

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE AND FIREWISE BOARD MEETING FOR THE
VILLAGE OF TAOS SKI VALLEY, NEW MEXICO
HELD ON MAY 1, 2023 (VIA ZOOM) at 10:00 AM**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 and notice of meeting announced.

Members present included Trudy DiLeo, Henry Caldwell, Jim Woodard, Kent Kiehl and Mitch Daniels.

Public Safety:

While waiting for members to log on, Kent Kiehl provided a link to a remote read water monitor made by Moen that detects leaks and can remotely shut the water off if the owner detects a leak. These will work inside the home only (not in the service line from the water mainline to the home). Jim Woodard said that there was another monitor made by Flologic that also had a battery (that should last about a week), so it would work if the power was out.

Trudy DiLeo gave an update as to the progress of getting Amizette residents on the south side of the highway to sign easements for Kit Carson to bury overhead power lines to help prevent wildfires in the area. Only 2 residents (Eichenberg and Gauthier) have not sent their easements in. Trudy and Henry have been in touch with these folks, and hopefully, we will receive their easements in the next couple of weeks.

Jalmar explained that turnoff valves inside the house may not be mandated by the state inspector, and that it is probably up to the individual supplier of water (the village). He stated that currently turnoff valves are not required by the Village. Anthony Martinez did not remember reading any requirements for this. Jalmar stated that, because of our environment, he wasn't sure if a turnoff valve would be possible in every situation. He reiterated that what the Village is requiring (in order to get a discount if a resident has a leak) is a remote read monitor. Anthony mentioned that a resident on Upper Twining has the Moen monitor, and this resident is able to shut the water off remotely. Jalmar stated that 'incentivizing' residents to get the remote monitors is preferable to him, rather than requiring turnoff valves across the board. He stated that the majority of homes in our village are seldom occupied and he thinks that having remote ability to turn off the water is a better choice in our situation.

Anthony mentioned that every situation is different and he stated that in the case of Tom McCullough's home, where there is a turnoff valve in the mechanical room inside, that a remote monitor would have to be placed on the 'house' side of the turnoff valve, so would not have much benefit when the home was not occupied and the turnoff valve was off. Trudy agreed saying it would only help them if they had a leak while they were there. She said the policy of having a discount in case of a water leak only if the resident had a monitor would not help in their situation. Anthony also reminded everyone that the remote monitors need electricity and a WIFI connection to operate and that this might not be ideal in every situation.

Michael Chandler brought up the issue of the property owners being responsible for the 'service line' from the water main to the interior plumbing. He stated that the water system has to be redone and that most of the service lines will need to be replaced by individual residents. He stated that when the water main is replaced, it will be installed deeper than it is now. This means that all the 'tap ins' to the service lines will need to be deeper as well. He stated that one of the village's biggest liabilities is where service lines are not protected. He stated the only way to detect a leak in a service

line is to have a monitor in 'the can' in the road close to the meter. He reiterated Anthony's note that these would need electricity and WIFI connection, which is difficult in many situations. He also stated that residents should be willing to spend money on their service lines, or they will spend money when they get a water leak.

Michael asked if a 'rebuild' done recently in the village was required to replace their service line to the water main. Jalmar said that they did replace it. Michael said that it should be mandated that service lines be replaced, or recertified, when homes are built.

Henry Caldwell stated that we have identified that the village has 120 residential homes that have service lines that are over 40 years old. He stated that it is catastrophic when these lines break and leak. He proposed our committee recommend to Council to mandate that every service line over 40 years old be replaced. He also stated that water turnoffs (manual or remote) should also be mandated in each home. He said that even though folks think their homes are heated, etc., that heat does go out and pipes freeze and burst. They frequently are not detected for a while. He said that, at times, mandating is the way to do it, that 'incentivizing' does not always get the job done.

Kent Kiehl agreed with Henry and thought that the village should give each resident a year or so to remedy these problems. He stated that we may need to bring the building code up to date to require these things. He said that maybe we could have the village waive the permit fee to replace the service line.

John Avila stated that Public Works needs to be the lead in this process. He said that indeed, we have many old lines. However, we don't know if every one is leaking. He thinks the village can help get the process started by asking the Council to waive any permit fees.

Jalmar mentioned that service lines are not part of the building codes. He stated that in 2011, the village created a document, Appendix 1A. This formalized how service lines were to be done, so we shouldn't have any issues with buildings newer than 2011. Copper lines are required on service lines, so that Public Works can 'dethaw' them when necessary. There are a lot of regulations in this document.

Anthony stated the specific 'rebuild' home in question by Michael was required to install a new service line at a deeper level. Michael had some questions and concerns about meters installed. Anthony said that it is very difficult to dig up meters to replace them. Meters, with the 'can' around them, are not guaranteed to not freeze. Michael said that homeowners should always provide access to water meter covers on their property so that Public Works personnel have easy access to the top of the 'can' over the meter.

Jalmar mentioned that in our environment, all of the meters and 'cans' are subject to freezing. He also clarified that the frost line in our village varies in different locations depending on various things (water in the soil, geography of specific locations, etc.). He stated that other factors mentioned in Appendix 1A assist in helping to prevent the freezing of lines. He agreed that it would be beneficial to request residents replace old service lines, but that it would be a burden for some residents. Michael interrupted Jalmar and said that the 'burden' is when the entire village is left without water in the middle of the winter because the village did not certify that one homeowner's line wasn't not deep enough. He stated that the entire village, including administration is left with the real burden of dealing with leaks.

