

SPECIAL MEETING, WARRENSBURG TOWN BOARD, DECEMBER 4, 2013

A special meeting of the Warrensburg Town Board was held on Friday, December 4, 2013 at the Albert Emerson Town Hall at 4:30 p.m. with the following members present:

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| PRESENT: | Supervisor | Kevin B. Geraghty |
| | Councilperson | Linda Baker Marcella |
| | Councilperson | Bryan Rounds |
| | Councilperson | Joyce Reed |
| | Councilperson | John Alexander |

OTHERS PRESENT: Donna A. Combs, Town Clerk, Kathy Rounds, Deputy Town Clerk, Tom Belden, Water Department, Tracey Benoit, Water Department and Tom Suozzo, Engineer.

RESOLUTION #209-13

APPOINT TRACY BENOIT WATER AND WASTEWATER PLANT OPERATOR

On motion of Councilperson Alexander, seconded by Councilperson Reed, the following resolution was ADOPTED

AYES 5 Rounds, Geraghty, Reed, Baker-Marcella, Alexander

NAYS 0

IT IS RESOLVED, to appoint Tracy Benoit to the position of Water Plant Operator and Wastewater Plant Operator.

RESOLUTION #210-13

APPOINT CHARLES WEBSTER WATER AND WASTEWATER PLANT OPERATOR

On motion of Councilperson Alexander, seconded by Councilperson Reed, the following resolution was ADOPTED

AYES 5 Rounds, Geraghty, Reed, Baker-Marcella, Alexander

NAYS 0

IT IS RESOLVED, to appoint Charles Webster to the position of Water Plant Operator and Wastewater Plant Operator.

DISCUSSION - WATER AND WASTEWATER OPERATOR APPOINTMENTS

Supervisor Geraghty opened discussion explaining that these appointments give them Civil Service protection, when jobs become available in other communities they are on the list.

Supervisor Geraghty told the Town Board that Tracy scored the highest score on the Civil Service exams and that Chip (Charles) tied with the other three, there was a total of five who took the Civil Service exams.

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DISCUSSION - 2014 WATER BILLING RATES AND CLASSIFICATIONS

Supervisor Geraghty turned the discussion over to Councilperson Alexander and Councilperson Reed.

Councilperson Alexander told the Town Board he wished to get a handle on all of the billing fees the Town has for the Code and to simplify fees down to a half dozen or so and he would like to add on another twenty thousand gallons for consumption. Councilperson Alexander said to do an analysis of his rates at his funeral home, a commercial rate with two apartments. Councilperson Alexander said he had spoken to Tom Belden.

Councilperson Reed said she is in agreement that the Board needed to increase the gallons for usage but the Board needed to discuss the commercial and residential. Councilperson Reed said that there are too many places here in Warrensburg where they cannot determine whether an apartment is commercial or residential, whether there is a family member living there or family doesn't, if you are renting is it considered commercial. Councilperson Reed said to her it is giving water away for people who have a business, and said do they really need to go the route of commercial and residential. Councilperson Reed said that she was directing that question to both Tom Belden and Tom Suozzo.

Tom Suozzo said the fundamental reason it was broken up that way was and there is always exceptions, he would discuss the apartments in a minute. Mr. Suozzo the difference between commercial and non residential is because most of them are using the water to make money, maybe in some small way and maybe in some large way. Mr. Suozzo told the Town Board they had thought the commercial place, because there income is based on it, that would be an acceptable way to bill it. Mr. Suozzo said he felt everyone made a good effort to make adjustments to get where they are today, a lot of communities have two different rates, if you go to Half Moon they have multiple rates. Mr. Suozzo told the Town Board he personally felt they should keep a residential and non-residential, there is some latitude the Board has to give an extra 20,000 gallons but he did not want to answer that tonight. Mr. Suozzo said he felt that what ever adjustments were made tonight should be made so that they are fair and equitable, like John had said, the Town still needs to make that mark and should not cut it right to the quick, they would not have to want to make another rate increase two years from now.

Discussion ensued on whether to put a dollar amount on usage only. Mr. Suozzo told the Town Board they would need to look at the rates, and, at what we need and what the meters say they are actually putting out. Mr. Suozzo said he felt it would be a lot easier if they were to do that now.

