

Town of Provincetown
Joint Meeting of the
WATER AND SEWER BOARD AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Monday, August 27, 2007
Judge Welsh Hearing Room, Town Hall, 260 Commercial Street, Provincetown

Members present: Jonathan Sinaiko (Chair), Moe Van Dereck, Kathleen Meads

Members absent: Sacha Richter

Other attendees: Board of Selectmen: Mary Jo Avellar (Chair), Michele Couture, Lynne Davies, Austin Knight, Pam Parmakian; Town Manager Sharon Lynn; John Goodrich; Mark Abrahams; Vernon Porter; DPW Staff: David Guertin, Dana Faris, Ron Gamella; members of the public and press.

Call to Order

Mr. Sinaiko called the joint meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and then yielded the floor to Ms. Avellar

Wastewater Project: Recommendations for Rate Relief for the Users of the Sewer System

Ms. Avellar turned the meeting over to Mr. Goodrich, who provided a brief financial analysis update and an update on rate relief. Mr. Goodrich then presented several rate relief policy options and recommendations. Ms. Avellar then asked for comments from the Water and Sewer Board and the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Sinaiko stated that when the sewer was originally proposed, everyone was to connect. Because town meeting rejected that proposal, the checkerboard system was subsequently hatched, which has created many "complications." Mr. Sinaiko allowed that while he was loath to renege on a promise allowing the red dot properties to delay connecting, he did not have an answer to the financial problem created by honoring that promise. He stated, however, that he had no problem with increasing the surcharge rate for those red dots who continue to delay connecting to the sewer.

Mr. Meads reminded those present that the town meeting article authorizing the sewer promised that it would be paid for solely by the sewer users. Because DEP is requiring the Town to reserve space on the sewer for the red dots and because the taxpayers are required to make up deficits in the wastewater enterprise fund, which deficits are due to revenue shortfalls caused by the red dots not paying their fair share, the promise to the taxpayers is being broken. Ms. Meads suggested that the red dots be required to reimburse the Town for the deficits that have been covered on their behalf by the general fund.

Ms. Avellar expressed her general discontent with the high sewer rates. Ms. Couture stated that she was in favor of the surcharge rate increase but suggested that the effective date be delayed to November 1. Mr. Parmakian reminded those present that there had been yet a third promise, namely, that the sewer rates would be "reasonable."

Mr. Sinaiko stated that the initial reason for putting in the sewer was to avoid the mounded systems that compliance with Title 5 was necessitating, which in turn was destroying the aesthetics of Provincetown. He opined that the whole town benefits by having the business district sewerred.

Mr. Knight affirmed his support for the rate increase for the red dots. He also mentioned that he favored changing the water and sewer billing periods from the present eight and four months to two equal periods of six months each. Finally, Mr. Knight declared that the sewer allowed for housing projects with greater density than would otherwise be possible.

Ms. Couture moved, seconded by Mr. Knight, that the Selectmen approve the recommendation of the Water & Sewer Board to increase the surcharge rate for red dots from \$39.08 to \$45.00, said increase to become effective November 1, 2007. The motion carried by a vote of 4 in favor and one opposed, with Ms. Avellar casting the dissenting vote.

Ms. Parmakian then moved that the sewer rate be reduced by 14% by having the general fund pay for betterment and user fee costs related to Town-owned building, retroactive to the FY 2008 billing cycles. Mr. Knight seconded the motion, and it carried by a vote of four in favor and one opposed, with Ms. Avellar casting the dissenting vote.

The joint meeting then adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

