



## Manchester-By-The-Sea Meeting Posting

Notice of Public Meeting – (As required by M.G.L.Ch.30A §18-28)

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**Board/Committee:** Water Resources Protection Task Force

**Day & Date:** Wednesday, May 24, 2023

**Time:** 7:00 PM

**Location:** VIRTUAL

**Signature:** Sue Croft

**Attendees:** Steve Gang, Scott Horsley, John Round, Peter Colarusso, Fred Wales, Ron Mastrogiacomo, Jeff Cochand, Tom Kehoe, Ron Parker, Nate Desrosiers, Lynn Atkinson, Francie Caudill, Ann Harrison, Sue Croft

### MINUTES

- Steve Gang called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees.
- Steve gave an update from the 5/15 Select Board meeting at which he provided an update on behalf of the Task Force. Steve said that the new water rates proposed were received positively by the SB and that the SB expressed their appreciation of all the good work the Task Force has provided. The SB supports moving forward with rolling out phase 1 of the new rates but believes that the July 1 date may be too soon given the importance of letting people know that this change is coming, letting them know how it will impact them depending on their usage and helping them to prepare (including updates/fixes to irrigation systems, lead time to drill private wells and considerations for individual water conservation efforts as pointed out by Scott Horsley and John Round). Peter Colarusso suggested that the highest usage homeowners be approach both via mail/email and personally (send card or email to homeowner including a phone number to call if they have questions or concerns regarding the impending rate changes). Everyone agreed that we should do whatever we can to prevent an adverse reaction. There was discussion about what the timeline would be for rolling out proposed phases 2 and 3, and a wait and see approach prevailed with the SB. The SB would like to see the Sustainability Committee take over for implementing the Task Force's proposed recommendations. John and Steve plan to meet with them to discuss this transition in the near future. The recommendations include adding three new volunteers to the Sustainability Committee which currently has two vacant At-Large openings. Of these three positions one would be outward facing, one would be inward facing, and one would focus on implementing long-term recommendations. Steve said he was pleased to see that there was a lot of overlap between the current TF recommendations and those from the original 1990's report and that some of the older recommendations would now be completed.
- Steve provided an update on the Citizen's Survey which is currently closed stating that there were about 200 responses. The vast majority of responses in all categories led Steve to believe that most

people don't have much knowledge of our water situation. This highlights the need to educate the community in this area.

- The Quality & Contaminants group have produced a comprehensive report and the Usage & Demand group have produced a detailed report as well. Steve mentioned that there is room for more recommendations in the other areas if TF members have additional input. TF as a whole needs to finalize the recommendations and produce a workplan and timetable as requested by the SB. Steve then showed attendees the current draft of the workplan/timetable.
- Steve asked Scott to talk about what they are doing with water rates in Cotuit (where Scott lives and where he is on the water dept). Scott explained that a few years ago, Cotuit increased their water rates and they are now doing another round of rate increases. After the first round, they didn't see any significant changes in usage due to the rate increase. They did see an increase in the number of private wells installed (about 20 or so by middle tier users) for irrigation as a result of the new rates in the first round. The highest tier users didn't change their usage. Scott said that elasticity varies between towns. Prior to Cotuit's first round of rate increases, the Town supplemented its water enterprise fund with taxes, but since the implementation of the first rate increase, they have been able to sustain this funding through water revenues alone. Steve again showed the proposed rates that were presented to the SB and noted that 50-60% of water users in MBTS are currently in tiers 1 and 2 and will be grouped into the lowest tier with the new rate structure therefore seeing a slight decrease in their rate in Phase 1. Steve then showed slides comparing MBTS to other communities both local and state-wide. There was discussion around meters as they applied to multi-unit homes, deduct meters and the implementation and timetable of rolling out new meters. Nate explained that deduct meters measure and charge for all incoming water and only deduct for sewer charges associated with that meter. John pointed out that he gets two water bills (one regular bill and one for his deduct meter) and asked if the water from both bills was added together to charge at the appropriate tier levels. Nate thought that they were added together first. Steve walked through the rates as they apply per household which led to a discussion of the impact of the new rates on the top 10 households. Jeff Cochand clarified that those users would indeed see an increase of 20-50% in their overall water costs. John noted that if we roll out the new tiers too quickly and at the same time as the new meters it will be difficult to measure any potential conservation. Peter C asked if these water rate changes would have any impact on the sewer enterprise fund. Steve pointed out that many of the highest water users are not on sewer. Nate mentioned that historically sewer is a fairly fixed cost year over year. John noted that the drought restriction last summer did have an impact on the water reserve fund but that he didn't know about sewer. John then asked Nate where we stand on the new meter pilot. Nate said that once the TF has identified approximately 24 users for the pilot they should be able to get those installed pretty quickly. Ann Harrison suggested that some of the people in the pilot be some of the highest users.
- Steve listed all the current volunteer opportunities (Sustainability Committee, workplan/timetable, finalizing overall recommendations).
- The minutes from the May 3 meeting were unanimously approved.
- Next meeting will be Wednesday June 14 from 7:00-8:30 PM
- Steve would like to host a "Wrap Party" that will be on Thursday June 8 time TBD. He asked that Task Force members save the date and if anyone wanted to help with the planning to let him know.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 PM.