Supervisor Geraghty asked how they would do that now when not every place is metered, not every entity has a meter. Supervisor Geraghty said you cannot charge

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a metered rate if you do not have a meter. Supervisor Geraghty told the Town Board if they wanted to go out and buy all of these places like the Cemetery, the Fire House, what ever ones do not have meters and put a meter in every one, there is only one meter on our wells, each well has its own meter. Supervisor Geraghty said the meters have not been calibrated and until they get a calibration on a flow meter and know that our guess estimate on our 107 million gallons of water used a year, that would have to be divided by the maximum amount needed and then set that rate. Supervisor Geraghty said every body would pay around \$3.00 a gallon if his calculations were correct.

Councilperson Reed asked if the water is bumped up to 40,000 gallons, how many households would pay at all if they did not have a flat rate. Councilperson Alexander said they have to have a flat rate.

Councilperson Reed said the discussion was usage.

Mr. Belden said they need to keep a flat rate.

Councilperson Baker-Marcella said they would obviously need a slush fund or reserve for the unexpected.

Councilperson Reed asked how many households there is that come under the 20,000 gallons. Deputy Town Clerk Rounds said that most of them were a little over. Town Clerk Combs told the Town Board the average water bill for a household was around \$300.00, there were some that did not have any overage.

Councilperson Baker-Marcella asked if she could ask her question and asked if the Town knows what it would cost them to produce a gallon of water.

Supervisor Geraghty said based on his budget, because the Town has bond payments due they need at least \$420,000 but that means they have to stay the \$420,000.00.

Discussion ensued on the Town Engineer and the Town Board figuring the rate of water per thousand with different calculations.

Supervisor Geraghty asked Town Clerk Combs what the average gallon usage is. Town Clerk Combs said she did not know. Supervisor Geraghty told her she should be able to tell them what the gallons is, she should be able to grab a bill and figure out what it is.

Discussion ensued on calculating the usage on a bill for a household.

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Councilperson Baker-Marcella said she still had a problem with the commercial/residential and asked what difference it made. Councilperson Baker-Marcella said to her it made no difference if someone is making money, they also are paying a lot of expenses. Councilperson Baker Marcella said to her, they are providing everybody water and to her is it fair and equitable to pay for what you use.

Supervisor Geraghty said that if the estimates were ever wrong and people use more and you are charging flat rate, if you ever have to increase the rates you would kiss it goodbye.

Councilperson Baker-Marcella asked what is wrong with figuring out what is needed to charge per gallon and then having an extra amount for safeguards, for emergencies. Supervisor Geraghty explained that \$420,000 does not give him any leeway in the budget. Mr. Belden explained that amount would not leave any room for expansions, upgrades or emergency breakdowns. Councilperson Baker-Marcella said the current system does not do that, and, said that normally when you do budgeting you plan on what kind of expansion you need to do and you need some reserve or un-appropriated money to do it.

Supervisor Geraghty told Councilperson Baker-Marcella Patty could guess what the costs are and that is what Patty was told. Supervisor Geraghty asked what the total amount of the warrant was for the year. Supervisor Geraghty said the Bookkeeper was logging in the wrong numbers because she was given the wrong numbers, but, he believed it had been corrected. Deputy Town Clerk Rounds said it had been corrected.

Councilperson Baker-Marcella asked how they budget under the current system for the Water Department. Supervisor Geraghty said it is based on past history, there is some money put in there for repairs but there is not money for upgrades. Supervisor Geraghty said he also had to budget for BAN payments, and, then we borrowed more money, this year he budgeted BAN payments for X amount of dollars. Supervisor Geraghty said they need to make adjustments but he does not think they want to take a whole leap of making adjustments for next year because until they have another year under their belt with this metering system, he would wait another year. Supervisor Geraghty said if every house was metered then Tom could take every metered reading that is plugged into the computer and they could back it up to the amount that the flow meter reads on the wells and they could say it is right, they do not know now but we have to be able to do that.

