design of the proposed location of the pipe, which included his property. Mr. Curry's concern is knowing which homes will be included and whether there are options for homeowners whether they connect or not. Mr. Baril noted his property would appear in the first phase. Mr. Farrell provided background information on the proposed sewer noting the AWPCA makes a request to the Engineering Department to perform preliminary studies, such as conducting borings, and sending letters to affected residents noting the preliminary feasibility studies. Before moving forward, there is a public information meeting which will include additional information such as preliminary costs and allows the affected residents to provide feedback to the AWPCA. Mr. Baril clarified the design plan Mr. Curry reviewed with his neighbor noting it is not an Engineering Plan, rather it was a rough sketch of the proposed sewer extension. Mr. Curry inquired what kind of design is created and does the number of homes who say yes or no determine the design. Mr. Baril responded that this does not come into play and noted that if a neighborhood is to be served, the whole neighborhood will be included. Mr. Baril also noted that all service areas in the Town of Avon will eventually be sewered. Septic systems don't last forever, even with pumping and being intelligent with what you are flushing down the drain. Mr. Curry noted he has been in his house for six years and his understanding is whether one connects or not, one needs to pay their share which is about 10 plus (\$10,000). Mr. Baril noted the sewer facilities plan has identified that this neighborhood is high on the list given the age of septic systems, high groundwater. Mr. Baril met with Mr. Diecidue who asked Mr. Baril for numbers, which Mr. Baril was hesitant in giving. The construction costs could be \$8,000, \$10,000 or even \$15,000. There is no way to know without doing the preliminary study. Mr. Farrell noted that within a five – year window, this neighborhood would likely be sewered, independent of the petition and the appeal from neighbors. Given reports conducted, it made sense this would be one of the neighborhoods we would go in to regardless. Mr.

Farrell noted that when a neighborhood is sewerred, it's considered an improvement and benefit to your property. Whether you choose to connect to the sewer line that's in the street or not, it is still considered a benefit. We need to share the cost of having that benefit in the street with every property owner that abuts to that. Whether one chooses to connect is a secondary issue. We have to pay for the cost of putting the plumbing in the street and is shared equally among every taxable property on that line. Mr. Curry said that is clear and inquired about the impact of where the pipe will go given the creek he has in his backyard. Mr. Baril responded that the mainline sewer is typically in the road and aspects of your property will have a role on where the sewer will go on your property. Initially we do the preliminary engineering and then the informational meeting. If the AWPCA decides to move forward, they direct me to move forward with final plans. A letter to residents will be sent out as the next step is final design after meeting with every resident and learning about certain constraints for each house.

Mr. Curry noted that he is not sure that when his neighbors signed the petition, they realized that if they do not connect, they will still share the cost. Mr. Baril reviewed the process and stated there is no cost ramifications for residents at this point for the proposed sewer extension. Mr. Baril noted that at the next informational meeting, perhaps in September or October, he will have a qualified preliminary estimate. It is for everyone's benefit to attend. Mr. Farrell encourages open participation from residents and invited residents to visit the Engineering Department to review the master sewer facilities plan. Mr. Armstrong noted that the Authority, in the past, has allowed payments in installments for the benefit assessments. Mr. Roy commented that the mainline in the road has to be paid for by someone. The cost is divided between each house that will benefit, whether now or in the future. It's the only way you can do it fairly. Mr. Curry inquired about extra charges associated with connecting. Mr. Farrell noted that is beyond the scope of what the Authority controls. Mr. Baril estimates it may be done by spring of 2016. Mr. Baril mentioned that proper maintenance is important in maintaining a septic system. Also, there is a benefit of having a sewer for homebuyers in front of their home, especially when it's time to sell their house. The Engineering Department receives numerous inquiries from realtors inquiring whether a particular home is connected to the sewer. Mr. Curry inquired whether a home is devalued if a new sewer is installed in an area. Mr. Farrell replied no as it's referred to as a benefit. Mr. Johansen mentioned that if a homeowner pays \$10,000 as an assessment, that money will come back. Mr. Farrell noted that when a project appears on the radar screen, the neighbors will contact the utility companies, such as the water and gas companies, to coordinate running those utilities also. Mr. Farrell thanked Mr. Curry for attending.

