

Town of Colebrook
Selectboard Meeting
June 13, 2022, at 5:00 pm
Town Hall Courtroom

Colebrook Downtown Development Association (CDDA) presentation of payment to the Town of Colebrook. The acknowledgement (attached to these minutes) was signed by Chairman Placy, Selectboard Member Sue Collins, as well as the President of the CDDA, Sandra Riendeau, and its Treasurer, Rosemary Mulliken. Check #2095, dated June 13, 2022, in the amount of \$25,904.03 was donated to the Town of Colebrook *for use in its "Main Street streetscape program."* *It is the wish of CDDA that these funds be used for something above what is already funded in the program, such as an upgrade to lights, sidewalk surface, and/or beautification.*

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED WATER RATE INCREASE

Present: Chairman Greg Placy, Selectboard members Suzanne Collins & Ray Gorman. Town Manager, James O'Gorman. Melanie Fogg, Tax Collector joined for part of the meeting.

Members of the Public: Jake Mardin, Colebrook News & Sentinel–Brenda Brooks Gadwah, Richard Cole, Jr., John Fothergill, Ed Carrier, Bernie Carrier, Rick Nadig, and Dawn Cameron.

Greg introduced the proposed rate raise. Rates have not been raised in a long time. The Town will have a \$62,000 annual repayment for bond for the new wells. There is a \$138,448 deficit in the water fund with \$38,346 of unpaid bills. The increase will be to \$75.00 per quarter for the first 7,048 gallons and .11 per gallon after that: The deficit started in 2018 and it has gotten worse each year. The Town cannot keep digging a deeper deficit hole. Next year the Town will have bond payments once the new wells are identified and developed.

Ed Carrier commented about his laundromat – His water bills have doubled.

Sue noted that this is because he is now getting billed on actual usage and that the laundromat had two water lines and two meters that were being used. Ed was not sure about that and noted that it is "not worth being in business."

Brenda Brooks Gadwah: Does everyone in town, every place, everybody, have a meter and is everybody paying for water.

Sue responded that some people have wells. But about everybody is metered. She noted that the new meters were free because of a grant from Northern Borders Regional Commission. The Town is still paying \$60,000 for the collapsed wells north of Town.

Richard Cole Jr. asked about the water meters being connected by cellular service – what will happen when service is upgraded to 5G?–This question could not be answered immediately.

Bernie Carrier: What if we were to hold off on new wells? He noted that the State of New Hampshire DES is suggesting a backup – not requiring a backup. Further, fuel costs doubling and heating costs are going higher and higher. How are people going to afford this? People in this town cannot afford it. Bernie stated that the New Hampshire DES is only suggesting the Town have a backup well. The daily

use requirement for a back-up well is 144,000. What about APP? Are they driving up the daily use? Why is the Town going forward with this new well?

Sue replied that the State of New Hampshire says that the Town has to put in a back-up well. The Town has \$550,000 from the settlement on the broken wells, plus funds from NH Drinking Water Fund of \$428,000. There is bond issue authorization in the Town Report (a warrant voted on at town meeting). The Town is under State directive to find a new water source.

Bernie Carrier: In his conversation with Randy Suoczou a systems engineer at the State of New Hampshire DES, Randy said that the NH DES is only suggesting a back-up well. Bernie said the gallons per day use marker for NH DES is 144,000+ to suggest an alternate well system and the Town of Colebrook is not using that amount.

Sue and Greg said that the State of New Hampshire DES is, in fact, demanding that an alternate well be available. Sue noted that the Town is getting all the grants that they can.

The leaks fixed in town saved water – but that does not affect billing for water and the income. The overhead is still the same: Staff costs and repair costs keep going up.

Greg: The town is pumping less water, but water is costing more because of the new wells.

John Fothergill commented that he is happy that we are not losing 70% of our water from leaks. He would like some reassurance of fairness on billing.

Does everyone have a meter and is everyone paying what they need to be paying? This would be nice to know, because is the price going up because of unfairness? Is the usage and billing information accurate? Using the Laundromat as an example: Are there two meters or not two meters? If the town is measuring accurately, then everyone is paying their fair share.

