

AVON WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY

April 12, 2018

Selectmen's Chambers, 7:00 p.m.

Town of Avon

Public Hearing

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Avon Water Pollution Control Authority was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mr. Johansen.

AWPCA

Present: Eric Johansen, Chairman
Terry Ryan, Vice Chairman
Tom Armstrong
Chris Roy
Lawrence Baril, Town Engineer
Tim Foster, Superintendent of Sanitary Sewers

Absent: Keith Jones

II. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING –

MOTION: Mr. Armstrong made a motion for approval of the March 8, 2018 minutes. The motion, seconded by Mr. Roy, received unanimous approval.

III. COMMUNICATION FROM THE AUDIENCE – Please see below.

IV. NEW BUSINESS – None

V. OLD BUSINESS -

2018 – 3 Annual discussion to establish sewer use (EDU) rate

Mr. Johansen opened the public hearing and provided background on the Avon Water Pollution Control Authority (AWPCA) noting the AWPCA establishes rates on an annual basis. The user rates are reviewed along with the budget. Mr. Johansen noted that the AWPCA is an authority mandated by state statute, not a town department. Various staff work for the AWPCA. It's not tax payer dollars that is paying for their services. It's AWPCA money which is coming from user fees – it's only from the users of the system in Town. When the budget is put together, there is one primary revenue source other than what is collected. The way to collect money is through the user charge, which is currently \$365/EDU. Connection fees is another source which is currently \$2,500 per residential unit. There is not a mandate to connect if there are sewers in front of your house. The money that comes in from connection fees is inconsistent – it can't be used for budgeting purposes. Mr. Johansen further explained that the AWPCA pays the Town of Avon for the services of the Town Engineer, Tim Foster and various Town Staff which is paid from the sewer fund. The Town of Avon does not have a wastewater treatment plant. The Town's sewage goes to either the Towns of Canton, Simsbury or Farmington. There are established rates which vary year to year which is a majority of the budget. The next part of the budget is the services for Town staff and other costs. There are agreements with area towns which sometimes include state mandated upgrades to make them more effective, which the Town of Avon pays. Currently, the Town of Avon pays the Town of Simsbury \$293,000 per year which goes through the year 2027. The Town of Farmington is undergoing a \$50-60M upgrade and they determined the Town of Avon's share will be \$1.2 million, due some time in 2019 with annual payments of \$400,000 [approximate numbers]. In

addition to the fixed costs such as staff salary, plant upgrades, maintaining the Town's pump station is also an expense. There are also I&I improvements needed and general system maintenance of the laterals. The emergency fund needs to be maintained also. Mr. Johansen explained the lateral extension program and how the project is funded and also explained the AWPCA's consultant, Raftelis, was hired to conduct a study to determine what is needed for emergency funds, user fees, while comparing other towns. Mr. Johansen commented the current sewer user fee of \$365/year is not adequate to meet the needs that are coming up. He noted that in the past years, there were lower increases. There are very serious costs coming up this year. There was a habit of not trying to raise rates if the Commission didn't need to but this year, a jump needs to be made. Mr. Johansen continued to note the amount published in the notice included a potential increase of \$550/EDU. Mr. Johansen clarified this amount noting the revised increase should be \$500/EDU. There is one source of income and without that money, the AWPCA can't run the sewers in Town. He invited the audience to comment on any issues they have.

Stanley Cohen noted he's in attendance as his family owns Avon Mills Apartments and he mentioned he feels the method of charging is unfair to multi-dwelling units noting it doesn't cost more to bring the sewers in. Mr. Johansen responded to Mr. Cohen's question regarding what the AWPCA does with excess funds. Mr. Baril responded to Mr. Cohen's comment that the staff in the Engineering Department has been reduced. The full-time secretary position has been changed to part-time and noted that Mr. Foster is the only full-time staff person charged 100% through the sewer fund. Mr. Baril explained other staff within the Town of Avon and how the positions are charged and also explained the payment and funding process to the sewer fund. Mr. Foster responded to a question regarding why the Town of Avon does not have a treatment plant noting how the network of sewers are built it would not be feasible. Mr. Cohen inquired how the Commission could punish the multi-dwelling units to charge per a unit when they don't use anywhere near the water or sewer the other people use. Discussion included other towns' formula for an EDU rate for multi-use dwellings. Mr. Johansen noted the AWPCA is reviewing the Raftelis report and once the report is finalized, they will look into other ways for sewer use billing like water usage. Mr. Cohen expressed appreciation to the Board noting the members are volunteers and trying to do the best for everyone in Town.

