

**Village District of Eastman  
Commissioners' Meeting–Village District of Eastman Office  
August 17, 2011  
Minutes**

**In attendance:** Commissioners Bill Sullivan (Chair), Bob Fairweather and Duncan Wood; Treasurer David Wright; District Manager Bill Weber; Operator Neil Perez. Absent: Deputy Treasurer Ben Conroy and Clerk Lorie McClory. In the clerk's absence, the meeting was recorded and minutes done from the recording.

The meeting was opened at 8:02 a.m.

**FIELD:**

Commissioners asked Operator Perez questions regarding the pressure reducing valve.

Commissioners asked operators to put more traffic cones around the water valves when work is in progress.

VDE may need to replace radios with a higher wattage because of tree growth; radios will be borrowed for testing.

Operator Perez said there may be leak on Snow Hill side, based on the historic levels of the tanks.

A test run of the backwash system was conducted. The only concern is that the valves may not open during the rinse. When this happens, the pipes start to separate. Solenoids have been replaced and it hasn't happened since, but it may be good to consider installing an emergency shutoff. DM Weber said the system was designed with one but it was never installed. He is contacting the original company to discuss retrofitting.

The backhoe has a few safety deficiencies, including the brakes; a report is in the works.

**MINUTES:** Commissioners made three changes to the July draft minutes:

- New business, item 1, line 1: change "water mains" to "curb stops."
- New business, item 5: Middle of first paragraph: change "6,000 to 7,000 gallons" to "600,000 gallons," and change "\$1/gallon" to "\$1/100 gallons."

***Commissioner Wood moved that the July minutes be approved as amended.***

***Commissioner Sullivan seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.***

**FINANCIAL REPORT:**

1. Commissioner Wood noted the gasoline budget only has 16% remaining. The total operations budget running where it should be.
2. Commissioners reviewed the MS-34 "Revised Estimate of Revenues" and decided to change revenue estimates based on current interest rates and a lack of sale of equipment. Two changes were made to the document. Due to current interest rates, the anticipated interest income was reduced from \$3,000 to \$1,000. That

loss of revenue was offset by increasing the anticipated tax revenue by \$2,000. Commissioners asked that a copy of the MS-34 be included with the minutes.

3. Revenue: \$2,000 was budgeted for sale of equipment, but nothing has been sold. DM Weber has photos to display items for sale.
4. Source 1: It was noted that the change in pumps will not change the need to use signage to encourage water conservation during dry weather. The water available is still dependent on rain, repairing leaks and people using water wisely.

#### **MANAGER'S REPORT:**

1. Each summer the district has had a major leak in the spring. The district is most likely pumping less water each year because leaks are being found and fixed as opposed to customers using less.
2. The "tree" letter sent to some owners generated some response. One customer called and asked VDE to mark his curb stops so he knows where he has to do tree work. It needs to be clear within five feet of the curb stop. Operators are marking them with blue ribbon so owners know what needs to be cut. It was noted that some trees are on customers' property and some on ECA easements.
3. The replacement vertical turbine pump is operational.

#### **SRF UPDATE**

1. State is currently reviewing data collected by Tata & Howard during the pump test. State was ready to approve but the report was late. Should approve next week. Bid package will be ready by mid-September.
2. Commissioners reviewed the scope of work for the next phase that was generated by Tata & Howard. DM Weber has already sent it back with his comments.
  - Item 5: Commissioner Wood said VDE is currently using wells 5 and 6; Well 2 is not in use. He wants the plan to include a provision for a meter for Well 2 in case it is reactivated.
  - Item 2.1: Commissioners want clarification on who will provide bid packages for the bidders: VDE or Tata & Howard. Will they get a hard copy and a CD? Will there be a fee for the package? Will the pre-bid meeting be mandatory?
  - Item 2.5: Permits: Is this close enough to wetlands to have to deal with the Springfield Conservation Commission? DM Weber said he will investigate.

Commissioners said the project should be documented by photographs taken either by VDE or Tata & Howard and not the contractor. DM Weber said VDE may want to hire a clerk of the works for portions of the project. He will talk to Tata & Howard to find out how many hours they'll have someone there during the four to six weeks of the project.

