

Minutes of the April 2, 2014 Meeting
Warwick City Council Sewer Review Commission

THE FOLLOWING IS A BRIEF SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS. FOR COMPLETE MEETING AUDIO MINUTES GO TO:

http://www.warwickri.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&catid=196:sewer-review-commission&id=1264:sewer-review-commission

Meeting was called to order by Councilman Ed Ladouceur, Chairman at 2:15 PM in the conference room at the Warwick Sewer Authority.

Commission members present:

Councilman Ed Ladouceur, Chairman

Representative Frank Ferri, District 22

Mark Carruolo, Mayor's Chief of Staff

David Picozzi, City of Warwick Department of Public Works Director

Peter Ginaitt, Warwick Sewer Authority Board

Angelo Liberti, RI Department of Environmental Management

Michelle Komar, Chairman's Citizen Appointment

Tophier Hamblett, Save The Bay

Members not present: Councilman Joe Gallucci, Vice Chairman, James Boyd, RI Coastal Resources Management Council, Doug Harris, Narragansett Indian Tribe, Senator William Walaska, District 30, Ernie Zmyslinski, City of Warwick Finance Director, Aaron Guckian, Warwick Sewer Authority Board

Also present: Janine Burke, WSA Executive Director, William Russo, Advisor to Committee

10 Minute Open Microphone Session

Gene Nadeau: Referred to Marjorie Murphy's previous comments about how it smells in her neighborhood after it rains. He said he made another visit to the neighborhood (Bayside/Longmeadow area) and there were no smells. He said he spoke with neighbors and did not find anyone who said it smelled. Next he spoke about the young Vets High School student, Angus Nathan (recently featured in The Beacon), who he said had commented that global warming was not a hoax and thinks we should all get sewers. Mr. Nadeau said Mr. Nathan didn't mention the thousands of birds and animals and fish in Buckeye Brook. He also referred to another article quoting Ed Tavares (of the Tax Collector's Office) saying the majority of people were "underwater", their mortgages were underwater due to economic woes which we are still experiencing. He said Mr. Boyd was taking over the Commission with his opinions which he thought was unfair. He said the Commission had no compassion and that the sewer plans were "fiscal insanity". He said the City is \$900 million in debt and adding sewers was too much burden to put on the taxpayers.

Don Fife: Spoke of seniors in Warwick on fixed incomes. He said their social security has not been increasing but expenses are. He commented that sewer usage bills are 3 times the water bills. He said that forcing sewer connections will force people out of their homes. He commented that Greenwich Bay is closed to shellfishing until early May. He thanked Ms. Burke for answering his questions.

March 26th Minutes

Ms. Komar and Mr. Ginaitt provided comments/corrections to the minutes and the amendments were accepted.

Action: Motion to approve the March 26th minutes, as amended

Moved by: Mark Carruolo

Seconded by: Topher Hamblett

Motion passes (unanimous)

March 31st Minutes

The chair tabled approval of these minutes to the next meeting.

Discussion – Grinder Pumps

Ms. Komar said that Bruce Gemp from the Diamond Hill neighborhood had contacted her and that she would forward his contact information to the Chair. The Chair said the goal was to address the inequities between customers with gravity and low pressure service and he wants these issues addressed in WSA regulations. Numerous suggestions were made by Commission members to address this issue in regulation.

Discussion – Cesspool and Septic System Inspection Guidelines

None.

Discussion in Regards to Enabling Legislation

Discussions resumes using the working document dated March 25, 2014.

Following up on the discussion about grinder pumps, Mr. Liberti raised possible concerns about the definition of “Sewer Service Connection” at Line 79 with the suggested addition of “and any associated appurtenances” to include the cost of grinder pumps with the cost of constructing the sewers. He explained to the Commission that generally communities install service connections from the main pipe to the property line and that the connection from there to the building is the responsibility of the owner. He pointed out that the definition of service connection included “from a building to a common sewer” and cautioned that could cause problems for the WSA. Ms. Burke said she would see how many times and in what context the term “service connection” was used in the document and do some research on the ways it is defined by other communities.

Starting at Line 608 again, the group discussed the draft schedule and recommended tiers for mandatory sewer connections. The Chair called for a vote with respect to the deadline set for properties with cesspools that abut a public sewer line (Section 2.17(b)(1)). Voting in favor of the language as written were Councilman Ladouceur, Mark Carruolo, Dave Picozzi, Peter Ginaitt and Topher Hamblett. Ms. Komar was opposed and Mr. Liberti abstained.

There was extensive discussion with respect to the last paragraph in Section 2.17 (e) allowing for hardship waivers from the mandatory connection requirements. There was general agreement to require WSA to establish such a program via rules and regulations.

Changes to the enabling legislation recommended by various Commission members were noted as follows:

Line 15 – Add to the definition for cesspool “other than on-site wastewater treatment systems (OWTS)”

Line 632 – Change “may” to “shall”. Change first sentence to say that WSA shall, in its rules and regulations, establish a program and criteria for hardship exemptions. Financial and technical reasons were agreed as possible reasons for hardship exemptions.

Line 352 – 354 – Ms. Burke suggested synching up the language regarding hardship deferment related to sewer assessment payments with the language suggested for hardship exemptions for the draft mandatory connection deadlines. Ms. Burke thought the reference to the rules and regulations prescribed by the City Council related to the Circuit Breaker Program. She explained that was the criteria the WSA used for assessment deferments due to financial hardship (i.e., if someone is on the Circuit Breaker program for taxes, WSA will defer the sewer assessment payments). Mr. Carruolo questions if there was an actual ordinance related to that. Ms. Burke said she would follow up on that.

Line 611 – Ms. Komar pointed out that the deadline for connecting a property with an OWTS permitted prior to January 1, 2000, was the same as the deadline for cesspools and commented that it didn’t make sense to her. The Chair commented that the goal was for people to get 20 years use from their OWTS before being required to connect and begin contributing to the sewer system.

New Section 2.27 – Ms. Komar suggested that language be added that the WSA adopt rules and regulations consistent with the Enabling Act within 6 months of the adoption of the amendments. In response to concerns about getting the WSA rules and regulations done to include all specific and detailed concerns raised, Mr. Ginaitt suggested adding an effect date upon passage of WSA regulations with a reasonable deadline for that.

The next Commission meeting dates were scheduled for April 3rd at 8 AM (previously scheduled) and April 4th at 12:30 PM at the offices of the Warwick Sewer Authority.

Councilman Ladouceur adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:00 PM.