Melanie Fogg replied that only three people are on flat rate billing versus on a meter. Everyone else has meters that are read every quarter.

Ed Carrier asked why the prices were not going down? If the town is charging that many more people? Why are prices going up?

Sue replied that it is because of staff wages, staff benefits, etc. The overhead cost is the same.

Richard Cole Jr. asked how many people are behind in their payments and what is the total amount due?

The total amount due is \$30,346.69 for water and this continues to add up because the lien process takes a long time, and the town does not shut-off people's water.

Sue – There is a phone app available for citizens and businesses to monitor water usage.

Dawn Cameron noted that the Colebrook Mobile Home Cooperative is behind on their water bill, but they have a payment plan to pay \$1000 a month in interest and they have been paying very consistently on their payment plan. She noted that if the Cooperative did not have this payment plan, then they would all become homeless.

Richard Cole Jr. – Responded that there must be a reason the Cooperative is not paying the bill – but issuing a tax lien – and the unpaid amounts keep piling up.

Dawn noted that there are twenty-seven homes in the park – but not all homes pay for their water usage. The Cooperative has debt, which remains unpaid by people that they cannot get rid of, and this is why the Cooperative cannot pay their bills.

John Fothergill asked if the park has a meter going to it? Is water efficiently getting to each unit? How much of the water going into the pipe is getting to the homes?

Greg – The Cooperative knows they have needs. The Town knows they have needs. They are paying a good-sized flat rate for the water they are using. Town reads the first meter, and the Cooperative can read the other meters to see how much is being used.

The Cooperative has received a grant to replace the water lines and they are moving forward and then there will be less leakage.

Dawn outlined the various funding sources: A grant/Loan from USDA and a grant from CDBG and they are hoping to dig in this season. Unfortunately, everything is delayed. The completion goal is spring, 2023. This is a promising deadline. She noted that they have been working on this for a couple of years now, and now everything is in place.

Sue commented about the phone app/software for individual water use tracking: Of 523 meters, only thirty people are using the software.

Dawn replied that the software is still not what it is supposed to be. They were supposed to have the app for the park with everybody on it AND the park meter. But this has not been set up yet. That would be helpful.

Guy Herlbert asked if the rate hike is going to happen? Was it decided even before this meeting? This is a waste of time. He noted that seniors who have lived here all their lives are getting to a point where they have nothing left to do anything on the side. All costs are going up. The timing on this rate increase is bad.

Rick Nadig noted that at the Black Bear restaurant they use a lot of water. Based on his total usage the cost is .02 per gallon sewer and water. Municipal water should be fractions of a penny not .02 gallon for city water. Digging and using his own well would be cost prohibitive with the regular testing.

James O’Gorman commented that he compiled a survey of twelve towns and provided the relative rate amounts on the hand-out.

Sue said that there has to be an increase and that, in Stewartstown, they increased their rates to \$600 per year in Stewartstown (versus \$300 per year in Colebrook) using the base rate as comparison.

John Fothergill – what is the town looking at for new wells?

Greg responded that they are expecting at least two wells. There have been five locations explored.

John Fothergill – Whose suggestion is it that we have two back-ups? Not just one?

Greg – If we can get enough volume from one of the sites, we will take one, if not, two.

Rick Nadig asked where the glove factory (APP) comes into play with needing more water?

Sue – They have drilled one of their own wells and that reduces the burden on the Town.

Ed Carrier asked about APP sewer discharge.

Greg responded that the APP intent is to recycle 80% of the water they use.

The Town is going to be dredging the lagoons which needs happen whether APP is in Town or not. The last time the lagoons were dredged was in the 1990s. The lagoons have a 450,000-gallon capacity, and the APP waste fits there. If not, DES has told APP that any costs incurred by the Town at the wastewater system because of APP is 100% paid for by APP.

Bernie Carrier – If APP maxes out the lagoons – there can be no more industry in this Town.

Greg – APP is figuring out what they can recycle.

