



## TOWN OF BROOKLYN

P.O. Box 356 - Route 6 and 169  
BROOKLYN, CONNECTICUT 06234

OFFICE OF SELECTMEN  
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### Brooklyn Water Pollution Control Authority

#### Special Meeting

Wednesday, July 26, 2023 **Public Hearing**  
6:30 pm via Zoom & at the Community Center  
Upper Level 31 Tiffany Street, Brooklyn, CT

To join this meeting, follow the below instructions:

#### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87193917651?pwd=YmJ3Y2o1dUI5TWVZT2lSazh4RE84Zz09>

Meeting ID: 871 9391 7651

Passcode: 698494

#### One tap mobile

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### MINUTES

1. **Call to Order** – Austin Tanner, First Selectman, called the Special Meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. **Attendance:** Austin Tanner, First Selectman; Derek Lindia; Dann Stuyanski; Charles Sczorski (via Zoom).

**Also Present:** Shelley Cates, Finance Director; Joe Couture; Lisa Lindia; J.S. Perreault, Recording Secretary.

There were approximately ten additional people present in the audience including: Joe Voccio, Selectman; Jocelyne Ruffo, Tax Collector; Paul Sorel, Lyn Lacharite; Roland Lacharite; R. David Lee; Robert Ross; Mrs. Ross; Theresa Desilets;

**Present via Zoom:** Al Carpenter; Sharon Loughlin; Jenn Nemeth; Carrie Horton.

3. **Public Comment** – None.
4. **Public Hearing** –  
The Water Pollution Control Authority of the Town of Brooklyn will hold a public hearing on July 26, 2023 at 6:30 PM at The Community Center, 31 Tiffany Street concerning the following:  
The Water Pollution Control Authority will establish a sewer use charge for the period of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024 as follows:

#### Rate increases

Single Units Increase from \$345 to \$690

Apartments Increase from \$276 to \$552/per Unit

Commercial Increase from \$825 to \$1,650

Metered usage for commercial and other increase from \$.0125 to \$.0250

School metered usage increase from \$.0115 to \$.0230

<u>Account</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Account Type</u>	<u>FY22-23 Budget</u>	<u>FY23-24 Proposed</u>
6013.00.0000.41000	Sewer Taxes Returned / Refunded	REVENUE	\$0.00	-\$500.00
6013.00.0000.41111	Sewer Use Fees-Current	REVENUE	\$629,000.00	\$1,018,978.00
6013.00.0000.41112	Sewer Use Fees-Prior	REVENUE	\$25,000.00	\$50,724.00
6013.00.0000.41113	Sewer Use Fees-Interest & Liens	REVENUE	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
6013.00.0000.45501	Sewer Assessments-Current	REVENUE	\$0.00	\$0.00
6013.00.0000.45502	Sewer Assessments-Prior	REVENUE	\$0.00	\$0.00
6013.00.0000.45503	Sewer Assessments-Interest & Liens	REVENUE	\$0.00	\$0.00
6013.00.0000.46101	Interest	REVENUE	\$1,000.00	\$500.00
6013.00.0000.46500	Account saved for Future Use	REVENUE	\$0.00	\$0.00
6013.00.0000.48425	Inspection Fees	REVENUE	\$5,400.00	\$5,000.00
			\$665,400.00	\$1,079,702.00
	Transfer In/out??		\$187,704.00	
			\$853,104.00	

