

MINUTES

Dover Utilities Commission

Public Works Facility Conference Room - 271 Mast Road

Monday, January 24, 2005, at 4:15 p.m.

Chairperson: Jay Stephens
Vice Chairperson: Vacant
Members Present: Roland Hofemann, Arthur Hoffman, Dan Ayer, Roland Hofemann
Members Absent: Dave Lippmeier, Jay Stephens
Staff Present: Pete Lavoie, Community Services Director, Jamie McCulloch, DUC Secretary, Doug Steele, Superintendent, Sharon Lucey, Meter/Backflow Coordinator

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. November 15, 2004

Motion: Hoffman made a motion to approve the minutes with the following correction. Page 2, Item 2B, it should read: Bowen stated that his *house is located in the middle of his lot*, so he is unable to subdivide, not his *lot line*. Belhumeur seconded the motion. Vote U/A.

2. ABATEMENTS

A. Jeri Vandebosch - 37-39 Forest Street - Ms. Vandebosch stated that the meter was changed and her tenant did not tell her that it was changed. She stated that on October 26, 2004, she received her high bill. She stated that she called her maintenance man and he checked all of the pipes etc., and found a water hose running outside. She stated that the tenant then told her that the Water Department had been there to change the meter. She said that she checked the inside reading and from 10/5 to 10/26 it only read 15.52 HCF. She stated that the amount of water billed for as having entered he home is exorbitant and the water did not enter the sewer collection system. She handed out an information packet to the board members. She stated that she agreed to pay 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ times her normal bill. She stated that she was offered an abatement from the Abatement Review Team of \$569.96, while referencing our abatement letter. She stated that in the decision letter the City stated that she used 30.04 HCF in 30-days, adding that the City used the figures during the time the outside hose was running.

Ayer stated that there were two issues to deal with. The first issue is the meter change out and the second is the garden hose. Lucey stated that there was a discrepancy between the inside and outside reading.

Ayer stated that during the meter change out there was a discrepancy, and the 80-unit abatement allowed by the City was offered, if the decision by the team was not contested. Lucey explained her working papers. Ayer stated that the bigger element is that the water went through the meter and there was a discrepancy. He stated that hypothetically, looking at the history and usage, you could say the difference between .64 and .53, would be the amount that went through the garden hose. Hoffman stated that the hose running would amount to roughly \$89.61. Ms. Vandebosch stated that she read the reading from the time period of 10/5 through 10/26, 21 days, and the usage was 15.52 HCF, and was .739 when the water was going through the hose. Ayer stated that between .73-.53, that difference went through the meter and out the garden hose. He stated that the board could grant an additional abatement, but it would not amount to very much.

There was some discussion.

Sharon went through the history with Ms. Vandebosch.

Motion: Hoffman made the motion to grant an abatement for the difference between .73 and .53, which is .20 units off sewer, which comes to \$80.00, as the water did not enter the sewer collection system.
Seconded by Belhumeur. Vote U/A.

B. Alvin & Linda Lightner - 25 Durrell Street - Mr. & Mrs. Lightner were present to speak on behalf of their abatement. Ms. Lightner stated that the request is cut and dry, the meter was changed, she received a \$2,500.00 bill and she called within 2 days after receiving that bill. She stated that the bill represents 5 times their normal usage in 8 years. She stated that the new meter now reads 21-units, which baffles her. She stated that the estimated bills usually corresponded with their normal usage of 15-18 units. She stated that she felt the bill was unjust as the meter was not working, and wasn't working three years ago, and questioned why it wasn't fixed before or found out about before now.

Ayer stated that the reading on the new meter is 21-units and the amount registering on the master meter shows 21-units as well. He stated that the high bill is a make up bill. Ayer stated that he understood the applicant's feelings, but that the bills are generated by the master meter readings. Ms. Lightner asked when it is the City's responsibility to change the meter, and how they can go back and charge for three years prior.

