

Representative Policy Board

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

October 5, 2022

Meeting Transcription

Mario:

Okay. It is Wednesday, October 5th, 5:00 PM. Welcome all. First item of business is the safety moment. October Fire Safety Awareness Month. Do your escape plans. Check your smoke alarms. Be careful with candles and incense, especially around Halloween. Careful when you're cooking, and since it just got cold, I'm going to add watch out if you're going to light your fireplace. Because want to make sure that that's working well. So thank you, Jen. Read through that. Memorize it. There'll be a test on Tuesday. Next item of business is the minutes of March 16th, 2022. Is there a motion?

Stephen:

I move to vote.

Tim:

Second.

Mario:

Ok, Tim.

Mario:

Any corrections, additions or amendments to the minutes?

Tim:

I just couldn't believe it had been so long ago.

Mario:

Yes. Gave you the summer off.

Tim:

Yes.

Mario:

Okay. All those in favor of approving?

Group:

Aye.

Mario:

Opposed? Anyone abstaining?

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All right, thank you. Next is the update on virtual and hybrid meetings.

Mario:

So we had... With the uptick, that seems to be happening, at least in RWA, with their staff, because it seems that it's not dropping down as you would hope that it would or think that it would. And I keep running into more and more people that have caught COVID recently. A gentleman from UI was not able to make a meeting today. It looks like, I'm afraid, the virtual meetings will end up continuing until spring. Because as we head into the fall and then we go into winter months.

Tim:

We're having upticks at work also.

Mario:

Okay.

Tim:

It's interesting, Mario. I mean, I don't have a problem with it, but it's interesting to hear some of the, or to read some of the articles about people that are demanding staying home, and they're going to be the first to be fired with layoffs. I mean, I'm reading all these crazy articles, and I'm sure some of you guys are too. I mean, I do immerse myself in some of this stuff about the economy, but again, it's certainly not an issue for me to have a meeting of this type with you guys. It saves some travel and everything else, but I just don't know how it's going to... I think it's becoming a labor relations issue as much as a COVID issue. Maybe I should be corrected on that, but I honestly think it is.

Mario:

Definitely see that in some instances. Private companies are running into a struggle with that.

Charles:

It's going to be of some value to get the RPB meeting back? I don't know about spring. I do know that I just spent four hours at a board of selectman meeting Monday morning, and yesterday afternoon, two of the selectmen announced they tested positive.

Tim:

Charles, was that the first time you'd met? I mean, we'd been meeting in council and Cheshire for two years now, almost.

Charles:

Oh yeah. No, we've been meeting hybrid right along and everything, but it was just a personal example of the uptick right now.

Tim:

Right.

Charles:

I think probably we'll be all right. I think maybe we should take another look at it in January or February. Spring. Spring can mean May or something like that. That might be too far out. But going into the flu season, if nothing else, in the weather season, I can see a hybrid still working. I would like to get back to at least the RPB meetings, at least being hybrid because I think there's a value to the face-to-face exchange.

Tim:

Yeah, and I agree, Charles, that obviously we're going into a season where people have the flu anyway. And it could be more... It's a good way to prevent it. But I see the other side, the business itself. I guess that's what I was speaking more to. I do get concerned that it's a labor relations issue more than a flu issue. So again, that's a separate issue, but I think we have to be mindful of that as a board.

Charles:

People are going to have to rethink. There's no question about it. So do you need a motion, Mario? Or where do you go?

Mario:

No. I wanted to get your sense. I'm just reporting from when I meet with David and Larry, what they're kind of seeing.

Tim:

Well, here's another piece of this, Mario. I mean, they're talking about kids not doing as well in school. I mean, how different are adults than kids? I know I'm adult asking a crazy question about kids, but I mean, when people aren't doing their normal thing, what becomes the new normal? I mean, do they pay attention as much if they're on a Zoom meeting? I mean, I just get a little concerned about it. I guess I shouldn't be pressing this so much, but I see that everything is not perfect in this Zoom world.

Charles:

What is your management doing now as far as the building? Is the building not open? I mean, if we wanted to have a hybrid meeting, could we use the building or is Larry saying no?

Mario:

Kind of discouraged.

Tim:

It's closed. Let's face it.

Mario:

If you all want to do a hybrid meeting, I think we can figure out a way to do it. My one concern is how do we do it with the public? Do we open it to the public? And there's a line there that... I'm not sure where it is.

Tim:

What do you mean? Our meetings? Our meetings to the public?

Mario:

For the public-

Tim:

The public never comes to our meetings. But they could.

Mario:

This would be when they'd want to.