Bernie Carrier wanted to know how much could the town save if we put the wells on the back burner and just wait for a bit? It is \$60,000 saved per year on the bond for the old wells.

The new wells will be another \$60,000 in addition to the old wells.

Sue responded that the town is in the hole \$136,000 at this time.

Greg added that with fewer leaks because of the repairs made in town, the savings is in energy for the pumps. The 70% water lost was not being paid for. The town is in decent shape with leaks. Granite State Rural Water comes to town to check for leaks, and they tell us where the leaks are.

Ed Carrier responded that the rate hike does not make sense if we are using fewer chemicals, less staff, less everything plus we have more people paying more now. Why not hold off for five years – we could save money. He is paying \$10,000 for the tiny laundromat: That much more than all his other utilities combined – it does not make sense.

END of PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED WATER RATE INCREASES at 5:50 pm

Regular Agenda

Review and approval of Minutes of May 23, 2022. Sue made a motion to accept the minutes of May 23, 2022, as presented. Ray seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Manager's Report as attached to these Minutes

Town Clerk's Warrant Issue Request on all the unlicensed dogs - Sue made a motion to authorize the town to issue a warrant for unpaid dog licensing as of today. Ray seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Old business

Black Bear Tavern – While Jim Wells was digging, he found that a sixteen inch" line from Howard's was packed with solidly with grease.

Greg is hoping the problem is solved. The Black Bear has grease traps, but Greg does not know if they have been maintained correctly.

Certainly, we know now that the sixteen-inch line is under the corner of the Black Bear. But the grease in the pipes is upstream from the Black Bear.

Sue needs to have a budget report for sewer in anticipation of major expenses this year – she needs the line-item detail.

Greg noted that Jim Wells has done more than what Greg thought. There was unstable ground, so Jim had to use a trench box – which took longer.

To connect the Congregational Church includes two more sections of pavement to cut through – there are still issues with the church lines – understanding where the lines go and how they are connected.

Bear Rock Road Bridge – The town received an email indicating State of NH approval, but then easements need to be agreed upon. There is a list of things that need to be done. The ball is in our court now. The select board reviewed the letter and the items needed. They reviewed the maps and potential easements – noting that there is one abutting property line affected.

Greg reported that there will be a **June 30th Main Street utility walk-through**. This should be the final walk-through. Everything should be pretty well set. Determinations have been made. June 30th is when the utilities measure their lengths of cables that they will need, etc.

Signatures

Cemetery Permit Albert Hayes

Notice of Intent to Excavate – Sheldon Gray off Route 26 – Russell Road

Notice of Intent to Cut – David Radun on Hughes Road

Warrant Current Use Penalty Land Use Change for Kheops International \$4,840. Memo from Gary Fournier. Too small to remain in current use, so comes out of current use. Town gains a few dollars in taxes.

OHRV/ATV/UT Permit applications – Greg went through the whole list with the tax map and with Dottie's information and Dottie put together a spreadsheet. Greg marked the list YES and NO.

YES – Signatures.

Sean Aquaro

Alicia Boire

Sarah Cummings

Alex Dec

Daniel Derring

Berkley Edwards

Todd Ewens – *needs to sign his form*

HCSS on the Hill

Glenn & Deb Kippen

Michael Knight – *Eight permits. He says he owns all eight machines. Lives on 52 Skyline Drive. Four or five times a year they go on a family ride.*

Sue made a motion to grant eight permits to Michael Knight at 52 Skyline Drive. Ray seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

Lisa & Michael Marsh

James Mountford, III from #22 Academy Street. *NH Route 145 is a State Highway. Therefore, access to Academy is Pleasant Street to the trail on Main Street.*

Jordan Phinney – *But they must get to the trail by using Monadnock Street to Colby Street. Bridge Street is a State Highway.*

Greg Placy

Thomas Ramadon

Tom Steele – discussion because permits are requested for non-family members, but after review this is allowable under the ordinance.

No – including reasons for denial.

