

Mary Lou McFadden brought the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Public Works Department Heads present:

Tom Dolph / Streets Superintendent, Greg Parrish / Water Superintendent

Public Works Committee members present:

Mary Lou McFadden (chair), Laurel Kuczynski, Don Reinke, Ernie Summers, John Wall.
Scott Popp and Rick Remijas attended via Zoom.

Others present: Chief Swistek, Town Administrator; Clerk Tim Perry and resident Zafar Rizvi / zoom

Approval of September 26, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Ernie S. made motion to approve; Laurel 2nd / all in favor

Water Department Field Report (Greg Parrish)

All meters have been read for October; all water samples were completed and came back clean.
All fire hydrants have been serviced and are operating well; no issues with any of them.
Water has been shut off in all Long Beach parks; residents have begun requesting seasonal shut-offs.
Locates for construction throughout Town are slowing down for the season.

Water Department Old Business

Two old business issues were discussed: vacant lots and Lake Shore Drive upgrades project.

Follow-up re: last month's vacant lots discussion

Town's accountant Karl Cender was invited to attend this meeting via zoom. Karl began by referencing Indiana's statute re: water utilities vs. sewer utilities. Towns with sewer utilities can require property owners within 300 feet of the sewer collection line to connect. He does not believe there is such a requirement under a water utility. Typically, is it voluntary if/when property owners connect to a town's water system. With that in mind, if people are not required to connect, common practice in most water utilities is that no fees are charged for services unless the owners have opted to connect to the water utility. Karl added that some utilities also allow residents who have second homes and leave for the winter to pay to disconnect services until they return (and then they pay to reconnect).

Mary Lou explained the reason we are revisiting this issue is because in Long Beach, there are currently ten vacant buildable lots that already have water taps; Town's rates ordinance does not separate these properties from all other properties with taps. Therefore, historically, new property owners have been charged for all services as soon as they purchase a buildable lot with a tap.

In April 2021, Town added charges for two new services to the Town/Water monthly invoice, a Town charge for the stormwater utility, and a Water charge for a fire protection fee. Town has recently decided that all vacant lots in Long Beach (with or without taps) will be charged for these land-specific services. Review of similar practices in other Indiana communities brought to light, however, that it is NOT common practice to charge property owners who have vacant lots for all other services.

In light of these concerns, Mary Lou made the following suggestion:

After purchasing any Long Beach lot, all new property owners will be charged for Stormwater and Fire Protection services. Anyone purchasing a vacant lot (with or without tap) can choose to add Town's Refuse/Leaf pickup service. Anyone with a vacant lot with a tap can choose to connect to the water utility; at that point, they will be charged by Water for a one-time tap fee. Water's monthly base charge, metered water charge, and local capital charge would automatically be added to their account. If they have not already added Town's refuse/leaf pickup charge, that would also be added.

Mary Lou asked Karl for his opinion; Karl agreed that requiring Stormwater and Fire Protection for all property was reasonable; allowing vacant lot owners to choose whether to add Refuse/Leaf was reasonable; and for owners of vacant lots with taps, Karl agreed that allowing these owners to choose when they would connect to the water utility and to pay a tap fee at that time was also reasonable. After Karl's comments, Lynne (Water) added that for any current customers who own vacant lots with taps, their account going forward would be brought into uniformity. Mary Lou asked if there was a motion to approve this proposal.

Laurel made a motion to approve.

John Wall then stated that before the committee went any farther, he had questions/issues. First he asked about whether these lots were adjacent to a resident's home? Lynne reviewed the two types of vacant lots in question, regardless of whether or not the owner was already living in Long Beach. John then said he was confused because this topic was discussed in the last meeting and he thought we had come to an agreement, so why was it being raised again. Lynne responded to say it was because no vote was taken and also Karl Cender's advice was available to us today. John repeated that, regardless, the committee had already discussed this issue last time. Of specific concern to John was the local capital charge that was added to all accounts in 2006 for a twenty-year period. The local capital charge is for repayment of the SRF monies used for Long Beach water infrastructure improvement in 2006. John repeated his opinion from the September meeting that everyone who owns property in Long Beach should have a responsibility for repayment of this loan, with or without a water tap.

The second issue John had was his opinion that Long Beach has a tendency to fix things that aren't broken and he asked how many people actually have a problem with paying for all Long Beach services when they have a vacant lot. Lynne said that Water has received complaints about it from at least 50% of both the current and past owners of these ten lots (and she doesn't know whether the other owners complained before she began working for Water).