In response to questions, DM Weber said it is not possible to do the security fence as part of this project. The fence and culvert work will be put on a list to consider in future budgets.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Water use ordinance penalties: A subcommittee of DM Weber, Treasurer Wright and Commissioner Fairweather made the following recommendations: First infraction: warning; Second: \$250 fine; Third: \$500 and the right to shut off the customer's water with reactivation \$125 additional

There was much discussion on how violations would be documented and how the customers would receive notification. DM Weber said customers cannot be put under surveillance and questioned whether photos or video could be taken without consent. As for warnings, discussion included whether leaving a card with the owner is enough or if it needs to be a more formal letter with a return receipt or a telephone call. How can VDE prove a second or third warning if they can't substantiate the first or second? Commissioners asked DM Weber to design a warning card and check with other districts about how they handle this.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Discuss scheduling a "special meeting" to correct a deficiency regarding the Water Mains and Valves Capital Reserve Fund. DM Weber is checking with supervisors of checklist to work out a date.
2. Question revisited from July meeting: what can VDE do and not do within water main maintenance easement(s). The length of easements is on tax maps but they often don't show the width. DM Weber said the NE Telephone & Telegraph maps show 24 feet. Widths are typically assumed to be 12 feet for water projects. He said from wellheads to curb stops, the district is allowed to cut any tree or do what is needed to maintain the system as long as the area is put back in good shape.

Areas with problems include Niblic Lane, Alpine Vista to Snow Hill, Deer Run to Wellfield Road along the trail, and the dam area near Pioneer Point. Should trees in those areas be thinned to allow easier access during an emergency? Operator Perez said there could be a leak in the Alpine Vista/Snow Hill area because there is a lot of water coming down the hill, but they cannot find a T or drawings of where the pipes are. Commissioner Wood asked who owns the property in the areas that need thinning: ECA, condo associations or private owners. DM Weber will obtain the GIS maps from Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission with the water lines overlay included.

3. Commissioners agreed to allow VDE staff to offer a class on shutting down homes for the winter or vacations in conjunction with Sustainable Eastman. Word is getting out about the problems with the houses in the last few years.
4. Water levels: Through today, the aquifer is up slightly and it will come up more in the next few days. It's at the same level it was in mid-June and better than last August. Water usage is down. Leave up water conservation signage through Labor Day.

### **Old business: (revisited)**

2. Rate structure and billing breakpoint: Commissioner Fairweather said VDE rates need to encourage conservation with a sliding scale, be fair to users and bring revenues from usage more in line with operating costs. Usage fees last year were 30% of total revenue. In winter, 49% of customers use 10,000 gallons or less. Summer usage is higher, assuming seasonal people, guests visiting and outside watering. Commissioners discussed the subcommittee's recommended rates (see attached). The rates suggested customers who don't pay a precinct tax should be charged more for usage.

A model billing generated by District Manager Weber showed the new rates generating \$22,000 more in revenue from residential customers and \$16,000 more from commercial. This is approximately a 10% increase per customer. The district would then receive 36% of its revenue from user fees.

Under this proposal, residential customers would be charged 70 cents per 100 gallons for the first 10,000 gallons; 75 cents/100 for the second 10,000; 80 cents/100 for the third 10,000; 90 cents/100 for the fourth 10,000; and \$1/100 for anything over 40,000 gallons. The usage will be a cumulative, annual total. The question arose: what if everyone started conserving water; could the district then lose money. Commissioners said this is unlikely.

There was considerable discussion about water usage by ECA. With a rate increase of 10 cents/100 gallons, the ECA bill could increase by \$453/year. Commissioners agreed that VDE needs to strongly encourage ECA to conserve water, particularly in the watering of the front entrance flowers. They said that area uses in a season four times what is used by a household in one year or by the entire district on one day. VDE will speak with members of the Gardens & Grounds Committee and Sustainable Eastman to solicit help in this matter. Commissioner Wood said a solution to the problem could be a soil moisture sensor, which will not allow the sprinklers to activate unless the soil moisture is at a certain level.

**Other:**

Commissioner Fairweather said he is working on updating the personnel manual.

DM Weber said he will need the trustees to take \$35,000 out of the water main and valves CD to cover the shortage from the water main and valve trust account for the reimbursement request of \$103,000, with approval of the Trustees of Trust Funds.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Lorie McClory