There was some discussion.

It was mentioned that an abatement in the amount of almost \$1,500.00 was recommended by Sharon Lucey, which would leave a balance due of \$1,063.61. Ms. Lightner stated that they feel they are being penalized because the meter stopped working three years ago. Ayer stated that a payment plan with the Finance office is always an option for the applicants. Lucey stated that twice a year the City sends out the Community Notes newsletter, and within that mailing are reminders for homeowners to check their toilets etc. Ayer stated that it's a good idea for homeowners to get in the practice of checking the meter readings.

Motion: Belhumeur stated that he would uphold the abatement recommended by the Abatement Review Team of \$1,469.16. Seconded by Hoffman.
Vote U/A.

Hoffman mentioned to the homeowners that the board tries to look for ways to find a reason behind these issues. It was relayed to the homeowners that there would be no interest on the bill in question from the date of their abatement to the meeting date 1/24/2005, and that if they chose to, they could contact the Finance Office to set up a payment plan.

B. Lee Hunsaker - 76 Bellamy Road - Mr. Hunsaker was present to speak on behalf of his abatement. Mr. Hunsaker stated that he never knew there was an outside meter. He stated that he sent in the cards showing his meter readings, all but a few of them. He stated that there are fewer people living in the home, they have two sinks and a bathtub. He stated that the spike says to him that the meter went wacko.

Ayer asked Mr. Hunsaker if he sent in the meter reading cards within the past year. Hunsaker stated yes, within the last 2 years or so. Lucey went through her paperwork with Hunsaker. Hunsaker stated that the City says the master meter is correct and he says it is not. Ayer stated that the meter tested between 89%-100%, which means 11% of the water used at the residence was free, according to the test guidelines. He stated that the bill in question is a catch up bill, and that is where the difference lies. Hunsaker stated, look at our averages over the last 9-years, that is reflecting what we are using now. Ayer stated that what Mr. Hunsaker was billed did not reflect the master meter. Hunsaker stated that the board is assuming that he used more water than what he was billed for. Ayer explained what a discrepancy is and how that creates a make up bill. There was some discussion. Ayer stated that per Lucey, the meter page was not available and she would like to review it. Ayer suggested tabling the abatement to allow Lucey to research the meter page.

Motion: Hofemann made the motion to table the abatement to research the meter reading page. Belhumeur asked if the \$834.58 abatement was based on the 89% accuracy of the meter. Lucey stated no, it is based on the total units from the inside readings. Hoffman asked Hunsaker if he ever contacted the City and questioned his bill in 2001 when he received a bill with a balance due of zero. Hunsaker stated no, he probably assumed the City over billed him in a previous billing. Hoffman seconded the motion. Vote U/A.

Lavoie asked the board to give Lucey and himself permission to research the meter page and have Lucey workout the abatement with Hunsaker, so that he would not have to return to the board. It was mentioned that if the situation satisfies the requirements with Pete, the board accept Pete's discretion. All members voted yes. It was noted that if Hunsaker was unhappy with the ending decision given by Lucey and Lavoie, he may return to the DUC.

3. **REPORTS**

A. **Utilities Report**

Sewer: No violations at the WWTP. The New UV system is now complete. Charles Street pump station upgrade has been awarded to Keymont Construction. Design of re-routing the Varney Brook force main has been awarded to Wright Pierce Engineers. There was a sewer force main break at the Varney Brook force main on New Years Eve.

Water: No bacteria problems. Pilot testing for the Bouchard Well occurred in December. Repaired water main breaks at Crescent City Bistro and in front of Dunkin Donuts on Central Avenue in December.

B. **Abatement Review Team**

None.

4. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

5. **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

6. **Adjournment**

Motion: Belhumeur made the motion to adjourn at 5:45 pm. Seconded by Hoffman. Vote U/A.

DUC - February 21, 2005

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie McCulloch

DUC Secretary