

**TOWN OF DIXFIELD
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, May 23 2016 – 5:30PM
LUDDEN MEMORIAL LIBRARY**

Present: Board of Selectmen, Malcolm Gill, Eugene Skibitsky, and Norman Mitchell Hart Daley and Dana Whittemore were absent. Mr. Whittemore arrived at 6:08

Town Employees present: Town Manager Carlo Puiia, PW Foreman Randy Glover, CEO Michael Moore, Scott Dennett, Water Supt. James White, and Chief Howe.

Citizens present: Aaron Jamison, Dan McKay, Peter Holman, Susan Holmes, Walter Newman, Jackie Moore, two High St. residents, Mrs. Mitchell, Barry Prescott, Scott Belskis, Cheryl Dickson and note taker Norine Clarke.

Non-Citizens: Dean Milligan, Ron Smith

Press present: WVAC tv and Matt Daigle Sun Journal

1. Call to Order: Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Gill opened the meeting at 5:30 with the Pledge of Allegiance.

- 1. Public Hearing for comment before the Board of Selectmen acting as Sewer Trustees vote to consider a Sewer Rate Increase proposed to become effective July 1, 2016.** Town Manager Puiia opened the Hearing with some comments about the Dixfield Sewer. There are 566 sewer customers of which some are commercial. 27% is the amount of increase proposed. There are some areas that need work and Ted Berry Co. has made some recommendations to bring everything up to “snuff”. The norm should be to put 2% of operating costs into an escrow account for needed repairs which has not happened. There are no reserves of any kind. In 2012 the Auditor, Ron Smith recommended the rate be raised to \$74.75. The rate was raised only to \$64.65. Consequently the Sewer Dept. is at a deficit. Mr. Smith was present to answer questions about the 27% proposal. Mr. Mitchell asked about the 2% of operational amounts. Mr. McKay asked to compare Dixfield's rates to Rumford and Mexico. Rumford is \$160 annually and Mexico is \$250 annually. In answer to Mr. McKay's request for a breakdown of costs of billing by Mexico TM Puiia said that in 2016 Mexico was paid \$38,400 which was one half for water and one half for sewer. The cost for work done in the Dixfield office for the same time was \$5663.09 also half water and half sewer. That work includes collecting, auditing, and making the warrants.

The Sewer Dept. has 3 debt payments:

2011 Pine St project	\$103,000 at 1% till 2031
2012 Bridge	\$147,000 at 1% to 2032 2 sections—crossing the bridge ---bridge to Peru

connection

\$31,000 of this loan can be forgiven if the 2% acct. is established

2014 Clear Water loan \$110,000 at 1/2% to 2034

Mr. McKay asked about services provided by Ted Berry Co and at what cost. The cost is

approximately \$80,000 for a calendar year. He feels that this could be done in house. He also

requested that when the new Sewer ordinance is written that it allow people a choice of sewer

or septic systems. Jim White, Water Supt noted that there are 5 pumping stations to keep track

of which is a considerable job. Mr. Skibitsky voiced concern that there are no reserves, no

contingency, no local share and the Town is not being paid back. He questioned whether a

larger percentage (29-31) should be considered to make more progress. Vice Chair Whittemore

closed the Public Hearing at 6:18.

1. Agenda Adjustments:

a. to 4 a add #103

b. to 4 b add #102

Mr. Skibitsky made a motion to accept the amendments, Mr. Gill seconded and all present were in favor (4-0)

1. Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Gill made a motion to accept Regular Meeting minutes of May 9, 2016. Mr. Skibitsky seconded and the vote was 2 in favor, 2 abstained due to absence, none opposed.

1. Approval of Warrants and Payroll:

Mr. Skibitsky moved to accept the warrants and payrolls as amended. Mr. Gill seconded and all present were in favor.

1. Dept. Head Reports: Foreman Glover reported that all the flags were up for Memorial Weekend and the cemeteries have been mowed. Mr. Jamison asked about a pile of brush left on his property for chipping that was still there. Mr. Glover said it was not a town-maintained road and he did not think about it. He suggested that a phone call be made. Mr. Jamison said that he did not expect they would and felt the pile was too big for them to handle anyway. This led to a discussion of how to notify residents of clean-up week and the earlier suggestion about post cards maybe instead of newspaper ads. Mrs. Holmes said maybe also the web site and signs could be used.