Regis Koontz of 94 Secret Lake Road commented on the area treatment plants and asked if the Authority has any input to the three towns to address their requests for additional funding for expenses such as treatment or capital improvements. Mr. Baril noted the Town has little input and reviewed the plant that the Town of Farmington has designed. Mr. Koontz asked the Authority what their intention for raising the fees. Mr. Johansen responded to Mr. Koontz's question noting the Authority has been charging the absolute minimum that could be charged to users. An increase user fee will address the expense associated with the Town of Farmington's treatment plant. Mr. Foster also commented the treatment upgrade is coming from the State – the Town of Farmington is mandated by the State to meet certain requirements. Mr. Armstrong noted there are agreements with the area towns and there is an Inflow and Infiltration study to investigate the volume going to Farmington. Mr. Roy addressed Mr. Koontz's comment explaining how the past sewer use fee formula has been calculated. Mr. Koontz inquired how much the Authority will increase for commercial businesses. Mr. Foster explained the difference between residential and commercial billing. Mr. Foster explained the billing structure from other towns and noted there's a meter system and the data is tallied, billed based on a formula which is sent to the Town of Avon. This is an estimate which is reconciled. Allyson Mulligan from 82 Secret Lake Road noted that in the real world, everyone should pay about the same percentage increase and noted that if the sewer increase was left at \$550, which is a 50.68% increase which is a ridiculous percentage increase for any tax. Mr. Johansen noted that he's been on the Board for 10 years and noted the discussions

regarding the best way to make an increase. Ms. Mulligan inquired if other towns are being assessed the same percentage increase. Mr. Baril noted the Town of Burlington is similar noting they also have inter-municipal agreements and they also flow effluent to the Town of Farmington. Ms. Milligan commented that if the mandates are coming from the State, those people who are involved with using a particular sewer plant, they should have input. Mr. Johansen noted the Town of Farmington's mill rate is low noting they have a lot of commercial and manufacturing – more than Avon. Mr. Baril provided further detail on the inter-municipal agreements based on Mr. Koontz's question inquiring if the AWPCA has an input on the budgets from the area towns. Mr. Foster noted he receives a monthly flow report. Mr. Baril explained the allocation to the Town of Simsbury which is 980,000 gallons per day, the Town of Farmington is 600,000 gallons per day. Mr. Baril noted that if the Farmington Sewer Shed is built-out, this will affect the allocated capacity and will need to be addressed in the plant upgrade. Discussion continued regarding specifics when looking at future build-outs.

Claire Henderson from 1 Keystone Circle noted that after listening to the conversation, residents will face an increase in the flat rate fee. Ms. Henderson inquired about looking into another way to create the user fee. Ms. Henderson has lived in town for 40 years and raised concern about how the sewer use rate is the same regardless of the number of bedrooms. Ms. Henderson recommend the AWPCA look at the assessed value of homes and get serious since the study is now going on. Two comments from the audience followed: Well said and We are all in the same boat.

