



Town of Tusten Town Board Meeting

Town Board Public Hearing and Workshop
December 5, 2023
6:30 PM

Venue: Tusten Community Hall, 210 Bridge Street and on Zoom ID: 879 2661 1419

PRESENT

Supervisor Bernard Johnson
Deputy Supervisor Jane Luchsinger
Councilmen Greg Trigg
Councilman Kevin McDonough
Councilman Bruce Gettel

OTHERS PRESENT

Town Clerk Crystal Weston, Deputy Town Clerk Leigh Delaney, Attorney to the Town Kenneth Klein, Interim NWS Superintendent, David Bunce, Jocelyn Strumpfler, Deputy Town Clerk; Approximately 11 attended in person and 5 on Zoom

PUBLIC HEARING

Supervisor Johnson called the Public Hearing to order at 6:30pm and read the following statement;

Good evening. Welcome to the public hearing for the 2024 sewer rate proposed increase. Before I open the floor, I would like to take this time. I need to thank a couple of people. I'd like to thank the Water and Sewer Committee, the Water and Sewer personnel including the interim superintendent and Becky Sims at RCAT. I approached the Water and Sewer Committee in 2022 requesting a rate increase and presented my reasons on why I would like to have seen that. To the committee's credit, they did not just ask how much we wanted, but actually wanted to know the billing, how it worked and how to best implement an increase if they were to give it in that effort. RCAP Solutions was approached by the committee and together over several months, data was collected and the needs were assessed and a final customer comparison of sewer rate scenarios was formulated by RCAP solutions with the assistance of the water and sewer personnel and information from the committee. Becky Sims presented to this board and the public. There is an array of scenarios that were developed and how they were developed. Prior to this scenario approved by the board, the rates were based on units, which is an engineering formula that had full and half the units and at best could be arbitrary. You could have a house with one and a half units of charge and have two people living in it and have another house charged being one and a half, two units and have six people living in it. One obviously would contribute more to the collection of the sewer than the other. The water usage fees currently proposed has been found not to be arbitrary. Although, never a happy discussion, the rates have not been addressed by the town since 2009. I find that to be a disservice to the customers of the district

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and a lack of concern of the fiduciary responsibilities of the board. So, keeping that in mind of what this board has presented. At this point, I will open up the floor to public comment here in the room first and then on to ZOOM.

All that wish to be heard will have the opportunity to be heard and the opportunity to comment on the increase in Sewer fees for those in the Water/Sewer District.

Comments were heard from:

Marla Commented regarding increase in water bill from 2012 \$800.00 every three month to \$3600.00 every three months
Not sustainable for business owners

Paul Asked how the money would be used

*Response Water Sewer Districts cannot make money, money can be set aside for future capital projects
There is a budget that can be viewed on line*

Steve Noted the great disparity between the commercial and residential rates, feels the commercial increase is unfair
Suggests heavy users pay more, base fees on gallon consumption, A 1,000 gallons used in a business on Main Street shouldn't cost so much more than 1,000 at home. (*Water Rates*)

Response Sewer rates will not be based on Commercial or Residential status, based on amount of water usage

Mike Farell Noted the five options on the information provided
Response Base rate of \$125 and 8.88 per thousand gallons of usage

Ray Johnson Has a pool and asked if he filled his pool would the water used to fill the pool be used in calculating his sewer bill or if there is an exception?

Response The issue will have to go before the Water Sewer Committee

Starr Hesse Noted that option 5 and option 2 both seemed to be circled on her handout and asked if they were both considered and what the deciding factors were

Response All 5 options were considered, narrowed down to option 2 and 5 and settled on option 5. Option 5 allows for better budget control

Jill Fuchar Asked if handouts for the meeting were available online

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- Response* *A link to handouts was placed in the chat*
- Jill Fuchar Asked about the commercial buildings in town that are not in use and if there was a cost to the town
With so few commercial businesses do they bear more of a burden because there are several empty buildings in the commercial district
- Response* *All storefronts are charged the base on rate regardless of occupancy*
- Iris Helfeld Asked how waste water is released into the river and if it is purified, how its processed
- Response* *Dave Bunce explained the filtration and release process, also offered a tour of the plant for those that would like to see the process*
- Eugene Questions for Dave Bunce: Is there a market for gray water? Is it something that can be sold?
- Dave Bunce* *Responded that there is no market and that things are getting tighter because of forever chemicals*
- Mary Bermudez Commented that some residents and commercial entities are not here fulltime/12 months
Is there a way to spread out the increase?
- Response* *Incremental increases are not sufficient to address current financial need*
- Steve Acknowledged the challenges of an increase
Suggested the district was too small for the burden attached to it
- Iris Helfeld Questioned if the Firetrucks could be hooked up to the existing fire hydrants
What needs to be done to make them all functional?
- Response* *Fire Hydrants are a top priority for replacement, 6 are working and functional and 3 more have been updated. The Fire Dept identified the most needed hydrants.*
- Steve Bottom line what is it going to cost?
- Response* *Several examples were discussed*
- Eugene Acknowledged one free pump out every four years, suggests one free turn off each year
- Response* *Cost of turn on, turn off was discussed and situations they are required*

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Michael Farrell Who is responsible for the water tank on a residential property

Response Further research required

Anthony Asked where he could find the 12-point report
Which fire hydrants are working, which are not

Response Enough hydrants working in the district to cover an initial attack but they will draft from the river

Supervisor Johnson If there are no additional comments,
I'd like to close the Public Hearing

With no further comments to be heard the Public Hearing was closed at 7:50pm on motion of Deputy Supervisor Jane Luchsinger and seconded by Kevin Mc Donough, All in favor

WORKSHOP

Supervisor Johnson opened work session at 7:51

No further discussion was had.

ADJOURNMENT

The work session was closed by Supervisor Johnson at 7:52PM seconded by Jane Luchsinger, all in favor

CLOSING ITEMS

Meeting reminder
-Town Board Meeting 12/13/2023 at 6:30

Respectfully Submitted,
Crystal Weston, Town Clerk