

The Town of Washington

"THE FIRST WASHINGTON OF ALL"

October 12, 2015

7:00 p.m.

Town Council Meeting

Approved Minutes

- CALL TO ORDER: Mayor John Fox Sullivan called the Town Council to order at 7:03 p.m. Council members Jerry Goebel, Gary Schwartz, Mary Ann Kuhn, Patrick O'Connell, Katharine Leggett, and Gary Aichele were present. Town Attorney John Bennett, Town Zoning Administrator John McCarthy, and Town Clerk Laura Dodd were present.

- MINUTES: April 15, 2015 minutes: Mayor Sullivan discussed that as the Council had just received the draft April 15, 2015 minutes they would be reviewed and amended or approved at the November Council meeting.

- REPORTS: Treasury Report: Mr. Goebel reviewed the attached Bank Summary Report, the Bills-To-Be Paid List, and the Additional Bills to Be Paid List.

Mr. Schwartz made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report and Mayor Sullivan seconded and the motion passed 7-0.

Planning Commission: Chairman Schwartz reported that the Planning Commission had not met in September but would be meeting on October 26, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

Architectural Review Board: Mayor Sullivan reported that that the ARB would be meeting to review a sign application.

Website: Ms. Kuhn reported that the website was up and running but there was a glitch in getting some items posted which Mr. Henze was working on to resolve.

- TOWN ATTORNEY: No Report.

- PUBLIC HEARING: Water and Sewer Rate increase: Mayor Sullivan opened the Public Hearing and discussed that the conversation on increasing the rates had been going on over several months and what was being proposed was essentially a doubling of the rates over two years.

Mr. Mark Allen, co-owner of the Kramer Building expressed his concerns regarding how the Kramer Building sewer reassessment had been done and that Mr. Thompson, the previous owner had been blind-sided by the extra \$32,700 cost. He also expressed his concerns that they could be reassessed again and about how and when that might happen. He also discussed that the Kramer Building had two bathrooms that were being used as public restrooms and that he felt it was unfair that they were being charged for what was essentially the only public restrooms in town.

Mr. John McCaslin, co-owner of the Kramer Building, discussed that he hoped that they could work something out with the Town about sharing the cost of the public restroom.

Ms. Sharon Luke, Town business owner, asked about how the sewer reassessments were done.

Mayor Sullivan discussed that he wished to discuss the rate increases.

Mr. David Fiske, lawyer for the Inn at Little Washington, expressed his concerns that the Town had a responsibility to look at the budget so there were no surprises in the future. He discussed that the Town should look at a bulk rate discount for water. He also discussed that he had never seen an accounts receivable line item in the financial reports and that if people owed money to the Town they should have to pay. He discussed that the Council should exercise good judgement in handling people's money. He expressed his concerns that there didn't seem to be any tap fees coming in and that Phase II of the sewer system wasn't happening. He discussed that before passing the rate increase the Council should be asking how they could change the system or what options were out there that could make it more financially sound and to bring costs down. He suggested that the Town should look at alternatives including changing contractors to save money. He discussed that the costs of water and sewer fell disproportionately on the Inn at Little Washington.

Mayor Sullivan discussed that although he agreed with 95% of what Mr. Fiske had discussed he felt that the costs fell proportionally on the Inn at Little Washington. He discussed that the Town finances were extremely important and that more work had been done on them than Mr. Fiske was aware of and the fact that the Council was addressing the water and sewer rates was indicative of that. He discussed that the Town would be addressing the cost of water and sewer operations and how the various loans would be paid going forward.

Mr. Goebel discussed that the Town was currently negotiating water and sewer contracts.

Ms. Leggett asked if there were projections for future costs for maintenance.

Mr. Schwartz discussed that he didn't have those numbers with him but they had been discussed as part of the budget process.

Mr. Bennett discussed that the Town had been looking at the costs of both water and sewer for several months and how operation costs were going to be met. He discussed that active analysis was ongoing on how to manage both systems to be able to significantly reduce operating costs.

Mr. Fiske discussed that everyone was in this into together and asked if the average homeowner was aware of those negotiations as they were going to be significantly impacted by a rate increase.

Mr. Bennett discussed as negotiations were going on the Town was not at a stage where it could say how much money could be saved and where.

Ms. Luke asked if the Council had considered a lower rate for users using less than the minimum of 3,000 gallons.

