

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WOODRIDGE LAKE SEWER DISTRICT, SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2014, 10:30 A.M. WOODRIDGE LAKE CLUB HOUSE

CALL TO ORDER: Raymond A. Turri, President of the Board of Directors of the Woodridge Lake Sewer District called the Meeting to order at 10:35 A.M.

Prior to acting on the items on the agenda, Ray Turri recognized the Board members present who were Joan Lang, Bob Goldfeld, Jim Hiltz. Jim Mersfelder who was traveling over seas was unable to attend. Ray Turri expressed his appreciation of the present Board noting their time, dedication and commitment they give to the issues the Board has had to address and continues to address relative to the operations, financials, planning and the DEEP issues. Also acknowledged were the members of the Planning Committee and Operations Committee who work towards planning for the future while addressing the issues with the DEEP and the overall operations of the WLSD plant and system. Serving on that Committee is Chairman Ken Greene, Richard Reis Chip Roraback, Charlie Ekstrom, Jim Mersfelder and Bob Goldfeld. Ray Turri noted that he also attends those meeting. Serving on the Finance Committee are Richard Reis Chairman, Jim Mersfelder, Lou Frederick and Dwight Kellog. The Finance committee deals with the annual operations budget and looks for and oversees all the opportunities available for funding needed once it is clear what the direction the District must take with the DEEP.

Jim Mersfelder is chairman of the Operations Committee which monitors and controls the maintenance activities, flows and personnel matters. Ray Turri also noted John Kelley and Cynthia Barrett who serve as alternates on the Sewer Authority Board and Frank Gomes who attends the District meeting serving as Board Liaison between the District and the WLSD and the WLPOA.

Item #1 – Election of Officers and Directors to serve on the Board of Directors of the Woodridge Lake Sewer District, all to serve a one year term.

Nominated – Raymond A. Turri, President

James Mersfelder – Vice President/Treasurer

Joan M. Lang, Clerk

James Hiltz, Director

Robert Goldfeld, Director

Other nominations were called for, there being none, A MOTION WAS MADE BY Frank Gomes seconded by Thomas McKiernan that nominations be closed and the clerk cast one ballot for the list of nominated officers and directors of the Woodridge Lake Sewer District, all to serve a one year term.. SO VOTED

Item #2 – To elect two Directors of the Woodridge Lake Sewer District Sewer Authority to serve a three (3) year term. Term to expire, April 2017.

Nominated for re-election were Robert Goldfeld and Joan Lang. Other nominations were called for, there being none, A MOTION WAS MADE BY Tom McKiernan seconded by Barry Donaldson to elect Robert Goldfeld and Joan M. Lang to serve a three year term on the WLSDSA Board, term to expire April 2017, SO VOTED.

Item #3 – The setting of a date for the holding of the Annual Budget Meeting of the Woodridge Lake Sewer District for the adoption of the July 1, 2014/2015 Fiscal Year Budget of the WLSD. The Date of Saturday, May 24<sup>th</sup> 2014, 10:00 A.M. was recommended and **A MOTION WAS MADE BY** Al Schull, seconded by Ray Turri to set the date of Saturday, May 24, 2014 for the holding of the annual budget meeting of the WLSD, **SO VOTED**.

There were no other items on the agenda, but Ray Turri took the time to give the taxpayers present an update on what has transpired in the WLSD. Noted was the diligent efforts taken by the Board to keep taxpayers informed via e-mail, letters or meetings of any changes or happenings that the Board feels the taxpayers need to know. In August of 2013 the District provided DEEP with the proposal for the future development which included the two choices, one, a new plant at the existing facility site, the other, the DEEP selection of going to Torrington. DEEP was to review and report back to the District their decision. Meanwhile the District looked at means of funding of the major projects and through the tireless efforts of Jim Mersfelder a program was found with the Dept. of Agriculture called Rural Development. Through interviews with a representative from the USDA the District was able to apply for a grant and a low interest loan. The application of a few hundred pages was completed by Jim Mersfelder and Richard Reis with assistance from Ken Green. The District recently received verification of approval of the Grant and low interest loan. The Grant is a 45% grant with a 4% loan for 40 years. The State of CT also has a Small Town Clean Water Fund and Ray Turri & Ken Green attended a State Public Hearing on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April to talk about the Clean Water Small City Grants and Loans. Based on the fact that the State appropriation of \$9,500,000 for the next two years for small town grants was not enough, Ray Turri and Ken Green wrote a paper from the board which was presented by Ray Turri at that hearing. There were positive results from that hearing and the District has been told that the District would be monies available to the District which can help to augment the SCADA and I/I program. The District expects to be able to take bids on those two projects in the next few weeks, and hoping to start on them this summer.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, approximately eight months after submitting the report to the DEEP, the District received a letter from DEEP which gave the results of their investigation of the two proposals. The DEEP conclusion is that they would still like to have the District discharge to Torrington because they felt the time spent investigating whether the 93 acres of property would absorb the discharge effluent met their specifications and requirements. Yet, their requirements and specifications were set by them when the District did all the testing that the District spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to do the testing with some of it being State money.