Tim:

I don't know. I'd love to see the lineup.

Charles:

We had hybrid meetings at the board of selectman, and they have worked very well. And sometimes the public comes and it just, they're masked up and they're distanced out. And it has worked for a while. So hybrids can work, but I thought a couple of times we did it at the office that they didn't have the technology speed. They got better, but it wasn't perfect.

Tim:

Well, town council meetings in Cheshire, like I said, are available. Generally they've been made available as a hybrid for a council member who felt they couldn't come for whatever reason. And members of the public were in attendance at the regular meeting. I mean, that's sort of a reverse look at what we're thinking. I mean, town hall has been open in Cheshire, and it's not a town that hasn't had a COVID impact. I mean, we just looked at things a little bit differently maybe, and have thought that in the public interest, we should be there. I mean, town hall never really closed unless everybody else had to be closed. It still had to operate. It's kind of like PD and FD. I mean, you got to be there. I mean, I'm really now talking about the Authority side, not our side as much. I think that business place should be open. I just think it's nuts that they're closed. I just think it is. That's my opinion. I won't shield it anymore.

Stephen:

Jennifer, are they still doing the cleaning routinely?

Jennifer:

Yes, they're still doing weekly cleanings.

Tim:

They are.

Stephen:

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Yeah. I mean, if we had a meeting in that room, they could do the cleaning there. We only meet once a month.

Tim:

I mean, the nursing homes are open. My mother's in a nursing home. There's a Elland Park at Cheshire, it's huge there. You can go in there. They want to know you're coming, you know, you sign in for gosh sakes. I mean, I think what's going on is ridiculous. I won't say anything more.

Stephen:

Hey, Jeff, you go to a lot of different meetings, groups. Are they mostly live now?

Jeff:

Yes. Most are in person. I mean, there's a few of my towns that make the online option available. Especially, we get... The town council meetings in Berlin, we frequently have standing room crowds. We get more people who show up in person than who come than log on to Zoom.

Stephen:

Are the courts open?

Jeff:

The courts? I actually had my first return to New Haven Superior Court in person last Friday. The courts are doing motion practice and pre-trial conferences and status conferences on Microsoft Teams. They've just resumed doing civil trials in person. Federal court has been doing civil trials in person since January.

Mario:

All right. Well, I think I got the sense of let's try and get back to a hybrid.

Charles:

Maybe after the first of the year. You're only talking a couple more months. So my vote would be let's go to the first of the year and take another look at it in January.

Tim:

And I'm fine with that, Charles. I just think on the business side of the business, we're a board.

Charles:

Yeah, I didn't realize that the office was shut down altogether. I didn't realize that.

Stephen:

Have you had any-

Jeff:

We were in there last year.

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Tim:

Well, they had reopened, Jennifer, correct? I mean, they had reopened. It was just suddenly it went in reverse. And they had some instances, which more than less justified it. But I mean, people are working around. People can stay home when they have it.

Jennifer:

You can go in with an appointment only. So as far as I know, the lobby hasn't reopened.

Tim:

Right.

Stephen:

And has that presented any problems in terms of the people accessing the services they need? Had any complaints?

Jennifer:

You know what that I'm not sure of, but I know that they can call and make an appointment. As far as payments, they go to, wherever they can make them? Walmart, 7-11 to other alternative areas. So I don't think the payments have been a problem. But as far as complaints, I don't know.

Stephen:

But even that. If Walmart's open, why isn't the water company open for payments?

Tim:

For that matter Yale New Haven has lost money for the first time in its history, and you know why. They didn't do extra services beyond COVID for years. I mean, they're feeling the pinch. I'm sure their policies are going to be changing.

Mario:

Okay. We'll revisit it after the first of the year and see how people do after New Year's Day. How's that sound?

Tim:

Perfect.

Charles:

Sounds good.

Mario:

All right. The next item we had was discussion regarding New Haven Environmental Advisory Council. And Naomi had called me one day, she's gotten an invitation from one of her neighbors who was the chair of that council, that she was being asked to come and participate in the meeting. And there were

issues about leaf blowers. And so I didn't want her to go alone. So I contacted Larry and his team and said, "Hey, you really need to get someone's else to go." And then Steve must have been contacted.

Stephen:

Well, Jeff-

Mario:

Jeff was contacted.

Stephen:

Yeah, through Jeff.

Mario:

So a bunch of people went, and it was an attack on RWAs practices, I will say. Some of which were not liked. So I don't know if-

Tim:

When you say environmental... I just had one question. Was it a noise issue or a pollution issue? Leaf blowers make a lot of noise.

