

**Village District of Eastman  
Commissioners' Meeting–Village District of Eastman Office  
1 PM November 17, 2010  
Minutes**

**Attendance:** Commissioners Bill Sullivan, Bob Fairweather and Duncan Wood; Treasurer Dave Wright; District Manager Bill Weber; Operators Neil Perez and Josh Worthen; Clerk Lorie McClory

**MINUTES:** Commissioner's Minutes from Oct. 20 had not been distributed to commissioners. Minutes from Nov. 3 meeting: errors and changes will be made and minutes taken up at the next meeting.

**FIELD:** DM Weber reported the plant is running well and water levels are up. The fluoride testing result is good: 1.2 (blended water).

**Source 1 rehab:** Information arrived after agenda out. Will discuss later in meeting.

**Meter reading:** New software is working well in the office but VDE is still using old method in the field because of a software issue with the handheld units. Meter reading was done using golf carts. Operator Perez said it worked well and cut time by about ½ day. Benefits: saved about \$150 in gas, better on driveways, easier than in the truck. Operators put signs on the carts and wore reflective vests.

**FINANCIAL REPORT:**

1. The Grantham Tax letter was sent out 11/8/10, for \$230,275.50, which represents the balance of the 2010 tax apportionment.
2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010 billing was much higher than anticipated, though the dollars are in line with the increased use from July through September. The billing total was \$156,442 for November and \$119,676 for May, for an annual total of \$276,118 or \$6,118 over our estimated revenues. New software gives concise report.
3. All CIP reimbursement requests totaling \$46,000 are currently being processed by the trustees. DM Weber said he went to Grantham's tax rate setting session and stayed after with the selectmen and Dept. of Revenue officials to discuss issues with the town's trustees of trust funds. One of the two trustees tendered his resignation and work cannot be done with only one trustee. Selectmen will appoint in the interim. DM Weber said he does not foresee any big expenses between now and the end of the year.
4. Our note payments, one annual and the other bi-annual and totaling approximately \$200,000, are due Dec. 20 and will be sent out Dec. 10. DM Weber said he hasn't seen a bank payment statement yet. New amount dropped by 7% for next year.
5. After 10 months, the budget should have 17% left and we're at about 20%.

**MANAGER'S REPORT:**

1. Water Use for October as predicted has fallen back to historical levels. Billing caught the usage for summer, and most of it was used. Backwashes down to four. pH in water

- has increased so VDE does not need to increase the pH level chemically. Source 1 static level up to 14 from 8 or 9 during the summer. More rain to date than an average year.
2. Service turnoffs: Oct. 09 recorded 29 turnoffs; Oct. 10 is only 2. Work orders have not all been turned in. Curb repairs also have not been getting reported to office. Keep track off inventory. Commissioner Fairweather said the commissioners decided to increase the hardware inventory and contract labor lines in the FY11 budget rather than set up a new account for curb stop repairs.
  3. All reports, DMR, Routine Sampling, 4-log have all been submitted for October. The DES has requested from the district a “good cause reason” as to why it does not bill or read meters more than twice a year. DM Weber is currently working on the formal waiver, which is due by Nov. 24. He said the comprehensive document requires proof that the district has a good handle on unaccounted-for water and asks for three years of numbers. Currently there is approximately 18% of water unaccounted for. Commissioners asked if there was a target percentage. DM Weber said he didn’t know. Since reading during the winter here is not feasible and heavy water use here is seasonal, it may be best to add a reading just after Labor Day to measure after the peak season.
  4. Though it may take 2-3 more billings with the new software, the tracking of “unaccounted” water is now more easily delineated. Using available data, DM Weber has established a rough estimate of approximately 18% of water unaccounted for.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **Appoint new moderator:** *Commissioner Fairweather made a motion to appoint Frank Farinella as the interim moderator and to swear him in as soon as possible. Commissioner Sullivan seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.*
2. **Water Turn-on Fee:** Commissioners discussed continuing the free fall/winter turnoff and raising the spring turn-on fee from \$50 to \$75. Last year’s “lost” revenue from the free turn-off service was approximately \$3,000; raising the turn-on fee will lower that to \$1,500 if the same number of requests are made. Notice to water users will be sent in the annual meeting mailing. *Commissioner Fairweather made a motion to increase the fee for water turn on at curbstop from \$50 to \$75 per occurrence. Commissioner Sullivan seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.*
3. **Meeting dates:** Commissioners established the following meeting dates and times: Regular meeting 1 p.m. Dec. 14, VDE Office; Regular meeting 8 a.m. Jan. 19, VDE Office; First public budget hearing 7 p.m. Feb. 9 at The Center at Eastman; Regular meeting 8 a.m. Feb. 16, VDE Office; Second public budget hearing, if needed, 7 p.m. Feb. 23 at The Center; Regular meeting 8 a.m. March 16, VDE Office; Annual meeting 7 p.m. March 23 at The Center.
4. **Donation request:** Commissioners considered request for a conservation easement acquisition donation from the Eastman Charitable Foundation. The purchase would significantly increase the well head protection area. DM Weber said the information and request came through ECF Board Chair Maynard Goldman. DM Weber is waiting for more information and will provide it as received. Currently as he understands it, the