IV NEW BUSINESS –

2015 – 3 Public Hearing regarding proposed increase for sewer use fee

Mr. Farrell opened the floor for the public hearing for the proposed increase of the sewer use fee to \$335.00. There were no audience members present and Mr. Farrell invited comments from the members. Mr. Armstrong commented that based on the budget that's before the Town for this coming fiscal year, there is a projected \$220,000 for the Farmington interceptor replacement and there's a substantial amount of \$660,000 for lateral connections and \$100,000 for I/I Rehabilitation. Mr. Baril responded to Mr. Armstrong's question regarding revenue generation and noted there's an average of 5,000 EDU's that are being billed this year. If the sewer increase is \$10, the calculation of multiplying \$10 by 5,000 equals a revenue increase of \$50,000. Without any further comments, Mr. Farrell closed out Agenda item 2015 – 3.

2015 – 4 Public Hearing regarding proposed changes to Assessment Policy, Section VII.

Mr. Armstrong noted the change is to correct a few typographical errors and notify those who receive a benefit assessment the right to pre-pay to avoid future interest, notify elderly and handicap that they have a right to come before the Authority to argue for some form of deferral. Also, the obligation that if there's a transfer of property, the remaining unpaid sum, which a homeowner chooses to pay in installments, is due and owing which will benefit the authority as we are no longer dealing with the individual who chose to pay in installments and are dealing with the new homeowner. Approximately three years ago, a homeowner came before the Authority to complain why she, as a new homeowner, was being held accountable for it. Mr. Baril noted the current deferral program is for only those individuals who are identified by low income, defined by the Town Assessor. Mr. Armstrong noted the wording includes disabled. Mr. Farrell noted the language of the policy will be changed and will appear at a future public hearing. Discussion continued that there's no need to change the wording in the proposed policy.

2015 – 5 Accounting and Management of Fund 5

Mr. Farrell noted the difficulty of identifying what money is coming in and what money is going out and noted there is a fiduciary responsibility for everyone that is a sewer user. There is not an intimate knowledge of what part of our budget goes to the Town Manager, what is being collected and what of that is being collected is going into paying for the pump station, emergency repairs, the Farmington contract, the sewer truck and salaries. Mr. Baril mentioned he can answer most of these questions as they are in the operating budget but a suggestion would be to invite the Finance Director, Peggy Colligan to a meeting. She can provide a tutorial on what the financial statements mean and provide further detail. Mr. Baril offered to bring in the budget book to review certain account numbers. Mr. Farrell noted that statutorily, everything the AWPCA does, it has to be isolated to the operations, maintenance, and all things sewer. Mr. Farrell would like to have Ms. Colligan and Mr. Robertson come in and clarify to the Commission by providing a quarterly report that's more fundamental. Mr. Baril noted the current quarterly report represents what is projected vs. actual at a given time. Mr. Baril noted that there are a lot of moving parts in the sewer fund and reviewed original budget (projected by Mr. Baril), final budget (may be modified by Administration), expenditures (requested funds for certain CIP requests that may be eliminated). Mr. Baril responded to Mr. Farrell's question stating Town Manager may modify certain budget figures and then provided the process of submitting CIP requests for Engineering, Secret Lake and Sewer related items. Discussion continued on how the sewer budget is compiled and reviewed and noted that a supplemental appropriation can be requested for certain projects, such as the I/I Study. There's a mechanism that exists to back-feed the system. The history of the Town budget process was discussed. Mr. Johansen expressed an interest to have someone come in to explain the details of the sewer report and have Brandon come in also. A discussion is needed as this is the Authority's responsibility. Mr. Armstrong's concern is that this is not how he's used to seeing a business report. He would like to see how much you budget, how much was spent last quarter, how much was spent year to date and how much is left and how much is coming in. Discussion included next steps on how the AWPCA will communicate to the Town their concerns and how to proceed to have questions answered. Mr. Johansen mentioned he would rather have more detail in the report. We would rather have more detail. In reviewing financial data, Mr. Armstrong mentioned we are collecting user fees roughly equal to the amount that is going out. I see that the town is 85% build-out. Our only additional income is connection fees, i.e., 15%. Therefore, should we increase our user fees in anticipation of the replacement of the

