TOWN OF RUMFORD

BOARD *of* SELECTPERSONS Minutes

February 15th at 6:00 p.m.

Rumford Falls Auditorium

6:00 Accept and Discuss ordinance requests and Charter amendments

Brennick motioned to move and start with the sewer rate and seconded by DiConzo

Vote 5-0

Brennick stated that 80% of our Sewer Rate is based off the information from the assessment from the Rumford Mexico Sewer District. Rumford and Mexico Sewer district have not done a decent job of funding long term capital needs in order to maintain the infrastructure. Carter stated Sewer Rate is based on the needs to pay our bill and maintaining our system. Carter stated that we receive our assessment from the Rumford Mexico Sewer District. The Rumford Mexico Sewer District is a separate system from the Town of Rumford. The district sets their budget on what they feel will keep them running. The Sewer plant is old and hasn’t been repaired or major upgrades over the years. They are gearing up for a large capital project to replace the sewer plant, it is decades old. We are talking about a multi-million project to do that. The superintendent at the sewer district has been working for a couple years now acquiring funding from the state and federal to fund as much as possible. It cannot all be covered by grants and loans so some of it will be coming out of their own capital needs. Over the last couple of years, sewer rates have gone up by $100. It is hard, we understand budgets are tight. The town does pay for the administration side as far as postage the bills and the lien processing that are also included in the formula. We have set money aside for the sewer reserve fund. The fund is for the maintenance of our own sewer infrastructure. We have miles and miles of pipe under the road that we need to maintain. The reserve fund pays for the parts and equipment used to fix or replace. We have piping, manholes, and we have 20 pumping stations that are all aging. DEP does require us to do the proper maintenance so that we do not lose our sewer pumping stations including piping. We have a maintenance program where we flush the system twice a year and we make sure they are not leaking sewerage out and that rain water is let in. We do have the capital fund that is used to replace pumping stations. 7 of them were affected by the flood back on 12/18/23. We have 2 pumping stations that are very old and will need to be replaced this year, and we must ensure we have the funding for it. We also have the contingency fund, which is needed in case of abatements, non-payments, emergency needs when the other fund is depleted. We have all seen the cost-of-living increase and household budgets, we are seeing that some parts were affordable at one time but now parts and materials is much more expensive. The assessment is our bill from the district and then the reserve fund and capital funds are our maintenance cost to keep the system going and replace as needed we divided that by the number of sewer units 3122. A single household is 1 unit, and a 2-3 apartment building is 2 or 3 units. We do have a sheet we go by for commercial buildings by size and based on number of employees. We have been using this sheet since the sewer district was created. We will be switching to the amount of usage that they contribute to this system. We wanted to start the new year with usage, but we do not have the information needed to set that usage rate. Tonight’s meeting is to set that unit rate. We will be going from biannual billing to quarterly billing. The September billing is half the year, and we are hoping that we will be able to set a based rate. If you don’t go over the base rate you only get charged the unit rate, but if you go over that rate then you will pay measured by cubic feet. It really comes down to water usage. We do not like raising the bill; we understand it is frustrating, but we must be able to pay our bill. Once the project is done the rate should eventually stay the same.

Sue Breau: If we make the change to the water district why can’t the Sewer Rate come down after the plant is upgraded?

Roland Arsenault started in 2018. From 1977 to 2018 the average rate increase was 0%.

The prior ten years before I started cost to run was $935,000 a year. Before I started they were billing out $430,000 a year. We had almost 6-million-dollar reserve in 1977 now we are down to $350,000 in operating cash. It costs $94,000 a month to run the treatment plant. We are ending up in the hole every month. We had multiple failures in October, September and we went through $150,000 which left us only with $100,000 on the verge of going bankrupt. We have talked with DEP, they said we need to figure it out or they will take over. We have hired a engineer firm, Brian Pierce and we had to spend $75,000 to do a primary project to see what it is going to cost to fix the plant. The only thing that has changed since 1977 was the sledge de-watering equipment in 1990 and replaced the raw sewage pumps. We have a 50-year-old equipment that is falling apart, and we are having a challenging time finding parts. The firm said we must do $28 million dollar upgrades in 2019. DEP said unfortunately we must do a lot of work on the intake system. Anytime you make any changes to the intake, we must follow several codes in order to make any changes. We have been trying to get grant money as much as we can. In the history of the sewer plants, we are the only one in the state that has received so much grant money. The loan money we must pay back with interest but the grant money we do not need to pay back. If we decided to build new it would add $12 million dollars just to build a new building. We have no real estate so we would have to buy new land to start all over. The Towns cannot afford to start all new. It is now a State law that the treatment plants must follow certain guidelines and each Town must put in a certain amount of money for infrastructure.

Charter Amendment

DiConzo spoke regarding amending the Charter to allow a Town Manager to be able to travel the most of 1 hour and half. It is hard to find a Town Manager that is qualified in the River Valley area. It makes it hard to uproot a entire family if we can allow to broaden our horizon on the location of where we can look for applications. The Town Manager needs to be assessable and reasonable for day-to-day operations.