<u>Account</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Account Type</u>	<u>FY22-23 Budget</u>	<u>FY23-24 Proposed</u>
6013.00.0000.51900	WPCA-Recording Secretary	EXPENDITURE	\$3,000.00	\$1,500.00
6013.00.0000.53020	WPCA-Legal Fees	EXPENDITURE	\$0.00	\$0.00
6013.00.0000.53510	WPCA-Software Maintenance	EXPENDITURE	\$2,232.00	\$2,860.00
6013.00.0000.53900	WPCA-Contingency	EXPENDITURE	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
6013.00.0000.54309	WPCA-Meter & Maintenance Fees	EXPENDITURE	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00
6013.00.0000.54412	WPCA-Killingly Use Fee	EXPENDITURE	\$667,000.00	\$830,000.00
6013.00.0000.54500	WPCA-Purchased Services	EXPENDITURE	\$15,500.00	\$12,000.00
6013.00.0000.55301	WPCA-Postage	EXPENDITURE	\$100.00	\$100.00
6013.00.0000.55400	WPCA-Advertising & Legal Notices	EXPENDITURE	\$0.00	\$0.00
6013.00.0000.55500	WPCA-Printing & Publications	EXPENDITURE	\$1,000.00	\$500.00
6013.00.0000.56120	WPCA-Office Supplies	EXPENDITURE	\$500.00	\$500.00
6013.00.0000.56220	WPCA-Electricity	EXPENDITURE	\$17,000.00	\$20,000.00
6013.00.0000.56240	WPCA-Fuel Oil	EXPENDITURE	\$700.00	\$400.00
6013.00.0000.57400	WPCA-Capital-Sewer Upgrades	EXPENDITURE	\$82,000.00	\$60,436.00
6013.00.0000.58310	WPCA-Debt-Principal	EXPENDITURE	\$19,981.00	\$20,430.15
6013.00.0000.58320	WPCA-Debt-Interest	EXPENDITURE	\$22,591.00	\$22,140.85
6013.00.0000.58350	WPCA-Int. Short Term Debt	EXPENDITURE	\$0.00	\$87,335.00
			\$853,104.00	\$1,079,702.00

Derek Lindia, Shelley Cates and Austin Tanner explained each of the topics contained in the Slide Presentation dated July 26, 2023 (hard copies were available for the public and a copy is also attached herewith): Proposed Revenue Budget FY 23-24, Primary Revenue Source, Proposed Expenditure Budget FY 23-24, Primary Expenditure Costs, What the Budget Does Not Include, Proposed Rate Changes, Reasons for Increase and Use of Reserve Funds, Town of Killingly Grand List, How Brooklyn Compares to Surrounding Towns.

Mr. Lindia explained that, over the past few years, Brooklyn had not raised user rates to its customers (page 9 of the Presentation), however, Brooklyn's obligation/commitment to Killingly has significantly gone up in those years (page 11 of the Presentation). He said it was nice then, but it was also a disservice because this proposed increase is just to get us where we need to be, but not putting anything into Reserves.

Ms. Cates referred to How Brooklyn Compares To Surrounding Towns (page 10 of the Presentation, which shows a Study from 2019) and explained that Brooklyn is the lowest on the list (substantially, in some instances).

## 5. Public Comment

- **Paul Sorel** asked for a breakdown of the 392 single-family dwellings (page 4 of the Presentation) - how many are in the center of Town and how many are in East Brooklyn. He feels that it should be more than 392 in total.

There was discussion and Ms. Cates explained she has a list of customers by streets, but she said that the data could be generated. Ms. Cates stated that if Mr. Sorel makes a request for that information, it would be provided when available. Mr. Sorel stated that he will call Derek Lindia tomorrow. Discussion continued.

- **Lyn Lacharite**, Hank's Restaurant, commented that during COVID, usage went up because everybody was at home. She said that, at the Restaurant, they weren't generating additional usage. She commented about how they have serious issues with the Sewer Authority as they are last on the sewer line on Route 6 before it goes to the Jail. She explained about multiple back-ups in the Restaurant, the latest being the Sunday after last Thanksgiving. She explained the situation that, for eight hours (from 4 p.m. until midnight), they had raw sewage coming into the building. The problem was discovered in a manhole near WalMart. She spoke of the expenses that were incurred as a result of this event. She commented that other towns have insurance that would cover things like this. She referred to the fifth bullet point on page 2 of the Presentation. She commented about no increase having been done and about missing Reserve money. She said that WalMart is still in violation and that she doesn't want to sue WalMart as they are good neighbors. She suggested that someone from the WPCA go to WalMart and explain to them what they are doing wrong. She said that her insurance company is now going after WalMart. She explained how, if rates go up, she will have to raise her prices. If user rates go up, she asked for a guarantee that good service will be provided.