Stephen:

It's kind of both, Tim. They have had a very strong program to eliminate leaf blowers, independent of anything else. And what happened was RWA put out a video on TV and they said, "Instead of washing your driveway down and wasting water, use a leaf blower to clear it." So they took issue with that because they had already been working to try to eliminate leaf blowers for, I guess a couple of reasons that you mentioned. But the discussion got... It went much further than that. And there was a pretty negative attitude toward RWA. They actually thought RWA should be policing water use. They especially pointed out Yale watering some of their athletic fields. So why were they doing that? That kind of thing. So Steve Vitko did a great job to answer the leaf blower issue. By the way, they did pull the ad, but it took two weeks for that to happen. And then they got into a bunch of other issues, and we had to provide... Jeff and I both talked a little bit just to inform them because they were misinformed on a number of things they were upset about. They really didn't understand the structure or the regulatory ability and responsibilities that were already in place.

Tim:

Well also, Steve, what about the giant leaf sucking machines in New Haven when everyone puts their leaves onto the city streets in New Haven? A machine, a diesel truck comes and sucks them up. Are they onto them as well?

Stephen:

They didn't mention that.

Tim:

Of course not. Of course they wouldn't. But what does New Haven do every year? What any town does?

Stephen:

That's a little different. I'm not defending it, but I'm just saying it's picking it up instead of just blowing them around.

Tim:

But it's still... If they're talking about exhaust... I'm just talking about education process. If they're talking about exhaust from leaf blowing versus diesel trucks sucking leaves up. I'm curious what the distinction is.

Stephen:

Yeah.

Charles:

Well we were faced with in town and we had to redo some ordinances and timing and that type of thing. It's kind of like a hot button with certain groups at this point in time. My understanding, it's more the noise issue because most of those leaf blowers have started to go towards electric anyway. So what we had to do, we had to change our noise ordinance and cut it down. And we even had to allow homeowners weekends and stuff like that. Cause they wanted to ban a lot of this equipment in construction, especially and landscaping from no weekends and that kind of stuff. So what we were faced with were people concerned about the noise. It sounds like that you just had an experience where people wanted to vent about things that they were probably not totally informed about. I don't have an answer for you. We dealt with it. We tried to find the middle of the road in town, and it all came under a noise situation for us.

Mario:

And I think part of New Haven's is the environmental aspect, not just the emissions from a gasoline blower, but also you're blowing the dust around that is on the driveway.

Charles:

They bring in every little, every factor that they could possibly bring. And even in a small community like Guilford, the waste water issue is an issue. Or get you caught... It's an interesting thing. People, I don't know whether they have too much time on their hands or not, but I think you got to listen to them and change where the things are that we can change. That's all. Some things we can't change.

Tim:

Well, the other thing about using water to clean off your driveway, now cities and towns are mandated to clean their drainage systems at super high rates, which impose costs on a community. I'm sure you've may have been confronted with that.

Charles:

We had to go to no sand.

Tim:

There's all kinds of things that-

Charles:

We can't do sand anymore on the roads.

Tim:

That's right. And yet they're using the most toxic saline solutions available to get ice away. So there's a lot of crazy stuff going on. And I think sometimes, and maybe I wouldn't necessarily be the guy that would do it when I'm running a town meeting, but sometimes these people are just crazy. And you cannot succumb to every whim and notion because you have to take everything into consideration when you're making some of these decisions. Yet they only take in one thing when they make a complaint. So you guys heard it out. It sounds like that's what you did. And I guess my question would be, well, what do we do about it?

Mario:

So the Authority is preparing a response and some informational items for them regarding our rate making structure, which Jeff, I believe went through how we come up with rates. That we don't take and charge everyone living in New Haven extra to pay for Yale's water use. Also to cover some of the other questions that they have. So they're preparing a response for that. But the reason it's on the agenda here is just so everyone's aware of it.

Charles:

Will it be possible for, Mario, for us to see either the response or at least the list of the complaints in case we're faced with them in our own communities.

Mario:

I'm sure that would not be a problem. I know the Five Member Authority spoke about it at their last meeting, and so we may get some more info, but I can definitely get a copy of the response.

Stephen:

Tim, we were not the RWA and the appropriate person to respond to a number of their issues, whether they were correct or not. So we just thought the RWA should do that.

Tim:

No, I agree, Steve. I do.

Stephen:

Just to clear it up.

Tim:

Right. No, I appreciate that. I'm sorry I haven't been a little bit more-

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Stephen:

They do need to get educated because if they are thinking that Yale... Their rates are supporting Yale using the water, that's ridiculous. It's probably the other way around, but somebody from the RWA needs to explain that to them.

