

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE AND FIREWISE BOARD MEETING
FOR THE VILLAGE OF TAOS SKI VALLEY, NEW MEXICO
HELD ON JUNE 5, 2023 (VIA ZOOM) at 10:00 AM**

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

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

Public Safety Committee:

Trudy DiLeo introduced Tom McCullough who spoke of research he had done in Pagosa Springs, Colorado with two different water systems, the Pagosa Area Water and Sanitation District and the San Juan River Village. He spent quite a bit of time with Tim McRee, the operations manager at San Juan River Village, learning about their water monitoring system made by ZennerUSA. Tom related how impressed he was with this monitoring system and wanted to present it to the committee and staff as a system to consider to install in TSV.

Tom then introduced 2 representatives from Zenner. DeWayne Mulligan covers New Mexico, Louisiana and Texas and Dan Pasternak is the Colorado representative for Zenner. DeWayne spoke of the 120 year history of the Zenner company. Dan spoke of the benefits of their radio-based 'collector' system where each home has a meter and a radio, in what they call a 'Mesh' system. The radios 'talk' to each other in the system and data is sent, via a 'repeater' to a collector. WI-FI is not needed. These mesh systems, using Meter Interface Units (MIU's) work well in mountainous areas with complex terrain. The system has field-replaceable batteries which last about 10-14 years and are above ground, so electrical hookup is not needed. (These batteries have a 10-year warranty.)

A big advantage for our public works department is that water is monitored on an hourly basis at each residence, 365 days a year / 24 hours a day. The system is set up with 'leak alarms' and if a leak is located, the water can be turned off at that residence with a keystroke on a computer from the public works office or by a magnet at the meter at each homesite.

Dan stated that they would need to do a propagation study with all the TSV addresses to get us some financial information about costs involved. Ann Marie Wooldridge said she could provide that on a spreadsheet. Dan also stated that these systems pay for themselves in 2-4 years, and DeWayne stated that with our current water loss of 70%, our 'payback' may be less than that. Also any system upgrades done to enhance the system down the line are done by Zenner, 'over the air', so TSV will not have to do anything with that. Information sent through the MIU's are replaced every 365 days, but all the information is stored in 'the cloud' for future reference, so no information is lost.

It was noted that all the meters in the Village would need to be changed out. Anthony Martinez (Public Works Director) said that he has a small crew, and he's probably going to need to contract out some of the work to get it done in a timely manner.

The subject of billing came up and DeWayne said he would look into working with our current billing provider.

This discussion lasted about an hour, and can be seen on the Zoom video in detail on the VTSV website, under Public Safety minutes for today.

Anthony Martinez gave an update on the water system. He reported that they are working on reestablishing water to the upper zone, in the Bavarian / Wheeler Peak condos area. TSVI expedited obtaining a pump that was needed for this project, which was very helpful. Hopefully, the line would be flushed and back online today or tomorrow.

No one could verify if keys had been made available for the package lockers to be utilized at the post office yet.

Henry gave an update of the project to bury overhead power lines in Amizette. Unfortunately, some of the residents, for various reasons, on the south side of Highway 150 are refusing to sign easements for Kit Carson to trench and lay cables. John Avila has come up with a 'workaround' to design a layout for trenching that will avoid these properties, and get the overhead power lines taken down eventually. Most of those not signing own undeveloped lots. Eventually, if they want power, these homeowners will have to pay to have these lines brought into their property underground. John and Henry are hoping to meet with Kit Carson this week to see if the new design will work with Kit Carson. Henry reiterated the important need to bury these power lines to help prevent wildfires.

John Avila spoke of the need to make sure that all gas, electrical, fiberoptic, etc. lines that are placed in the village are put at standard depths by contractors. Work is being done in the village now and lines that were buried too shallow in the recent past will be put in at the correct depth while the contractors are up in the village working. He spoke of charging these contractors for the time it takes for village staff to go to these sites and verify they are

being installed at correct depths. John Avila and Anthony Martinez both agreed the someone from Public Works should work with contractors to make sure that approved plans are being carried out.

Trudy DiLeo spoke to the committee about recommending to Council to increase the village water rates 36%, as per the recommendation of Henry Caldwell. This came up after the fact that Tom Whitman recommended only a 6% rate increase at the last Council meeting. A discussion followed in an attempt to make the 36% increase a formal recommendation for the Council. Trudy DiLeo, Henry Caldwell, Jim Woodard agreed with the recommendation. Kent Kiehl needed more information to make a decision, even though Henry explained the 'numbers' involved with the current operational costs, the estimates for next year and the amount that was taken from the general fund, which showed a deficit of 36%. Even this increase of 36% does not put any money into reserves for repairs / replacing lines, or any emergencies. He stated that it's tricky depending on handouts from the state, because down the line, the state may not be as 'flush' as it is now.