Mr. Tanner stated that Ms. Lacharite raised some legitimate gripes, but he explained that they do know where the Reserve money went. There was no money to pay the bills for a couple years and the Reserve money was used. He agrees that it is terrible to have to raise the rates, but it is justified as there isn't a lot that can be done to adjust the budget (he referred to information provided on page 6 of the Presentation). Regarding the back-up situation, he explained that they check the manhole periodically and it is still an issue.

Mr. Lindia commented that from the photos that he has seen, it looks like it has been coming from WalMart and the difficult thing is getting them to stop what they are doing. He said that he has spoken with Bob Kiley, former Chair of the WPCA, about that night and Mr. Kiley informed him that he was very disappointed because he had gone into WalMart and did not see the proper signage in the bathrooms and he witnessed improper things (e.g. diapers) going down the toilet and into the sink. Mr. Lindia explained that the WPCA wants to work with the Community, but it's been tough getting WalMart to work with us to prevent it from happening again. He apologized to the Lacharite's for what happened.

- **Roland Lacharite**, Hank's Restaurant, commented that they pay more than \$825 currently (although he was not sure of the exact amount). There was discussion and Ms. Lacharite will verify the amount with Shelley Cates.
- **Dave Lee**, Board of Finance Member, commented that the Board is supposed to have five appointed Members and currently only has three. He asked how many of the three Members would be affected by this increase. Mr. Lindia and Mr. Stuykowski stated that they would not be affected, an answer from Mr. Sczorski

(via Zoom) was not heard. Mr. Lee stated that it is unconscionable to increase 100 percent in one year. He asked how the process is being managed and said to not account for a planned upgrade at the Killingly Facility in your rate increase over time is malfeasance and mismanagement of the Board. He feels that there needs to be re-organization of the Board because there is no accountability and no tax payer recourse in this process. He also suggests that the Board have some enforcement authority for when there are customers that are not following what they are supposed to do.

Mr. Tanner stated that Mr. Lee's comments are well-taken and he explained that they had worked with Consultant, Al Carpenter on a three-year plan using the Reserve, but it did not include the Killingly increase, so it was a faulty plan to start, so they find themselves behind in the first year. They are just looking at the current budget to cover expenses.

Mr. Lee explained that it would be less of an issue if it had been billed over time. Discussion continued.

- **Jenn Nemeth** (viz Zoom) commented about something that Joe Voccio had said at the last Board of Selectmen's meeting regarding some sort of Town intervention or grant to offset this drastic increase so it isn't felt so badly by people. She asked if the rates are going to increase.

Mr. Tanner explained that it had not been discussed further and that grants are usually for operating costs which they are looking into.

Mr. Tanner explained that there are not a lot of options other than raising the rates.

- **Joe Voccio**, 60 Fairway Drive, asked about the timeframe for setting the rates and what the impact to the Town would be if we hold off on the rate increase for sixty days to allow the Town to explore other funding options. He stated agreement with Mr. Lee that 100 percent all at once is impractical and would have impacts which would ripple throughout the Community.

There was discussion and Mr. Lindia explained that he would be willing to discuss other options. Mr. Lee suggested that if bills at the previous rate or the previous rate with some kind of increase were sent out, it would bring money in. Then, a supplemental billing could go out for the additional amount, once things are figured out.

Ms. Cates explained that the #1 immediate expense is the short-term debt with the Killingly WPCA that needs to be brought current to avoid monthly interest charges. She questioned whether they would be allowed to pass a balanced budget if passing it without the complete increase.

Mr. Voccio suggested the Option #2 would be for the Town to fund the payment to Killingly in the short term. Then, the Town could be reimbursed when the rate increase is figured out. There was discussion regarding timeline.

Mr. Voccio asked if it is customary for WPCA's to carry their own liability/equipment/maintenance insurance and Ms. Lacharite had stated other towns do. Under the master policy that the Town holds with CIRMA, it covers WPCA/emergency services. Ms. Cates stated that the Town covers that expense for the WPCA and it is not included in the WPCA budget.

- **Theresa Desilets**, 8 Common Way Drive, President of an HOA with 29 units, suggested quarterly payments.

She asked about the short-term debt which was explained by Shelley Cates.

- **Robert Ross** explained that he had been a Member of the WPCA in the past and he remembers that there was a Reserve of \$800,000 two years ago. He asked about the rate per gallon not going up.