Tim:

Of course.

Jay:

Is there new representation that anyone or any group intended to bring legal action against us?

Mario:

I don't think that's where it was headed, Jay. This is a board of the City of New Haven.

Jeff:

An advisory board.

Mario:

Advisory board. They meet, I believe, quarterly. I'm not sure how limited their powers are, if you will. I don't think they can write regulations, but they do raise issues that the other boards, like the planning and zoning board, would take into consideration as they possibly rewrite regulations.

Stephen:

Jay, it wasn't so much the issues, but kind of the hostility which with they presented them. So we just thought RWA should be aware of that and kind of nip that.

Charles:

Yeah, that's a PR struggle. It doesn't sound completely unlike the hydrant issue. Periodically that'll pop up, and I think you got to address them and answer their concerns and to a certain extent, educate them. It's as simple as that. I mean, we're not the ones that determine whether Yale's a nonprofit or not. We're just doing our jobs.

Mario:

Right.

Jay:

I agree with that.

Mario:

Anything to add, Jeff, since you were there?

Jeff:

Well, I mean, it was a long meeting. If you're bored, and you want to see it, the link to the video's on the city's website. My biggest issue, which I expressed very clearly. Steve was there. Is that there's a presumption that the questions they were asking are not already examined by the RPB and the OCA. For example, their approach was that to assume that none of us are doing our jobs and that they know more than our experts who advise us. I mentioned we do a cost of service study periodically in connection with this-

I mentioned we do a cost to service study periodically in connection with issuance test rate applications. And I also mentioned that I've done independent research, the idea that conservation oriented rates work is a fallacy. And I also mentioned that as the consumer advocate, I have to balance the conservation interest with the reality that the regional water authority has a lot of water and it's in the interest of all consumers to sell as much water as possible because that will fund the ongoing capital needs. And the infrastructure needs don't go away because somebody uses a little bit less water.

We've seen that declining consumption doesn't result in declining capital costs over the last 15 years. So balancing the interest of a consumer in affordable water with the interest of the environmental mission of conserving water is certainly something that I have in mind. One of the comments that was made is that regardless of the fact that regional water has plenty of water, we should be a role model for the rest of the country for those people that don't have water. And my response to that is, if that's something you want me to consider in connection with testifying at an issuance test rate application, send me some data that shows that somebody elsewhere in the country is paying attention to how much water we have in New Haven.

Stephen:

Not only that, they seem to think that water could just be saved and don't realize it's moving all the time. It's a dynamic issue, especially once it's treated.

Mario:

It was interesting. I'm partially sorry I missed it and partially glad that I-

Mario:

I didn't want Naomi going alone, so Steve attended.

Tim:

You're a good man, Steve.

Jeff:

Listen, I went to the original meeting when they had their first meeting pre-COVID. I went in person in city hall and I told them, if you ever have any questions, if you ever need anything, here's my contact info. And I'd never been contacted by them. And I also told them when we were on their Zoom meeting that the Authority's been meeting remotely, so anytime anybody has any questions, feel free to pop in and ask questions in a meeting. And their response to that was, "We're volunteers. We can only go to so many meetings." I hear that a lot, and if you're a volunteer and you have time to criticize, then you also have time to become educated.

Tim:

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Right.

Mario:

Thank you.

Jeff:

Sure.

Mario:

Next item, although that was a great lead in for item six, but next item is upcoming capital projects, the funding. So I did get from Sunny a list of the projects. We're doing some work at the DOT project on Route 34 in Derby. He expects that to be an application actually that he's going to ask for it to be expedited in October, November. So I haven't seen any details on that at all yet. I think that's a pipe replacement in conjunction with a bridge project if I recall correctly. Lake Saltonstall water treatment plant electrical improvement, and Lake Gaillard water treatment plant electrical improvements. November, December applications. And interestingly, he listed 233 Skiff Street in Hamden. Disposition of if the condemnation goes through. If not, we'll have to go through demolition and waiting for the Hamden town attorney. So that might be something, Peter, you can ask about at your next meeting. 233 Skiff Street.

Peter:

Yes, I'll take care of that.

Mario:

Well, there's not a lot of detail and I didn't get a chance to call Sunny.

Stephen:

Peter, do you know if that's the last house to be disposed of?

Peter:

I can't answer that. No, I'm not sure. I think it is actually, though. We're getting real close. I'll get you that answer too.

Tim:

Steve, that's not one that you had reported some information on a while back in Hamden? Because you went to some of those meetings.