Supervisor Geraghty asked what the amount collected was. Councilperson Baker-Marcella asked where that money goes. Supervisor Geraghty said he was ready to say cut the rates because he was looking at a number on their monthly report that said water was at six hundred and some odd thousand and he kept scratching his

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head saying that can't be and it was not because the number given to Patty was the warrant number, she was entering the tax warrant. Supervisor Geraghty said he guessed they needed to know what they billed for last year, the total amount billed and then he will say they can cut their rate.

Supervisor Geraghty asked what the reley for water was for last year. Town Clerk Combs told him the Commercial reley was \$15,812.47 and the residential was \$93,300.67 for 2013.

Councilperson Baker-Marcella spoke about charging by the gallon rate only for everyone. Supervisor Geraghty said that he would love to just keep the gallon rate for everyone but he was afraid of hurting the revenue.

Discussion ensued on what was billed for the year and what the billing period covered for 2013, and what the revenue amount was that was collected through November.

Councilperson Reed told the Town Board that if they figured the average house used 100,000 gallons the house hold charge would be \$500.00 a year, the Town is now charging \$351.00 a year for the same gallons, it would go up almost \$150.00.

Discussion ensued on the usage per household.

Supervisor Geraghty told the Town Board he wished to ask them a question. Supervisor Geraghty asked how many accounts don't have meters.

Tom Belden - told the Supervisor probably six.

Supervisor Geraghty told the Town Board that if he owned a house and had his mother in law living in the house, whether she paid rent or not, he should not be charged commercial. Supervisor Geraghty said he felt it was a shame we are doing that. Councilperson Baker-Marcella said she agreed and asked why. Supervisor Geraghty said what he was saying is that this person has her mother in law living with her and she is paying commercial rate.

Town Clerk Combs said it was because it is an additional apartment, two apartments. Councilperson Reed said there should have been two meters. Councilperson Baker-Marcella said that was irrelevant. Supervisor Geraghty said we are charging commercial. Councilperson Baker-Marcella said she did not think it was right. Supervisor Geraghty said that is wrong, that is wrong.

Tom Belden - asked if the Commons will be charged residential, so much per apartment.

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Councilperson Baker-Marcella asked why the Town Board did not set a rate of anything over 4 apartments as commercial.

Supervisor Geraghty told the Town Board there are forty two places and asked the Town Clerk if that was right. Supervisor Geraghty said they need to change that.

Tom Suozzo - told the Town Board that in a perfect world the place with the 12 units each unit would have its own meter. Mr. Suozzo said if we would consider that each one of those units would then be 195 x 12.

Councilperson Reed told Mr. Suozzo that is where the Town Board got that from and that they should each have a meter and so they said residential \$195.00, \$195.00, \$390.00 combined. Councilperson Reed said that each structure would have a meter, no problem, she did not like that she pays a flat rate on a house that does not even have the water turned on.

Supervisor Geraghty told Councilperson Reed she shouldn't, that needed to be adjusted too. Councilperson Reed said that is in there, they did it because they needed too, they have people that put meters in for that reason.

Supervisor Geraghty said just because he had an apartment for his mother-in-law should not make him commercial, when he is not charging her. Supervisor Geraghty said the person that filed his complaint was Beth McLaughlin, she is not commercial, it is her mother-in-law, that is not right, that is not correct.

Tracy Benoit, Water Employee- told the Town Board that was not the \$395.00, it was the \$3.95 per gallon is what she has the problem with, and, he has heard that from other people. Mr. Benoit said she did not mind paying the \$395.00, but, she felt she should pay the \$1.95 for usage.

Supervisor Geraghty said that her sewer and water rent on her house is almost as much as her land tax.

Mr. Suozzo said another option would be to count the number of units, 25x12 and then \$1.95 per thousand. Mr. Suozzo said the tricky part would be the 20,000 gallons free and asked if that would be per apartment.

Councilperson Reed said that was the part that they could not do because the computer billing would not accept letting them have 40,000 gallons per apartment, they do not have individual meters and the billing would not allow them to give 20,000 gallons per apartment where there is only one meter.

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Supervisor Geraghty said you can tell that computer to do anything you want. Councilperson Reed said that when they did the resolution that was the reason they did it that way.

Town Clerk Combs said you would have to give each apartment its own account. Supervisor Geraghty asked who had said that. Supervisor Geraghty said you could give it a different code number and say N252 is going to get an 80,000 credit for gallons.