Mayor Sullivan discussed that the minimum for water had been established for a long time and that the financial challenge could not be met by having a \$20 minimum go down to \$14.

Mr. Bennett discussed that the minimum charge reflected not only usage but also included capital costs to maintain the system regardless of usage.

Christine Smith, a County resident, discussed that the Town was discontinuing the higher tier of over 5,000 gallons which would result in less revenue.

Mayor Sullivan discussed that he would be addressing that issue in the ongoing discussion. He reviewed a three page water and sewer rate increase document, attached. He discussed that page one showed that the water system was operating at a loss of \$47,000 a year and that the sewer system was operating at a loss of \$197,000, which was a problem that had to be solved. He discussed that there had been no increase in the water rates since 2007 and no increase in sewer rates since 2010 and that the proposed increases were lower than many surrounding localities. He reviewed page two which showed the current and proposed new water rates where there was now a flat rate for each 1000 over the minimum of 3,000 gallons. He reviewed the examples of how different usages would be affected by the rate increase, which would generate more revenue than expenses over the next few years. He reviewed page 3, and discussed that the original minimum for sewer was 2,000 gallons but now for the sake of simplicity the new minimum was now 3,000 and that there was consistency in how much was paid for each additional 1,000 gallons over the minimum.

Mr. Aichele discussed that for years water and sewer had been subsidized out of the Meals and Lodging taxes and those monies could have been used for other projects such as sidewalks and lighting. He spoke in favor of the rate increases so that users of the services were paying for those services.

Mr. Schwartz discussed that Special Use Permits were looked at closely regarding usage and intensity of use and that he had always said when a Special Use Permit came up if there was an increase in usage or intensity it might affect the sewer assessment so that shouldn't come as a surprise to people.

Ms. Smith asked if there was further information available in a handout regarding the number of users in each tier group.

Mr. Schwartz discussed that he did not have those numbers but the significant number was that the majority of the users were at the minimum so that the majority were at that tier.

Mayor Sullivan closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Schwartz discussed that there been a few new sewer taps that had come in at \$15,000, which was significantly more money than the original \$7,500 but still was in a lower range than for most jurisdictions.

Mayor Sullivan made a motion to adopt the increased water rate as of January 1, 2016 as advertised and as shown on the attached water and sewer rate document and again on January 1, 2017 as advertised and as shown on the water and sewer rate document. Mr. Goebel seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Schwartz voted "yes"	Mr. Goebel voted "yes"
Mr. O'Connell abstained	Ms. Leggett voted "yes"
Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"	Mr. Aichele voted "yes"
Mayor Sullivan voted "yes"	

And the motion passed 6-0 with Mr. O'Connell abstaining.

Mayor Sullivan made a motion to adopt the increased sewer rate as of January 1, 2016 as advertised and as shown on the attached water and sewer rate document and again on January 1, 2017 as advertised and as shown on the water and sewer rate document. Mr. Goebel seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Aichele voted "yes"	Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"
Ms. Leggett voted "yes"	Mr. O'Connell abstained
Mr. Goebel voted "yes"	Mr. Schwartz voted "yes"
Mayor Sullivan voted "yes"	

And the motion passed 6-0 with Mr. O'Connell abstaining.

- OLD BUSINESS: a). Avon Hall Update: Mr. Aichele reviewed the history of the Avon Hall Study Group.

Mr. Catlin discussed a village on Martha's Vineyard he felt was visionary in its small house concepts. He discussed that the Town of Washington was a place to visit but not a place to live and that many people were interested in living in small houses. He discussed that the challenge was for the Town to be visionary and look forward to the next twenty and thirty years. He discussed that the Town Council had before them the last great space in the Town and urged the Council to consider how they used Avon Hall to create a style in houses that would sustain the community long after the Council was gone. He discussed that this would be the Council's legacy and he asked the Council not take this last great space and do something that was quick and cheap but to do something to help transform the town into endless possibilities of what it could be.

Mr. Milt Herd, a Planning Consultant hired by the Town to work with the Avon Hall Study Group, reviewed the attached Strategy Considerations for the Avon Hall Property.