There was a discussion of 'meters' and 'monitors'. Henry mentioned that the main idea of monitors is to isolate where a leak is. Tom McCullough asked if it was possible for individual homeowners to get devices like the Public Works personnel have, so that they could keep an eye on their meter to check for differences in flow. John Avila reiterated the benefits of remote monitors and said that the village was having one installed at the office to get experience with it firsthand. He requested that homeowners share their information with the committee as they are installed around

the village. He also stated that if a monitor read for water use was different than what the village reads, that issue could be addressed.

Trudy asked for more of a discussion on Henry's idea to mandate service lines over 40 years old be replaced. Anthony said that the village could definitely look at changing the policy to include that. Henry said that this winter was disastrous with the multiple failures at different points in our system. He said we are past the point of asking folks and we need to require these improvements as that is the only way they will get done in any kind of reasonable time frame. Anthony said that it would be difficult to test every service line in the village. Trudy asked at what age, do we want to require service lines be replaced? Jalmar suggested that we test service lines after remote readers are installed in homes built before 2011, or if the home currently has a turnoff valve.

Trudy asked John if the village has staff to assess each home individually. The homeowner would then be responsible for needed repairs. He said he would have to meet with Anthony on that. He said that Public Works might need additional staffing.

John Avila said that he reported the issue of a segment of gas lines needing to be placed deeper. He will follow up on that. Henry asked if the homeowner was responsible and John said that he surmised that New Mexico Gas Company did not specify the correct depth in the road before they got to private property to the company that placed the line.

Anthony gave an update on the water situation. Only one home currently does not have water. This home is in the middle of a line that will be replaced on Cliffhanger Loop.

John Avila talked about utilizing our GIS system, that could be married to another program, to help the Public Works personnel locate water and other utility lines.

There was a discussion about the water rate increase that was discussed at the last Council meeting. Henry gave a summary of problems with the funding of our water system currently. He said we had a \$335,000. shortfall just on the basic operations for the water system. The way the budget was written, the village would take that money out of the general fund. He said that the water system should be an 'enterprise' system that funds itself, and stands on its own. He said that we would need a 36% increase in water rates just to cover operations. This would not even include additional funding for reserves for repairs, maintenance, or replacement of the system down the line. This is why we are begging for money from the state because we have never put any money away for the eventual replacement of the system. Trudy stated that the committee should recommend to Council to support the rate increase talked about by Henry and asked for feedback from the other members. Jim Woodard agreed.

Kent Kiehl brought up a situation that involved his property being used as part of a public hiking trail through the village. There was discussion of having a bridge go over the Rio Hondo instead of having hikers walk through the river, at their own risk. Kent thinks this is a public safety issue and he talked to Patrick Nicholson about this. Patrick said it would take years to get a permit from the Forest Service to build a bridge. Kent said this area is steep and he thinks hikers will go on various private properties to cross the river somewhere else, besides at the trail. He recommended that the committee walk this trail to see it. He considered that an avalanche fence may be needed. Patrick has funds to work on the trail presently. Originally, with the previous mayor, a bridge was planned over the river. Trudy agreed that a bridge was needed. John Avila said that some fencing and signs were in the plans to dissuade hikers from going on private land, though that would not be completely preventable. Kent would like the committee to recommend a bridge be put in. John said that we should start the permitting process regardless. Jalmar said the Forest Service has a very long lead time in years to get a bridge in. Trudy asked if the village could build the bridge with the Forest Service's approval. Trudy asked why the trail is going on private property at all and Jalmar said it was the geography of the area. Trudy and Kent agreed to walk the area.

Firewise Board:

We talked about the recent avalanche study that was done by Chris Wilbur. There was a discussion of competing interests in Firewise concerns and avalanche concerns. Jalmar said that he will confer with the avalanche engineers when looking at tree thinning with the NFL grant this summer.

Jalmar gave an update to the NFL grant. He is hoping to get a favorable response from the state in the next month or so, then we can begin thinning trees.

Trudy said that residents who applied for a cost-sharing program called 'Healthy Forests' with the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District should hear from them in early June. Jalmar said he will coordinate the NFL grant tree thinning with the Healthy Forests tree thinning.

Trudy spoke about having a table/tent for a Firewise display at the 4th of July parade this year, and asked if anyone thought it was worthwhile. Jim said that in the past, the Fire Department laid out some equipment that the kids played with. He also said that it may be part of the requirement for Firewise. Henry said maybe we could have some information about water monitors there as well.

Trudy reported on a meeting she attended via Zoom with the Taos County Firewise committee. She spoke with John Avila about wood chippers. John Avila talked about work he is doing to set up 'curbside' chipping in the village for a week in September. This would involve small items from trimming, not big trees. Mitch Daniels said he is waiting on more information about that.

Trudy asked about the village having a BAER plan. Mitch said he would look into that.

Jalmar said he would check to see if the CWPP is on the village website.

Anthony said that a slash pile near the trash dumpster would be set up for residents in the coming days.

Trudy said the next meeting would be on June 5th at 10:00 via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00.

(Minutes recorded by Trudy DiLeo)