pipes which we will have to replace in about 20 – 25 years? Mr. Johansen noted a long term replacement schedule would be beneficial so we can say there's a specific reason why we're charging what we have to and whether we're in the ballpark – not because of what other towns charge. We need this much money and the reason we have this much money sitting in the fund is because we need it for the future. Mr. Baril noted the sewer facility plan is extremely interesting in terms of the long range planning relating to longevity to pumps. Mr. Roy compared his experience with the Town of Simsbury to the Town of Avon and noted Simsbury's treatment plant is a large asset to the Town. It's the biggest piece of capital in Town. That budget stands alone from the Town of Simsbury. The WPCA maintains that budget solely by themselves. Mr. Baril reviewed what line items he requests for the sewer fund under the operation budget and reviewed how his requests are approved or not approved. Mr. Baril noted the CIP budget requests he made, such as the I/I study and lateral extension projects will tap against the undesignated fund balance. Mr. Farrell invited feedback from members to include in writing the invitation to the Town Administration to meet with the WPCA.

V. OLD BUSINESS

2015 – 2 Annual Discussion to establish sewer use (EDU) Rate

Mr. Farrell noted a vote is needed to adopt the annual user rate of \$335. Public session was open and is now closed. The new rate will begin FY July 2015.

MOTION Mr. Roy motioned to approve the user fee. The motion, seconded by Mr. Farrell received unanimous approval.

2013 – 7 Assessment Conveyance

Mr. Farrell noted public comment was open and is now closed.

MOTION Mr. Farrell motioned to accept the changes to the assessment conveyance. The motion, seconded by Mr. Roy received unanimous approval.

VI PLANNING & ZONING MATTERS – Mr. Baril reviewed a meeting he had with Mr. Robertson, Mr. Kushner and a development group from Providence, RI regarding the purchase of Avon Park North from Ensign Bickford. They intend to purchase the property in two phases. The first phase closing is scheduled for the middle of September. There will be ramifications to the sewer use anticipated from this property and downstream infrastructure impacts also. The second Planning & Zoning matter is the property opposite near the town line (the Northeast Utilities site) is in consideration for development. Mr. Baril received a call from the Town of Simsbury inquiring about Engineering's consideration should the Town of Simsbury wish to pump sewers from this facility through the Town of Avon line back into the interceptor to go north to Simsbury.

VII COMMUNICATION FROM STAFF – Mr. Baril provided an update on the I/I study. Letters have been sent to affected residents who are included in the first phase of the study. Letters will be sent the following week to residents in the second phase. Along with staff from the Engineering Department, Mr. Baril noted they came across manholes that will need to have work performed on them. Repairing manholes will be coordinated with the paving schedule with Public Works. Mr. Baril contacted the surveying company to begin the survey work for the proposed sewer extension on Paperchase and Hurdle Fence. A letter to residents regarding this update will be sent to those affected parcels. Ms. Essex inquired about the administrative requirements in posting the changes to the sewer assessment policy.

VIII COMMUNICATION FROM MEMBERS – Mr. Farrell reviewed the original town ordinance and it says the AWPCA should have 6 members and questioned whether Mr. Baril would be considered the sixth member. Mr. Baril thought that would be strange why any board or commission would have an even number. Mr. Farrell will look into it further.

IX OTHER BUSINESS – None

X ADJOURNMENT -

MOTION: Mr. Farrell motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m. The motion, seconded by Mr. Armstrong received unanimous approval.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Essex, Clerk