

DENNIS WATER DISTRICT

Board of Water Commissioners

Minutes of Meeting held

April 16, 2020

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. C. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners, March 31, 2020 at 10:15am (Clerk's Note: Meeting date April 16, 2020 at 11:00 AM.) that would have been normally held at the Dennis Water District, 80 Old Bass River Rd, South Dennis, MA 02660 will be physically closed to the public and conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right to attend this meeting can be found on the Town of Dennis's website at www.town.dennis.ma. For this meeting members of the public who wish to listen to the meeting may do so by calling 712-770-5023 and enter the participant code of 364041: The meeting will be available for replay via Town of Dennis Channel 18. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post an audio recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting

A meeting, having been duly posted, was held this date at the Dennis Water District, 80 Old Bass River Rd., South Dennis and called to order by Paul F. Prue, Chairman at approximately 11:12 AM. Water Commissioners Peter L. McDowell and Alan Tuttle was present. Sheryl A McMahon, Treasurer was present.

Discuss and Consider Waiver of Interest on Past Due Bills

Chairman Prue recognized Ms. McMahon to provide an explanation for this agenda item. She stated that before she issued the Past Due notices she wanted to confer with the Board considering the charging of interest in light of the Governor's emergency orders regarding utility charging penalties and the shutting off for none payment due to the high unemployment rate due to the pandemic. She wanted to provide the Board the opportunity to decide if they wanted to waive the interest that would be charged on the Past Due Notices. She said that it is relatively minor interest based on 7% per annum on the amount that is 30 days past due. It is not daily interest as are real estate taxes. The amount of interest that would be assessed (based on prior year) would be approximately \$1,800.

This topic is somewhat related to the next item which is whether the Board wanted her to issue the Shut-Off Demand Notices that are always done. She said that it is a difficult time out there and she did not want to automatically issue the Demands considering what it might do to public relations. Mr. Tuttle inquired about an email he said Mr. Larkowski sent that states water cannot be shut-off. Ms. McMahon clarified by advising that the emergency order states that entities cannot turn off *residents* provided that the submit documentation that they have been adversely impacted by the pandemic (i.e. unemployment). She further reported that approximately 94% of customers have already paid their water bill. She said that the documentation requirement would essentially make her the arbitrator if someone was impacted or not. Ms. McMahon advised that customers issued a Shut-off Demand Notice are charged \$15 because they are by certified mail.

The Chair asked about future collection procedures. Ms. McMahon advised that in November she would still issue water liens to the Town Assessors. Water liens are generally past due balances from the prior year. Chairman confirmed that the District accepts partial payments for outstanding balances. She answered Mr. Tuttle's question regarding interest assessed on outstanding bills prior to the one

most recently issued. Mr. McDowell said that if the interest is eliminated why any would bother to pay their bills. He asked why if there is no interest there would be no incentive to pay the bill. Mr. Tuttle said this just intended to be a temporary thing. Ms. McMahon calculated that there were about 840 residents and business that have not paid the water bill that was due in March. Ms. McMahon said that the Board could waive the interest for one month, two month or no months. It was not an issue she was championing one way or the other. She only wanted the Board to consider that when the Past Due Notices are sent, they state that if the bill is not paid then the property will be shut off. This was an opportunity for the Board to make a decision before they are to be issued.

The Chairman felt that the District has always been user-friendly and have always tried to help people and that ultimately the District will not lose any money over all. Ms. McMahon clarified that the District would lose the interest that would have been charged. Mr. Tuttle felt that it is a temporary measure. He said that there are people not working now that have worked their entire lives and many are now living paycheck to paycheck. ***A motion was made by Alan Tuttle to waive the interest on past due balances for ninety (90) days. The motion was seconded by Paul F Prue. The motion passed by majority vote when the roll was called as follows:***

Alan Tuttle “aye”

Paul F Prue “aye”

Peter L. McDowell “no”

Discuss and Consider Waiving Shut-Off Notices and Demands – Discussion was part of preceding agenda item.

A motion was made by Alan Tuttle to suspend the shut-off demand process until September 1, 2020. The motion was seconded by Paul F Prue. Mr. Tuttle asked about the seasonal accounts. If they already have their meters out, why would they pay their bill. Ms. McMahon explained that these accounts are processed like every other account that is past due. Shut-Off Demand Notices are still issued and charged a fee of \$15. If they are still not paid, the \$40 shut-off order is charged. If it still remains unpaid, the seasonal meter will not be installed until the balance is paid in full. ***The motion passed by majority vote when the roll was called as follows:***

Alan Tuttle “aye”

Paul F Prue “aye”

Peter L. McDowell “no”

Adjournment - ***A motion was made by Alan Tuttle to adjourn the meeting at approximately 11:42 AM. The motion was seconded by Peter L. McDowell. The motion passed by unanimous vote when the roll was called as follows:***

Alan Tuttle “aye”

Paul F Prue “aye”

Peter L. McDowell “aye”

Respectfully submitted,

Sheryl A McMahon, Clerk