Town Clerk Combs said the only way to do it would be to do 12 separate bills for that apartment building.

Supervisor Geraghty asked if he was being told that there was no way they could tell this thing to look at no7 and put a different gallon amount.

Town Clerk Combs said that she had looked into it before and it could not be done.

Supervisor Geraghty asked the Town Clerk why they have all of these different codes now. It was explained they are for the different fee scheduled accounts. Town Clerk Combs said that you would have to take each apartment and give it its own account and it would get its own bill.

Supervisor Geraghty asked the Town Clerk if she was telling him that this program would not take this N 03 and assign it a different number of gallons than an N 01. Discussion ensued on what the Water software program can do and cannot do.

Supervisor Geraghty said that he was going to call the software company himself and ask him. Supervisor Geraghty said he has never talked to this guy, he wants this guy to come here when he is here.

Discussion ensued on the Williamson Law Water billing software program and their staff.

Discussion ensued on what the Town Board feels the public is looking for in their water bill and sewer bill. Councilperson Alexander said the public would like to see water and sewer billed together, one bill, throw an extra 10,000 gallons in there.

Supervisor Geraghty said the Town needs to stop the craziness, they need to stop billing these apartments as commercial. Town Clerk Combs asked what about the Commons and those apartment buildings. Supervisor Geraghty said he was not talking about those apartment buildings, he is talking apartments. Supervisor Geraghty said he was talking where if he gets his mother in law to live with him, Beth McLaughlin has her mother in law under her roof and that is different and told the Town Clerk it was different than her daughter who is renting rooms to

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people who are not related. Town Clerk Combs said they are all still paying \$390.00. Supervisor Geraghty said that is a different scenario, if Bryan had his daughter live down stairs and he lives up stairs it is different.

Councilperson Reed asked how they would determine who gets what. Supervisor Geraghty said by people being honest.

Councilperson Baker-Marcella told the Town Board they should charge 4 or more apartments the commercial rate of \$390.00. Town Clerk Combs asked if it is 4 or more it is commercial and should she continue to charge the additional \$25.00 per apartment for 4 or more apartment houses and if it is \$390.00 if it is 4 or more.

Town Clerk Combs asked for resolutions to amend the fee schedule.

RESOLUTION #211-13

**AMEND WATER FEE SCHEDULE TO CHANGE COMMERCIAL RATE
DESCRIPTION**

On motion of Councilperson Rounds, seconded by Councilperson Reed, the following resolution was ADOPTED

AYES 5 Alexander, Rounds, Geraghty, Reed, Baker-Marcella

NAYS 0

RESOLVED, that Commercial apartments will be defined as 5 or more, more than 4, at \$390.00 with an additional fee of \$25.00 each additional apartment and a usage fee of \$3.90 per thousand gallon.

RESOLUTION #212-13

CHANGE GALLONS FOR 2014 WATER METER BILLING

On motion of Councilperson Alexander, seconded by Councilperson Rounds, the following resolution was ADOPTED

AYES 5 Alexander, Rounds, Geraghty, Reed, Baker-Marcella

NAYS 0

IT IS RESOLVED, to amend the water billing gallon allotment from 20,000 gallons to increase to 30,000 gallons for every water meter.

RESOLUTION #213-13

SEASONAL RATES FOR GARDENS FOR WATER FOR 2014

On motion of Councilperson Alexander, seconded by Councilperson Rounds, the following resolution was ADOPTED

AYES 5 Alexander, Rounds, Geraghty, Reed, Baker-Marcella

NAYS 0

RESOLVED, to amend the garden rates to one bill a year with a flat fee of \$12.19.

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RESOLUTION #214-13

AMEND VACANT HOME RATE FEE FOR 2014

On motion of Councilperson Alexander, seconded by Councilperson Rounds, the following resolution was ADOPTED

AYES 5 Alexander, Rounds, Geraghty, Reed, Baker-Marcella

NAYS 0

IT IS RESOLVED, to amend the vacant house rate in the water billing fee schedule to \$97.50 per vacant house.

On motion of Councilperson Alexander, seconded by Councilperson Baker-Marcella, the meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**Donna A. Combs, RMC/CMC
Town Clerk**