Ms. Cates explained how the rate per gallon is calculated, based on the usage.

Discussion with Mr. Ross continued and Ms. Cates explained about the under-budgeted revenues and under-budgeted expenses in past years' budgets, which Ms. Cates explained the Town's auditors had reviewed and had red-flagged. She displayed information and explained about Killingly Plant operating costs and rates billed per gallon. She stated that she could provide this information to anyone who wants to request it. The Brooklyn WPCA had been a separate Authority until now. Discussion with Mr. Ross continued and he said that it is an awful lot to increase over three years.

Mr. Ross referred to the Minutes of a previous meeting where a statement had been made about raising the rates 100 percent, then 30 another percent and then another 30 percent. He asked if this is true.

Mr. Tanner stated that it must have been in reference to something else because he had not discussed that.

- **Mr. Voccio** suggested forming a task force for the Members of the WPCA, Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen to explore some of the options discussed at this meeting: quarterly billing; supplemental billing to have enough working capital to pay current obligations while figuring out the balance of the year. Mr. Tanner and Mr. Lindia explained that they are open to discussing it and working with the residents of the Town, but there are other factors to consider. Discussion continued.
- There was discussion regarding possible development coming to Town and Mrs. Ross commented that some development has come to Town and asked if it would ever get to the point where a percentage would be given back to the people. Mr. Tanner explained that he does not have a magic answer to that.
- Lyn Lacharite commented about the people that don't know about the increase and that they may not be able to pay the bill. Ms. Cates noted that historically, the WPCA is 15-19 percent uncollectible.

Mr. Stuynecki asked the members of the public for a realistic percentage increase that they would prefer. Robert Ross commented that Brooklyn is a small community of people feeding into the sewer system and someone didn't do their homework when negotiating with Killingly regarding Brooklyn's portion of the \$24 million upgrade and operating expenses. He said that Killingly's single-family rate is about \$500/year now.

The answers that were offered were understanding of what is needed to fix the situation.

- Robert Ross suggested an increase of \$160 increase to the single-family rate at this time, until it gets figured out. He said that no matter what we do, there is a number that needs to be met. He stated agreement with Mr. Lee.
- Paul Sorel stated that there was an increase last year and he expected to see another increase this year, possibly a little higher.

At this time, there was discussion regarding the back-up event at Hank's Restaurant. Mr. Ross explained that he was there with Joe Couture at 11 p.m. that night trying to find the manhole on Route 6. He said that it is all rags coming out of WalMart. He suggested that WalMart should install a grinder pump or cages.

- Mrs. Ross explained that she is in favor of quarterly payments and special accommodations should be made for those with hardships (extra 30 days).

Jocelyne Ruffo, Tax Collector explained that the if you bill for August 1<sup>st</sup>, they would be due by September 1<sup>st</sup>. Discussion continued.

- Dave Lee commented that more WPCA Members are needed. He said that this situation was not created by these Members, but they have to deal with it and controls need to be put in place to monitor, so that it doesn't happen again. Mr. Lindia and Mr. Tanner stated that they feel the Board is heading in the right direction.

#### **ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM THOSE ATTENDING VIA ZOOM:**

- **Carrie Horton** voiced concern regarding that it was three years before anybody caught it. It having been flagged by the Town auditors. She said that you get in a pickle like this by paying less money to a less qualified person. There are a lot of financial hardships now as all of our bills seem to be doubling and none of our wages seem to be doubling. She feels it would suit the Town well to hire professionals and consult with professionals in a lot of these different areas where we are handing over large sums of money and hoping for the best. Mr. Lindia explained that Lisa Lindia helps with the computer and that Joe Couture has been a great resource. He said that the Board is looking for good people who have knowledge and experience to help get things going right.

Mr. Tanner stated that there is a Meeting of the WPCA starting after this meeting and he invited the public to stay.

## **6. Adjournment**

Motion was made by D. Lindia to adjourn at 7:57 p.m.

Second by D. Stuyinski.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Perreault

Recording Secretary

Attachments:

- Brooklyn WPCA Public Hearing Presentation dated July 26, 2023
- Public Hearing Notice