On April 23, the District Planning Committee chaired by Ken Green met with all the members of the Committee, the Engineers from Woodard & Curran and the District Legal Counsel from Shipman & Goodwin of Hartford to plan a response to DEEP. DEEP requested a response to the letter before the 16<sup>th</sup> of May giving the District three weeks to respond while it took them eight months to respond to the report submitted by

the District. As a result of the Planning Committee meeting, Legal Counsel for the District was authorized by the District to send a letter to DEEP requesting to have a meeting with the Engineers of Woodard & Curran who did the original report that the DEEP is challenging. Also attending that meeting will be Ray Turri, Ken Green and Jim Mersfelder to see what the next step will be for the District. Going to Torrington will be a challenge, the cost of which is not quite double the cost to upgrade the existing facility. Ray Turri emphasized the fact that all being taxpayers, including those serving on the District Board are concerned about cost, and the future and want the best for the property and the taxpayers. Wanting no one to have to think about selling their home because they cannot afford to continue to live in the Woodridge Lake area, the Board and Planning Committee have been working diligently over the past four years with DEEP to make sure that that doesn't happen.

Ray Turri noted the surprise the Board had when Al Shull showed up to sit in on the monthly Board meeting, the Board was pleased to see him and wished more taxpayers of the District would take the time to see how things are going. It was again noted that the Board is pleased to have Frank Gomes serving as a Liaison for the WLPOA and attending the monthly meeting. An opportunity was given to receive questions or comments from the floor and Frank Gomes stated that he was impressed by the thoughtfulness and analysis that goes into the reports the Board receives and sends out and the work that is being done by the Plant Manager in overseeing the successful operations of the waste water collection system. Frank Gomes stated it has been a learning process for him and noted that he feels very comfortable with those who are running the District.

Question: Can the Grant dollars from the Federal as well as the State Clean Water Fund be used for both the onsite and the Torrington options? It was noted they could be used for both. Questioned was why the DEEP is reluctant to let the District continue to operate onsite. In answer to the question, Ray Turri noted that it is the objective of the State DEEP to consolidate the small plants and regionalize by sending the waste water to large plants. The District using the State specifications has to continue to work to prove to the State DEEP that everything can and will work, and the District has done that using the DEEP specifications and suddenly their specifications are not good enough and the District continues to challenge the position of DEEP.

Ray Turri talked of the history of the last four years of the operation of the Plant. At the time of the hiring of a Class IV Plant Manager the District had no employee who met the grade level to operate a treatment plant. Plant Manager Charlie Ekstrom, has done an excellent job in bringing in and mentoring three employees to the point that the District now has three licensed employees, two of which are Class III plant operators certified by the State to run the plant. The Plant Manager has worked diligently to take an old treatment facility which is in need of constant maintenance and running it successfully. It is the hope of the Board that he will be willing to continue working for the District for a little while longer.

Question: If the ultimate decision of DEEP is not to approve the plan, is there an authority above them that the District could turn to. Ray Turri stated that the District could go to Court. The District can appeal within the agency but if the appeal was denied, the only option for the District would be to go to court. Bob Goldfeld noted that he and he thinks most of the Board would like to challenge the DEEP to the bitter end but based on the fact the District is operating with a 40+ year old plant which has passed its normal life the District cannot count on the plant to continue to run successfully through five or more years of litigation. Ray Turri noted the work that is being done by an engineering firm relative to the inspection of all the in ground metal tanks to determine their current condition.

Question: It the process of tying into Torrington a one time cost or would there be cost down the road? Ray Turri noted the contracts that the towns of Harwinton and Litchfield have with Torrington to accept influent from those two system. If the District were to put in a collection system to go to Torrington, the District will negotiate a contract with Torrington. The cost to get to Torrington will be a one time cost, the cost of operating per individual will be based on numbers that Torrington will come up with. It was noted that the average sewer bill for Torrington residents is less that \$400.00 a year. In going to Torrington, the District would still have to have a holding facility, pump stations and a potential for at least two employees. Ken Green addressed the Capital Cost and Operating cost that Torrington would have to do to be in compliance with DEEP requirements in order for Torrington to the take the wastewater from Woodridge Lake and the District would be responsible to pick up their share of the cost.

Al Shull reported that having attended a meeting of the District Board that he too was impressed with the work they are doing. He stated that no matter what direction the District goes, there will be a large bill and questioned how the cost will be distributed among the users of the system. As it stands now, the District is funded by taxes raised through property assessment, and asked if other methods are being looked at, will there be a meeting to discuss the issue, will there be an advanced notice of the meeting and what will be discussed at the meeting.

Ray Turri stated that the Board would do nothing as to how it would be supported financially until there was a meeting with the property owners. Everyone will have the opportunity to be present, property owners will be notified by mail, legal notice will be published as well as e-mails being sent. There will be much forewarning.

Ray Turri stated that all the possibilities would be talked about at such time as the Board knows what the cost are and where the District is going. The May 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Budget Meeting is for the approval of the Operating cost of the District for the next Fiscal Year which runs from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015. Questioned was who makes the final decision as to the method to be used to raise the necessary funds. Ray Turri stated that the CT Statutes under regulations for Municipalities state, the Board Votes and the Board can direct which way it goes.

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Question: Could there be a referendum to negate the State Statute and pass a resolution that would allow the entire community to vote on the issue? Ray Turri stated that it is a State Statute governing Municipalities and does not believe that a referendum could change it. It will be a matter to be looked into.

There were those present who expressed their displeasure that the whole community would not get to vote on the issue and Ray Turri emphatically stated that the whole Board is also a part of the community, it will affect everyone and it is the intention of the Board to make it as palatable as they possible can for everyone, it is all of us working together.

There was no other business to come before the meeting. Ray Turri called for adjournment and the meeting adjourned at 11:30 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

WOODRIDGE LAKE SEWER DISTRICT

Joan M. Lang, Clerk