

NORTH EAST TOWNSHIP WATER/SEWER AUTHORITY MEETING
May 11, 2016 - Special Meeting
9:00 AM

A special meeting was called to order to discuss the “no forgiveness” policy regarding water leaks.

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Dave Montgomery at 9:00 a.m. In attendance were Teresa Sculley, Bill Heald, Rick Hall, Gordy Post, Julia Gorniak, Bob Brown, Attorney Robert Jeffery, and Deb Miller.

In attendance from the public were Al Arment and Fritzer Shunk.

Chairman Montgomery asked for public comments.

Al Arment, of 2560 Clark Road, spoke to the Board about his first quarter 2016 water/sewer bill. His bill was \$2,800.00. He also mentioned that his next bill will be approximately another \$500 - \$600 more. When the water meters were read for the first quarter, Mr. Arment was called by the water department and told that he had an unusually high amount of water usage. He called a plumber who did a walk through the house, but did not find any leaks with his first pass. Upon further investigation, it was determined that his toilet was leaking. North East Township employees also confirmed that the toilet was leaking.

Mr. Arment does not feel that is right for the Township to make 40% on his misery. He feels that this is exorbitant. Mr. Arment stated that the Borough reads their meters monthly and he feels that the Township should also do it. He believes that it is not that big of a deal.

Mr. Arment also stated that when the Township has a leak, they don't pay the 40% increase but instead the Borough rate. Mr. Arment is asking for some consideration in the reduction of his bill.

Chairman Montgomery briefed the Board on the existing policy regarding water leaks. He stated that with the current policy, the Township does not give any breaks on water leaks.

Attorney Robert Jeffery added that in 2013 the Supervisors adopted a policy that stated no credits be given on water leaks. A motion was made by Denny Culver and the second from Vern Frye and passed by unanimous vote. Attorney Jeffery stated that Deb Miller had furnished him with documents where residents had leaks in the year 2015 and the policy in effect was utilized.

Attorney Jeffery addressed Mr. Arment's comment regarding monthly reading by stating that the Borough's customer base is more compact than the Township's. Monthly reads would result in ongoing and tripling costs to the Township. Instead of two guys reading for four hours each every quarter, it would be two guys, four hours each, every month. He did comment that while unlikely, property owners could be looking at their own meters. Also, it's a matter of timing of catching a leak.

He added that the Supervisors are looking for some direction from the Water/Sewer Authority regarding the current policy.

Rick Hall asked if the 40% is all profit. Attorney Jeffery responded, no, that overhead has to be taken into consideration.

During discussion, a few ideas were mentioned. In order to be considered for any forgiveness, the over usage would have to be a multiplier of normal usage, it must be a verifiable leak, and charge of additional usage at wholesale. Another suggestion was that it would have to be a catastrophic leak and the additional charges be split at the wholesale cost between the Township and resident.

A motion was made by Gordy Post to use a multiplier of two times to be considered for any adjustments on the account, must be a verifiable leak, and any charges in excess of the two times multiplier would be at wholesale cost as determined by the Supervisors. The second was made by Bill Heald. Upon Chairman Montgomery calling for the vote, Teresa Sculley voiced the only opposition. Motion passed with a majority vote.

Rick Hall stated that the policy needs to be administratively feasible. He also suggested that the policy be revisited to see if the policy works.

Attorney Jeffery added that a verifiable leak should stipulate that either it's done by a plumber, Township employee, or both and that fixes have been made.

Fritzer Shunk asked if an adjustment could apply to Mr. Arment's situation as the policy has not been set until after his leak happened. Attorney Jeffery replied that the adjustment would apply to the situation for which the decision was made. In addition, it should be applicable to the same quarter in question.

With all business addressed, a motion to adjourn was made by Gordy Post with a second from Bill Heald. Meeting was adjourned at 9:53 a.m.