request is for \$2,500 to go toward the purchase, survey and attorney fees; the total purchase price is \$15,000. Commissioners said they are willing to give the money as long as the easement is in perpetuity. DM Weber also said wells are an allowable use under such easements.

Operator Worthen, who lives in Springfield where the land under consideration is, said this has to go to Town Meeting because it includes a Class 6 road (Biers Road/Old Grantham Road). He said people are typically reluctant to give up rights to a road.

Commissioners voiced concerns over district money being used on up-front costs and the purchase never going through, and access issues with the Class 6 road. Treasurer Wright said the district has \$2,000 in two accounts earmarked for such expenditures; none of the money has been used in many years. Commissioners said this will be a great benefit to the district, but would like more information before taking formal action.

5. **Source 1 update:** DM Weber distributed the proposed schedule for replacement wells. Pump test proposal is at DES.
6. **Cell phone policy:** DM Weber has initiated a policy regarding cell phone use with district phones and vehicles. The entire personnel and policies manual will be updated and corrected in early 2011. ***Commissioner Wood made a motion to endorse the policy regarding in-vehicle cell phone use dated Nov. 8, 2010 as prepared by DM Weber. Commissioner Fairweather seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.***

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

1. **Finalize the 2011 budget:** Commissioners reviewed the 2011 proposed budget, noting the following highlights:
  - ◆ The bottom line will result in no tax rate increase. To make this happen, commissioners will transfer \$20,000 from general fund surplus into the general fund. Last year, \$10,000 was transferred. DM Weber said VDE has sufficient funds in unrestricted fund balance. Using it to reduce taxes is an appropriate use.
  - ◆ Budget for wage increases was decreased to 2% since employees got 3% this year while surrounding municipalities gave employees lesser increases
  - ◆ The communication budget is up because of the need for a dedicated cell phone line for power outages
  - ◆ Contract labor is up 3% but have to keep eye on things
  - ◆ There is an increase in the contingency line this year
  - ◆ VDE can get a guaranteed rate for three years for property, liability and workers compensation insurance, but the district can lose money if the rates should drop during that period. ***Commissioner Fairweather made a motion to direct DM Weber to lock the insurance premiums for the next three years as offered by the Local Government Center in a letter dated 10/15/10. Commissioner Sullivan seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.***

- ◆ The CIP accounts are basically level funded because two accounts are being closed and appropriations are being moved to other accounts.

***Commissioner Fairweather moved that the Board approve the annual budget of \$844,138 as a draft budget for calendar year 2011, to be reviewed and finalized at the December meeting. Commissioner Sullivan seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.***

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

**Commissioners voted to go into non-public session at 2:35 p.m. to discuss personnel issues.**

Commissioners returned to public session at 2:45 p.m.

**OTHER:**

Commissioner Fairweather said he would like to see the CIP document that was started when Bob LaGassa was a commissioner continued, at least the portion dealing with goals and the history of the accounts. This will make for continuity as the board changes. He recommended the entire document be updated every five years, but to annually update the interim goals and spreadsheet on where things stand. The Annual report has included a 10-year plan for capital. Commissioners would like the projection table without the extended explanation.

DM Weber recommended writing the CIP warrant similar to many towns: grouping them all into a table so the vote is on the CIP program as a whole rather than each individual CIP account. Commissioner Wood said he is concerned that voters may disagree with one item and can defeat the entire thing. DM Weber said controversial items can be separated as individual warrant articles and noted that new accounts have to be approved separately. It was agreed that the CIP appropriations will be combined when drawing up the warrant and commissioners will have the option of changing it.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Lorie McClory