

Village of Coxsackie

Public Hearing Minutes

Water & Sewer Rate Review

June 19, 2023

Mark Evans called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Present were Trustee Donald Daoust, Trustee Rodney Levine and Trustee Rebecca Vermilyea. Trustee Katlyn Irwin was absent.

Mayor Evans stated that the purpose of this meeting is to review the current water and sewer rates and discuss the rate increase for all users. He said that the Village has not had a rate increase in a couple of years, and when the Village has looked into a rate increase in the past, they had asked Mary Beth Bianconi, of Delaware Engineering, to do an evaluation for them. That is once again what the Board asked of Mary Beth Bianconi for this rate change. It is a simple issue of whether or not the Village is bringing in enough revenue based upon the amount of water that is being sold. As with anything, the expenses related to water and sewer have increased dramatically over the last couple of years during Covid. Chemical supply costs have gone through the roof. The Village has even had to change some chemicals because they have not been available. So, it has been quite a struggle to keep those operating costs down. The Village has not added any significant upgrades, vehicles, or change in personnel, outside of the upgrade that was made to the Sewer Plant and sewer system. So, this rate increase is unfortunately just to keep pace with the expenses that they are experiencing. He stated that the water rate for village residents is currently \$8.14/1,000 gallons, and the proposed increase would be \$10.18/1,000 gallons. The water rate for Town of Coxsackie residents, Town of New Baltimore residents, and the Greene County Jail is currently \$10.18/1,000 gallons, and the proposed increase would be \$12.73/1,000 gallons. The water rate for the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) is currently \$8.56/1,000 gallons, and the proposed increase would be \$10.70/1,000 gallons. He stated that the sewer rate for village residents is currently \$4.33/1,000 gallons, and the proposed increase would be \$5.67/1,000 gallons. The sewer rate for Town of Coxsackie residents, Town of New Baltimore residents, and the Greene County Jail is currently \$5.41/1,000 gallons, and the proposed increase would be \$7.09/1,000 gallons. The sewer rate for DOCCS is currently \$5.41/1,000 gallons, and the proposed increase would be \$6.11/1,000 gallons. Just for historical information, the residents in the towns, as well as the County Jail, pay 25% more than what village residents pay. That historically has been to help pay for the infrastructure that the Village has invested in over time. Regarding the correctional facilities, there are a lot of contracts in place between the Village and DOCCS for the water and sewer, and for infrastructure that have been there historically over time for various projects. So, regarding the water, DOCCS uses about 40% of the water that the Village produces, and about 60% of the sewer capacity that the Village has. They do compensate the Village accordingly for everyday costs, as well as project costs. So, for instance, when the Wastewater Plant Upgrade Project was completed, it was overall a \$17 million dollar project. DOCCS will very shortly, now that after two years a contract has been signed, be making a payment of \$9 million dollars to the Village to reduce the overall cost. Unfortunately, what happens is that money comes to the Village, and then goes right out the door and goes to the Environmental Facilities Corporation, which is where the Village gets their money for water and sewer projects.

Anita Hynes stated that at least it is cheaper of an increase than the residents' taxes.

Malinda Purdy asked if the Board is raising the rates based on the new development coming in.

Mayor Evans stated that this increase has nothing to do with development. The increase is simply based on the Village's costs. Water and sewer are all based on user fees, so there is no tax money involved. The Board tries to keep those funds as lean as they possibly can. They do try to keep fund balances, so that at the end of the year they don't have things down to zero. However, the Village's costs have just increased dramatically in the last few years. Things like electric,

chemical costs, fuel, etc. have all gone up.

Veronica Foley asked if these numbers were shared prior to today in any form.

Nikki Berezna, Clerk, stated that there was a presentation given at the Special Meeting held on May 22nd, but the spreadsheet was not posted publicly.

Veronica Foley stated that she looked at the Special Meeting minutes and she thought that they would be listed in there, but it just states that the purpose of the meeting was to review the current water and sewer rates and discuss potential rate increases. She said that she would find it helpful that if there were discussion about the rates, that they be reflected in the minutes. This way people can at least learn about what the proposed increases look like prior to the Public Hearing. That also would align with the Open Meetings Law.

Malinda Purdy stated that not everybody has Facebook, or knowledge to get on. She asked how the meetings are advertised to the village residents. She asked what communication the Village is doing. She said that residents are not getting notified unless they are on Facebook or by word of mouth.

Nikki Berezna, Clerk, stated that meetings are posted in the Catskill Daily Mail newspaper, on the Village of Coxsackie website, and on the Village of Coxsackie Facebook page.

Malinda Purdy asked if the Village does letters to the community.

Nikki Berezna, Clerk, stated that the Village does not send routine letters out to the community regarding meetings.

Mary Beth Bianconi, of Delaware Engineering, stated that there is no legal requirement to do letters to residents regarding routine meetings. It is participatory government, so it is up to the public to do their due diligence and show up to the meetings.

Malinda Purdy stated that she is coming to the meetings, but this is all new to her. She is asking on behalf of other residents. She knows that a lot of people didn't even know that there was a meeting tonight. A lot of people don't have that knowledge. A lot of people don't purchase the paper nowadays. That is why she was asking about communication with the public.

Anita Hynes asked why the Village can't use the sign out in front of the Village Building.

Mayor Evans stated that the Village can use the sign out front. They try to put as many messages as they can out there.

Anita Hynes stated that a meeting seems pretty important, and she has never seen it on the sign out front.

Mayor Evans stated that this meeting should have been last week, but he was away for a work-related conference, and the Board decided that they wanted to wait until this week to have the meeting.

Anita Hynes stated that there was never a message on the sign related to the meeting. Nobody ever knows unless they get the paper, go on Facebook, or go online all of the time and check the website. Older people do not go online or have Facebook.

Mayor Evans stated that the Board is open to any suggestions on how the Village can reach older people.

Anita Hynes stated that her suggestion is to use the sign that the Village has out front.

Mayor Evans stated that currently people wanted to have the NY Forward Grant posted on the sign.

Anita Hynes stated that that message has been there on the sign for a while. It is not like that is something new.

Mayor Evans stated that the message has been posted for several days. The Village is in an "Open Call" for projects right now, and tomorrow night is the first Public Outreach Meeting at the C-A High School. That is the information that is on the sign. The Village takes advantage of the sign the best they can. A lot of people have asked the Village why they don't put an electronic sign up, but it is not allowed per the Village Code. Years ago, when the Comprehensive Plan was done, they decided that nobody wanted any electronic signs.

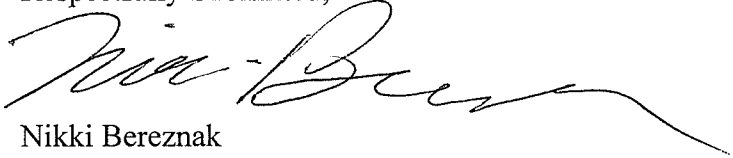
Mary Beth Bianconi, of Delaware Engineering, stated that the Village's meetings are routine. They are always the Board Meeting is always the second Monday of the month, and the Workshop Meeting is always the Thursday prior. That rarely changes, and if it does there is a notice in the paper.

No further public comments were offered.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Trustee Levine and seconded by Trustee Vermilyea. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Levine voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nikki Berezna", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nikki Berezna
Clerk