John Avila explained that the water rate includes money for the wastewater treatment plant, so a resident's "water" bill also includes a bill for sewer as well. We are currently paying back a loan that was taken out for our new wastewater treatment plant. He said that, as part of that loan, the village is supposed to be able to cover our operation expenses with our water rates, and right now we have a deficit that is covered with GRT. He also explained that we have been short-staffed in our Public Works department for 5-7 years now, as it is hard to get certified crews up here. He said we still need to be able to perform extensive repairs, as have been necessary lately, but we also need more staff to perform line replacements and maintenance in the future. Even though the state and federal government have given us money, it hasn't been as much as some other neighboring municipalities.

John gave an explanation of "fixed" charges and "usage" charges on our water bills. Fixed is basically access to the system and helps offset those months when there are not many folks in the village using water. It's about 50% of the total bill. The usage is based on actual volume used. There is no difference between residential and business rates, since our village is so small. He also said that 80% of the fees go to wastewater and 20% goes to water.

Henry mentioned that a couple of years ago, our audit recommended we get a water rate study done, and when it went to Council, this study was voted down. He also stated that an 'enterprise' system, which is what our water system is, should be funded on its own and should not be funded out of the general fund.

Tom McCullough mentioned that in Pagosa Springs, CO, owners of empty lots pay a basic rate for water and sewer. He asked if we could raise some revenue in that way in TSV.

Henry then suggested that maybe the recommendation to Council should be that the rate increase be sufficient to cover operating expenses and emergency repairs at this time, and then reserves to be considered later. The estimated operating costs are in the budget, but repairs are not.

Mitch Daniels said he did not have an opinion on the issue.

After the discussion, Kent Kiehl did agree that the rate increase should be sufficient to cover operating expenses.

Anthony Martinez said that there was a proposal for residents, when first connecting into the water system, to pay not only a 'connection fee', but also to pay an 'upkeep fee' into the general fund. He said that when the ordinance was passed, the 'upkeep' fee was not included, and this could have helped us pay for our water system and it's maintenance through the years.

Kent mentioned that it would be beneficial to learn how other municipalities charge their customers for water and sewer. Trudy said that she would appreciate any research he could do on that subject.

Trudy asked for a discussion on the 'connector' trail that is being created near Bull of the Woods trail. This trail would cross the river and join up with the Kachina Park. It would need to pass onto Kent's property for a short distance. Kent is concerned that the river is too dangerous to cross through here and thinks a bridge will be required. Kent has spoken with some attorneys that told him about the idea of an 'attractive nuisance'. His concerns are that if we have a formal trail that leads to the river (with no bridge), and if anyone gets hurt while crossing the river, the village might be held liable for any injuries.

Kent reiterated how dangerous the river is at this crossing, and wondered if the village attorney and insurance underwriter should be consulted about this. Patrick Nicholson said that funding is in place and plans are made to begin the trail next week. He does want to eventually have a bridge placed here at the river, but it may take a while as there is a NEPA process involved, possibly up to a year. When asked by Kent, Patrick said he had not consulted our attorney or insurance underwriter about the issue of 'attractive nuisance'.

Jalmar Bowden then added that there are other trails in our area that cross creeks and the river, and there are no bridges there. He said that he thinks the concern about having a bridge is a 'little bit pumped up' when we start speaking to attorneys. He said that there is a lot of water running now. Kent stated that this part of the river is steep and fast, and not like other trail crossings, and that he never sees anyone crossing there.

Kent stated that on a Public Safety committee, we should seek legal guidance with this river crossing that

can be potentially dangerous. It would be our responsibility, and otherwise he would wonder about the utility of the committee.

Trudy asked if it was reasonable to say that the trail wouldn't open until the bridge was in place. Patrick said he would like to see the trail open before the bridge goes in, and said that many of the trails in our area are difficult. Trudy asked if there would be any signage stating that the trail is dangerous and to proceed at your own risk. Patrick said that at this time, there are no signs to this effect.

Henry agreed that some 'warning' signs would be beneficial.

Firewise Board:

Trudy asked Jalmar for an update on the NFL grant. He said that the state told him that they had some new employees and it may take a while before he hears from them. Trudy expressed a lot of disappointment at this news.

Ann Marie Wooldridge spoke about the upcoming 4th of July festivities in the village. In years past, there was a parade, but apparently we will not be doing that, due to construction. There will be a band, a bagpiper, and an honor guard. Some of our elected officials will speak. There will be places to buy lunch and the village is providing free cupcakes! There will also be a duck race.

Trudy spoke about Firewise and Public Safety information folders that she was making to give out to residents at the Firewise tent. She is donating kids fireman hats and beverage koozies with TSV and Firewise logos on them.

Jim Woodard talked about what a great time the kids have putting on fireman's gear and climbing on the firetrucks.

Trudy announced the next meeting date and adjourned the meeting at 12:15.

Minutes submitted by Trudy DiLeo - 6/12/23