2. Old Business: none

3. New Business:

a. Sewer Rate. Mr. Skibitsky made a motion that the 27% increase as outlined by the auditor making the new rate \$81.98 be made effective July 1, 2016. Mr. Gill seconded the motion and the vote was 4-0 with Mr. Daley absent.

b. Town Audit as of June 30, 2015. Auditor, Ron Smith reported that the town finances were healthy and solid. The surplus remains at the recommended amount for 90 days which for Dixfield is about one million. The Town continues to stay up to industry standards and within budget. The Water Dept. is the next issue to come up. He suggested that maybe at the next meeting they could discuss a term note to clean up the old sewer debt to the town. Mr. Skibitsky asked if it would be better for the town to have one bookkeeping system instead of the three now in place (sewer, water, town). Mr. Smith said it can be done and probably should be, but will need some background work. He suggested that idea be revisited. Mr. Whittemore asked a question about the undesignated surplus. Unspent budget amounts are turned to surplus. There is already \$125,000 spent from the current account which was used to lower the tax rate. Mr. Whittemore then said that the amount must represent 2-3 months' worth of expenses and Mr. Smith said that one month of Dixfield's expenses is about \$350,000 and the total surplus should be enough to cover 90 days. The Manager and the Board expressed their appreciation to Mr. Smith.

c. MedCare: Dean Milligan, and Cheryl Dickson, Dixfield's representative to the MedCare Board, were present to give some background and answer questions. MedCare is owned by 11 towns and was established in 1988. They also cover some un-organized territories. There are about 16,000 people covered and they answer about 4000 calls per year. Daily there are three full paramedic ambulances from 8am to 6pm and two from 6pm to 8am. If more personnel are needed, off duty and re-call people are brought in. Franklin, Oxford, and Androscoggin Counties have mutual aid agreements. Mr. Mitchell asked if ambulances were ever parked at other locations and was told they are all at the central location. In response to a question, Mrs. Holmes was told that a computer analyzes the phone number and decides whom to notify when a 911 call comes in. A patient can be taken to whichever hospital they choose unless the concern is life-threatening and then they would suggest to take the patient to the closest location to be stabilized and then transferred.

Revenues include the medical billing, classes that they teach and the town subsidies.. Mr. McKay asked if the calls are proportional to the sizes of the towns and was told that the numbers fall in line with the populations. Mr. Jamison asked how long the contract was for and was told it ends in 2018. In answer to why the increase, Mr. Milligan said it was due to several factors, the population drop, less call volume and 7-8% more uninsured people. The rates are set by Medicare standards. For those who do not pay, there is a collection plan. Mr. McKay inquired about debt "write-off" and was told it amounted to between \$100 and \$120,000 per year. In answer to his next question about private services, he was told there are none around here. The only way they can make enough money to survive is to have a large population and short transports. The average Medicare call takes 1 ½ hours. 16% is funded by the towns. Mrs. Dickson reminded the Board that Mr. Gill has been her alternate and with him leaving the Board, they will need a new alternate member.

d. RSU 10 School Budget assessment for 2016-2017 School assessment will be \$49,862,93 higher than last year. The Vote will be held on May 25 at MV High School.

e. RSU 10 Withdrawal Report. Barry Prescott said they are at the point they need to

form a new committee which will have to be accepted by the Dept. of Ed. An informal hearing will be held in each individual town and then an actual hearing. The Re Organization Committee will have 3-4 members. There may need to be a Special Selectmen's Meeting called to name the committee members. All Board members present thanked Mr. Prescott for his services on the committee.

f. Request to Place Soldier Silhouettes at the back half of Greenwood Cemetery: Mr. Neri Cormier has placed military silhouettes at the Memorial Stone on the Weld St. side of Greenwood Cemetery and would like to make some for the entrance to the back section. There were compliments given for those in place and Mr. Gill made a motion to allow the second set. Mr. Skibitsky seconded and the vote was 4-0.

1. **Other Business.** TM Puiia suggested to the Board that he send a congratulatory letter to Bob McPhee for his nomination to the Maine Sports Hall of Fame and all agreed.
2. **Public Correspondence.** None
3. **Public Comment:** Mr. Holman said that the Town needs to look into new business to get more money for the town. CEO Moore commented that sewer billing is based on water usage.
4. **Board Questions and Comments:** Mr. Skibitsky asked Chief Howe if the Police Log is going to be in the newspaper again and Chief said yes, that there has been a change in the reporter connection.

Mr. Gill read two letters that had been noted but not read at an earlier Wind hearing. The letters were from Mr. and Mrs. Norman Towle and Mr. Edward B. Ellis and both urged the Selectmen to vote in favor of windmills coming to Dixfield as has been the intent of the voters. He also made two presentations, one to Mr. McKay who was present and one to Freemont Tibbetts that he will deliver. They were given because those two and he had been "battling" for six years. Text on the shirts read "Official Member of the Piss and Moan Club".

Mr. Whittemore asked if there had been any response from Mike Rogers and was told there had been no recent contact by him.

Mr. Mitchell: no comment.

1. **FYI: As noted on agenda.**
2. **Next meeting: as noted on agenda**
3. **Adjournment:** At 7:42pm, Mr. Gill made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Skibitsky seconded. All present were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Norine H. Clarke, secretary