Joseph Bettencourt – *There is not trail off the road that he lives on. He does not live on Hughes Road. The regulation is: Permission to use the road you live on to get to a trail.*

Eric & Pamela Hartlen – *Property is in Stewartstown. They were denied last year as well.*

Kenneth Grimes, III – *Property is on Route 26 which is a State Highway.*

Kathie Vierira – *Trail is on Bungy Road in Columbia. We cannot give permit that requires riding in Columbia.*

Adam Wolotschaj – *Their property is in Stewartstown.*

Other Business

Sue spoke regarding a memo from the Executive Director of Coos Economic County Development (CEDC). What does Coos County Economic Development have to do with the ARPA money that is coming to the town?

James responded that he thinks this letter was just to outline the benefits of CEDC to the town.

Sue asked if we have applied for the second half of our ARPA money? James will ask Mel.

The selectboard is still waiting for CEDC to answer on the payment in lieu of taxes on the Bromage property. CEDC is waiting for their board meeting.

Sue made a motion to approve an annual donation from Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital equal to what the taxes would have been on 129 Corliss Lane, less the school tax. The motion, seconded Ray, passed unanimously.

Sue made a motion to approve new water rates at \$75 base rate with additional .11 over 7,480 gallons. The motion was seconded by Ray and passed unanimously. **

Joy Haynes was unable to attend the public hearing on the water rates but voiced her opinion to James O’Gorman and would like to go on the public record as opposed to the water rate increase.

Ray noted that on June 30th Josh Bouchard will be working on the Edwards Street project with Brian.

The select board can expect regular dispatch updates from Ray. Vermont and NH 911 calls software is being funded through each state grants. The Vermont 911 system is not good. The new software should help things. NH has problems in rural areas, but they are working on this. This will include encompassing channels so that all the first responders will be equal and on the same channels.

Ray and James should talk about the solar possibilities for the town. The consultant had ideas on town hall and town garage for solar array installation. They looked at the old well site north of town. The right of way is seventy-five feet – it is a controlled access right of way.

Greg noted that the State of New Hampshire bought 150 foot wide right of way through there. This is actually owned – it is not an easement. The road is in the middle of it. The seventy-five feet is on each side of the center line.

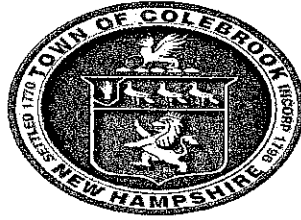
The solar consultant from the Tillotson Fund will be looking at the town electric bills in the office tomorrow.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:22 pm on a motion by Sue Collins, seconded by Ray Gorman.

** The new water rates will be effective July 1, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine E. Charman



Town of Colebrook

Town Managers Report for 06/27/2022

FINANCE

- Town Policy on Administration of Federal Grants from Cohoes Advisors still needs to be reviewed.
- Maggie was here last week. They have completed through March.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

- Nothing to report

POLICE DEPARTMENT.

- Stand off incident at Church next door, yesterday, June 26th. Minor misunderstanding. I believe it has been resolved.
- Issue with Charlene Dion from June 10th. Still finishing investigation.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

- Working on ditching.

RECREATION DEPARTMENT

- Nothing to report at this time.

WATER AND SEWER

- APP – Brian Sullivan and Mike Worten and I met with Jeff Wolf twice since the last selectboard meeting to tour the lagoons.
- APP – DES and our staff toured the APP Plant last week.
- Colby Street pumps and pump station needed work yesterday. Plugged with rubber gloves and disposable wipes.
- Started running the lagoons again. Brain said the new bulbs are covered black again.

TOWN OFFICE

- Portland Glass will be here the week of July 11 – 15th.

TRANSFER STATION

- Incident at Transfer Station this past Saturday. I will speak to David about.

WELFARE

- Nothing to report at this time.

OTHER

- 122 Bridge St. purchase – Still waiting to hear back from Canaan School Board.
- 129 Corliss Ave. – Still waiting to hear back from Mr. Colby.
- Response from DES on Water Wells. I have received a response to send to Mr. Carrier.