Sue Anderson from 17 Mountain Ledge Road noted the increase is generated for capital improvements to the Town of Farmington's treatment plant. Ms. Anderson asked if the proposed increase is a temporary increase or will the increases continue year after year. Mr. Johansen noted they are still looking at the numbers but the bump in the increase is a combination of a one-time payment of \$1.2 million and an additional \$400,000 per year. Mr. Baril added additional information regarding the data review by Raftelis and noted the \$1.2 million upgrade is not the only driving force. Projects include two pump stations which need major upgrades, the sewer lateral program to bring sewers into neighborhoods that were built in the 1950s and 1960s which include septic systems that are questionable. The charge of the AWPCA is water pollution control. Septic systems that fail create pollution and are a public health problem. Mr. Baril explained the possibility of going to a usage based program. Mr. Foster noted the challenges the Town faced when looking into the water-in/water-out program. Discussion included how to calculate those residents who are on wells and issues that may arise with irrigation.

Mr. Johansen responded to an audience member's question confirming that \$500 is the figure the Authority will vote on that evening.

Dennis Teixeira of 161 Secret Lake Road asked if one would have to connect if there is sewer available and one's septic tank would need to be replaced. Mr. Johansen replied one would not have to connect. Mr. Baril noted that septic systems are not the AWPCA purview- it falls under the Farmington Valley Health District (FVHD). The AWPCA does not mandate connections to their system. The Health Department may mandate it. Mr. Roy believes the Health Department will not authorize the rebuild of a system if there is sewer in the street. Mr. Armstrong believes there is a 200 foot statutory requirement noting if one is within 200 feet of sewer, one will have to connect but noted the FVHD is the correct contact. Mr. Baril commented that the FVHD has their own permitting process for septic systems.

Mr. Johansen expressed appreciation to the audience for their feedback.

MOTION: Mr. Johansen made a motion to formally close the public hearing. The motion, seconded by Mr. Roy, received unanimous approval.

Mr. Johansen explained the background information on changing the proposed increase from \$550 to \$500.

Further discussion included a factor to consider for the future when calculating the annual sewer rate, including reviewing the income generated from connection fees. Also, there will be a financial template to enter variable information, such as operating and maintenance costs, which the spreadsheet will use to compute a sewer rate.

MOTION Mr. Johansen proposed to increase the annual sewer EDU rate to \$500 for the next year. The motion, seconded by Mr. Armstrong, received unanimous approval.

2018 – 1 Potential Sewer Extension for the Highwood Area

Mr. Baril provided an update noting bids have been received for soil borings. The next step is to do field survey work and then design. A July public hearing is a possibility. Mr. Baril noted the Engineering Department received a fair number of calls from residents who are not in favor of the project. Mr. Johansen commented he does want to go out and ask for an engineering report for the second time if the original report is based on what the costs were originally. Discussion included next steps to address which sewer project(s) to move forward on. Mr. Baril addressed Mr. Ryan's comment about metering noting that working with one water company will be beneficial. Mr. Baril noted he will work with Mr. Foster to conduct an analysis this fall. Mr. Baril noted there are resources available to do the projects, such as the Highwood area and Stony Corners, in a linear fashion. Mr. Foster commented there are sewer mains that are 50 to 60 years old and there are pump stations that are over 38 years old which need attention. Where the money is going should be addressed. Discussion included next steps regarding potential maintenance projects and costs along with the top two streets on the sewer facilities plan matrix.

2018 – 2 Proposed Sewer Extension for the remainder of Stony Corners and Stony Corners Circle

The preliminary engineering is underway for the remainder of Stony Corners / Stony Corners Circle.

2017 – 5 Cost of Service Analysis

Mr. Baril noted there will be a final report and will follow-up with Raftelis regarding outstanding items. Mr. Baril encouraged members to let Mr. Baril know if they have any comments.

VI PLANNING & ZONING MATTERS – Mr. Armstrong mentioned the Bailey Road project. Mr. Baril noted that sewer analysis has been completed for the proposed project on Nod Road. He will meet with the developer's engineer.

VII COMMUNICATION FROM STAFF – None

VIII COMMUNICATION FROM MEMBERS – Mr. Ryan commended the members for tonight's meeting.

IX OTHER BUSINESS – None

X ADJOURNMENT – Mr. Johansen motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. The motion, seconded by Mr. Roy, received unanimous approval.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Essex, Clerk