Rick Remijas asked for clarification also, regarding what is actually on these vacant lots – Lynne said the water tap is there but there is no water available until the water meter goes in and the water is turned on. John reiterated that these property owners should pay for at least the local capital charge. And then he commented that leaves blow on those lots, and asked how Town would police those who uses the leaf pickup service. And what about people who go away for the winter – what if they also complain? Mary Lou reminded John that we are only discussing property owners who do not have a home on the lot; all snowbirds pay for all services all year long. Mary Lou added that we have reached out to Trail Creek and Michigan City and they do not charge those kinds of fees for vacant lots. John asked if we have pictures of these lots to see whether or not they have landscaping and whether or not they are raking leaves. John thinks that giving property owners of vacant lots the option to sign on for leaf pickup would have to be policed. Lynne commented that Streets could let us know if a vacant lot owner is clearly using leaf pickup; if so, we would contact them and add the service to their account.

Rick Remijas asked to proceed with the motion. Don Reinke 2nd the motion. Karl Cender asked to add another comment before the vote. He said that some towns address the capitol charge issue for lots that have not connected to the water utility by adding a “system development fee” at the time of connection to the water service. Lynne asked Karl for clarification regarding this being allowed by Indiana code, and that it would be billed along with the tap fee that is charged at the time of connection. Karl said that was correct. Lynne asked if he could approximate how large the fee would be. Karl said the fee would be specifically calculated by Long Beach based on our system, and that there are a number of factors that would be included; in some communities it is in the range of our existing tap fee. Scott Popp also asked if the fee was a one-time fee; Karl said that is correct.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed 6-1; all were in favor except John Wall. The committee will make a recommendation to the Town Council and go forward from there. Rick R. asked if we should also consider the system development fee; Mary Lou suggested that she would look into this with Karl’s guidance and bring this back to the committee at a later date.

Lake Shore Drive upgrades for 2023

Because the sewer project was cancelled and Water’s upgrade project had been piggybacked with it, the Water project is now delayed until 2023. However, to get 2022 prices for materials, Greg has contacted suppliers for materials that can be ordered now but delivered/invoiced in 2023. The lowest bid for materials came in at \$144,295. The 2022 budget covers this cost; Greg asked Laurel and John to confirm with the Budget & Finance committee that the monies will be carried over to the 2023 budget.

The need to contact the residents who have obstructions in the right of way was also revisited. Last April, the Water Department prepared a detailed letter to residents regarding their responsibility for removal of any obstructions; those letters were put on hold because John Wall was concerned that the message be consistent with the one that would eventually be sent to sewer project residents. Now that the Water project will precede the sewer project in 2023, the issue of consistent message will be reviewed when Water is ready to mail them out.

Streets Department Old Business (Tom Dolph)

- Stop 17 drainage project is still ongoing; no relevant update.
- Regarding 2022/23 CCMG – should have heard back by first week in October, but are still waiting.
- Asset management plan is due December 1st; Hass will work with them to prepare that.
- Leaf Pickup dates are 10/31 through 12/2. Leaves must be at street no later than Sunday 10/27. Final one-time pass through will start on Monday 28th. They will stick to this schedule.

Public Works Old Business (Mary Lou McFadden)

1) Public Works Board Members

Town Council voted to increase the number of members to seven to include all who wanted to be on it.

2) Capital Plan 2023

John said there is really not much to bring to this committee; more informational in nature of issues that will be reviewed on December 1. John gave a brief update re: salt storage and retaining wall at Water Tower.

Streets Department New Business

There was no new business for Street.

Water Department New Business – Payment / Billing Adjustments 09.22.22 - 10.19.22

Lynne reviewed this month's payment/billing adjustments; reminded committee that she runs a report from Utility data base that is public record and available in the office for review. This month she reversed late charges as allowed.

Anything from the floor

Zafar Rizvi had a question regarding leaf pickup; other communities allow residents to bag leaves and have waste management pick them up – why isn't this allowed in Long Beach. He also questioned why Town charges for leaf pickup every month when it only happens for a month each year. Zafar thinks Town needs to always consider what is truly necessary and to do what it takes to keep costs down. John said we charge only for what is needed. Tom Dolph reviewed the history of leaf pickup and why bags are not allowed – unfortunately, when they were allowed, trash was too often mixed in with the leaves (and contents were not always safe - a hypothermic needle was once found). The goal is to compost the leaves and bagging leaves does not allow for this. Republic Services requires that all leaves go to a specific composting site.

Motion to Adjourn made by Laurel; Rick R. 2nd. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:47.

Next Meeting: November 28, 2022

(Note: Due to Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, the 11/28 and 12/26 meetings were cancelled. Next meeting was rescheduled to 1/23/23.)