Mr. Aichele reported that Dan Clark had completed his survey of Avon Hall. He discussed the Avon Hall Study Group Report, attached, which showed four options for how to sell Avon Hall. He made a motion that the Town Council authorize the Mayor to retain Milt Herd to consult with the Town Council and the Planning Commission as the Town moved forward to consider alternatives 1 and 2 of the October 12, 2015 Avon Hall Study Group Report and further that the Council schedule as soon as possible a public joint work session with the Planning Commission to consider further actions on alternatives 1 and 2 of the October 12, 2015 Avon Hall Study Group Report.

Milt Herd presented and discussed two sketches, attached, which showed samples of alternatives 1 and 2 from the Avon Hall Study Group Report. There was a lengthy discussion of the sketches.

Ms. Kuhn seconded Mr. Aichele motion.

After some further discussion, Mr. Aichele amended his motion to state that he moved to authorize the Mayor to retain Milt Herd at a rate of \$130 an hour for up to \$1,000 to consult with the Town Council and the Planning Commission to move forward with a review of the October 12, 2015 Avon Hall Study Group Report and further that the Council schedule as soon as possible a public joint work session with the Planning Commission to consider further actions regarding the October 12, 2015 Avon Hall Study Group Report. Ms. Kuhn seconded the amended motion and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Aichele voted "yes"	Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"
Ms. Leggett voted "yes"	Mr. O'Connell "yes"
Mr. Goebel voted "yes"	Mr. Schwartz abstained
Mayor Sullivan voted "yes"	

And the motion passed 6-0 with Mr. Schwartz abstaining.

Mr. Schwartz made a motion to continue the Town Council meeting to Thursday, October 22, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. to hold a joint public hearing with the Planning Commission and Ms. Kuhn seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Schwartz voted "yes"	Mr. Goebel voted "yes"
Mr. O'Connell "yes"	Ms. Leggett voted "yes"

Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"
Mayor Sullivan voted "yes"
And the motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Aichele voted "yes"

Mr. Alan Comp reviewed a survey/sketch, attached, of Avon Hall that he and Dan Clark had produced that followed typography and sightlines and showed small lots and a clear connection to the Town.

Mr. Bill Metcalf, a County resident/Town water user, asked if new fire hydrants would be included in the development of Avon Hall and expressed his concerns that the Council should be looking at current infrastructure and should looking at replacing the off-line hydrant on Piedmont Avenue.

Mr. Aichele discussed that if was unknown if new hydrants would be installed.

There was a short discussion of the off-line fire hydrant. Mayor Sullivan discussed that there was no eminent danger as the Fire Department had indicated that the existing hydrants could service the area and a new hydrant would have to wait for funding.

b).

- NEW BUSINESS: a). Shadow Ridge Moore Deed of Boundary Line Adjustment: Mr. Bennett reviewed a deed of Boundary Line Adjustment, attached, which confirmed a deed and the location of a Town well lot outside of Town created in 1935.

Ms. Kuhn made a motion to authorize Mayor Sullivan to execute the Shadow Ridge Farm Deed and Ms. Leggett seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Schwartz voted "yes"

Mr. Goebel voted "yes"

Mr. O'Connell yes

Ms. Leggett voted "yes"

Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"

Mr. Aichele voted "yes"

Mayor Sullivan voted "yes"

And the motion passed 7-0

- PUBLIC FORUM: Mayor Sullivan opened the Public Forum:

Mr. Metcalf urged the Council to move forward on replacing the off-line hydrant on Piedmont Avenue.

Council agreed by consensus that although the Council wanted to replace the off-line fire hydrant it would have to be tabled as it was not economically feasible at that time.

Mr. Metcalf expressed his concerns that if a fire company besides Washington's responded to a fire on Piedmont Avenue they might not find the right hydrant to use.

Mayor Sullivan closed the Public Forum.

- CONTINUED MEETING: At 9:50 p.m. Mr. Goebel made a motion to continue the meeting to October 22, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. and Mr. Aichele seconded and the motion passed 7-0.

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NEXT SCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON NOVEMBER 9, 2015

Respectfully submitted,

Attachments:

Treasurer's report
Additional Bills to be Paid
Bills to be Paid
Water and Sewer Rate Increase Document
Milt Herd 's Strategy Considerations for Avon Hall
Alternative 1 &2 Sketches
October 12, 2015 Avon Hall Study Group Report
Dan Clark/Alan Comp Avon Hall Survey/Sketch
Shadow Ridge Moore Deed