Ordinance Amendments:

Discussed:

* Sewer Ordinance
* Solar Ordinance

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Adopt Agenda: Brennick motioned to add to extend the Liquor License at Black Mountain of Maine and DiConzo seconded

Vote 5-0

1. Public Hearing:

\*Discussion on Sewer Rate

Action Following Public Hearing:

\*Discuss/Set Sewer Rate

Brennick motioned to set the sewer rate at $600 per unit and Sax seconded

Vote 5-0

Carter stated we will also need to set due dates for the Sewer payment

Brennick motioned to set the following 4 due dates, March first bill date and due date April 1st, second bill date June 1st due by July 1st, third bill date September 1st due by October 1st and forth bill date December 1st and due by January 1st, and to charge 6% interest on unpaid bills like taxes and seconded by DiConzo.

Vote 5-0

Recess at 7:06 pm

Returned at 7:09 pm

Public Hearing:

\* Victualers License for Community Energy Co, Inc. – DBA Community Quick Stop – 876 US Route 2, Rumford

\* Liquor License Extension with Black Mountain of Maine

Action Following Public Hearing:

\* Discuss/Approve Victualers License for Community Energy Co. Inc. – DBA Community Quick Stop - 876 US Route 2, Rumford

DiConzo motioned to approve and seconded by Theriault

Vote 5-0

\* Liquor License Extension till March 31st with Black Mountain of Maine

DiConzo motioned to approve and seconded by Theriault Vote 5-0

1. Special Presentation or Award:

A: Public Comment:

B: Town Manager’s Report: Just a FYI the Rumford Morse Bridge rehab project is going to start this early spring/ summer. There will be a 56-day closure of a minimum that the bridge will be closed. We will have more information soon.

The FEMA process is going well, we did an initial 30-day agreement for them to use our auditorium. The window of getting information into FEMA they have 60 days. We may be extending their stay another 30 days. There is an informational meeting at the MVHS on February 27th at 6pm for FEMA and SBA to provide information to the public. They will be having several representatives. FEMA will also be sending some representatives to the Roxbury Pond fishing derby to allow anyone that may have questions to be available. There has been a lot of coverage already by the News channels, Facebook, website, and others. The Library was preparing for new flooring and when they had a section tested and it came back and tested positive for asbestos. It does not seem to pose a risk at this time, the tiles are not broken but we will be putting out BIDs to be able to put new flooring. We will try our best to have the least amount of disruption.

C: Department Heads and Committee Chairs: O’Keefe said that over the past few weeks, I have been offering local businesses to access funding including FEMA. SBA loans are quite generous terms as far up to 30 years and some cases of 4% interest on loans.

Travis Palmer spoke stating we have a lot of Energy Projects going on. We are also working with Inland Woods and Trials on the Community Forest. We have sent out to the community a survey on the Community Forest. We will also need to be having a conversation referencing the Comprehensive plan.

D: Select Board: DiConzo thanked whoever got the postcards out to let citizens know about the sewer rate change at the Public Hearing. DiConzo understands that it will be tight for some people in the town, but DiConzo stated he is also on a fixed income, but we have to update our system if we want to keep the system in place.

Sax gave a update on the Disaster readiness program. We met with both towns, and they agreed to the terms. We were able to initially give each town $9,000 but within that same week we were able to give an additional $5,000 to each town.

1. Discuss/Approve minutes from 2/1/2024

DiConzo motioned to approve and seconded by Theriault

Vote 5-0

1. Discuss/ Approve Warrant #35

Pepin motioned to approve and seconded by DiConzo

Vote 5-0

1. Discuss/ Approve Agreement with RSU for School Resource Officer

Pepin motioned to approve and seconded by Theriault

Vote 4-0-1 (Brennick)

1. Discuss/ Approve Maine Service Center Coalition delegates

Brennick motioned and seconded by Sax to allow the Town Manager to delegate and DiConzo to be the alternate

Vote 5-0

1. Discuss/Approve Parade permit / road closure Recover Strong March

Brennick motioned to approve and seconded by Theriault

Vote 5-0

1. Discuss / Appoint Election Wardens for March election

Brennick motioned to approve and seconded by Sax to elect DiConzo as the Warden and Theriault as the Deputy

Vote 5-0

1. Discuss / Approve Eliminating evening hours for Voter Registration

DiConzo motioned to approve and seconded by Theriault

Vote 5-0

1. Discuss / Approve Fee schedule amendment

DiConzo motioned to approve and seconded by Pepin

Vote 5-0

1. Executive Session ref Labor Negotiations 1 MRS §405(6)(D)

DiConzo motioned to enter session at 7:33 pm and seconded by Pepin

Vote 5-0

Exit session at 7:50 pm

1. Executive Session ref Personnel Matter 1 MRS §405(6)(A)

Brennick motioned to enter session at 7:51 pm and seconded by DiConzo

Vote 5-0

Exit session at 7:55 pm

1. Adjourn

DiConzo motioned to adjourn and seconded by Theriault

Vote 5-0