Stephen:

We had two in Hamden. One had-

Tim:

They were like a public meeting in Hamden, right?

Stephen:

Yeah. Well this has been going on for years. And there was an interest in the other house because it had a historical significance. This one is just an old house. They told me it was in good shape. And now I don't know if the RWA thinks that's the case. It looks pretty bad and it's in a very commercialized area on Skiff Street and it sits right next to the river. But they need just a little clarity as to where the property line is, because they did some bridge work near it and changed the road a little bit. Everything had to be relocated. The sewer and water lines and the right of way there. So once they get that straightened out, RWA can figure out what it wants to do with the property. But I wouldn't be unhappy with it just sitting idle if RWA could do that because it is right next to the river.

Mario:

Well I think they're saying if the town doesn't take it, then they're going to demolish the house.

Stephen:

And just let the property sit or sell?

Mario:

Let the property sit, I'm guessing. It wasn't that level of detail in his note.

Peter:

I'll look into it more and let you guys know.

Mario:

The other one, Pete, since you're there, is Beech Street and Poms Lane in North Branford. Sale to NBLCT North Branford, I would think it would be Land Trust. And they're waiting for input from North Branford Town Planning. And then we would see that as an application. There's a Route 80 pressure reducing valve relocation and Raynham Hill pump station that they're working on. But they don't have a timeframe on that yet. Those are all applications. Rochelle did say that the electrical improvements for Lake Saltonstall, they got a congressional direct spending appropriations bill for a couple million dollars and then they've submitted the Route 80 pressure reducing valve project for drinking water state revolving fund along with the Raynham Hill pump station. So they are looking at alternate spending. I was hoping to get some information on the lead and copper rule changes and what's being done to investigate the lead service lines. But I think he's still trying to get their arms wrapped around that because there is funding that's going to become available for that work in the not too distant future.

Stephen:

I have a question on capital projects.

Mario:

Yeah.

Stephen:

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We're always looking at the top of the priority list. That whole pile is how deep. Now are we looking at 36 million a year for 10 years, 20 years? Do we know?

Mario:

There's a 10 year projection, and I don't remember off the top of my head Tim, but I believe it went up for a couple of years because it included the...

Stephen:

No, the amounts, but I mean are we looking at an expenditure of roughly 36 million neighborhood for indefinitely?

Mario:

I think it comes back down on the capital outlay because of Lake Whitney Dam drives it way up and then it comes down. But it doesn't come down to 20 million. It comes down, I want to say-

Tim:

Sounds about right.

Mario:

Towards like 25 million. I think it was a four year window. And I'm drawing it straws Steve, so I apologize.

Tim:

I would be too.

Stephen:

But it's not going to be less than 25 million, right?

Mario:

Oh, it's not coming down to 15 if that's what you're thinking.

Stephen:

No, but, you know.

Mario:

The advantage, if you will, or disadvantage, but over time our bonds should start to run out as far as being paid off. And so the new bonded money should be reduced so that our additional payback on the bonds should start to reduce, which would just reduce the annual amount that gets added to the interest that gets added to the rate.

Tim:

But isn't that Mario, just based on descending rates and now we're forward looking at higher rates?

Mario:

Well we're looking at higher rates, but the dollars-

Tim:

You're talking about the-

Mario:

The dollars that we're borrowing, the more that we are paying for out of our operating-

Tim:

Out of our operating budget.

Mario:

I mean, they want to use the term of internally generated funds, which is fine, it's a proper term. But it's essentially monies that are coming out of operating that we're putting in each year that go towards capital. The interest would go down because we're borrowing less each year. And I think Rochelle is looking more towards what sources of money are there. I'm really worried about the cost on replacements of the water services. That could be a crazy number if they don't get a real good handle on it and they don't chase the money.

Stephen:

I guess where I'm going is, do we need to look at structural changes in the organization to address the future or is this the way it's just going to keep going on?

Tim:

Doesn't our rate applications incorporate capital costs and things of that nature? I mean, that's all part of how much we can charge people, correct? Am I missing something here? There's always pressure on rates or operating. It's not exclusively operating. We've got to maintain, just correct me if I'm mistaken. I mean, we got to watch our rates and we've got to maintain our stuff.

Stephen:

I was a little surprised at the delinquency rate that was just-

Tim:

Yeah, I agree.

Stephen:

Where's the threshold, Tim? In terms of what can people afford? Because if the use keeps going down, the rates just have to keep going up to support all of this.

Tim:

Right. And you're right about the delinquency. I think she said there's a lot of money

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Stephen:

It was just a month or two when it's month to month now and it's already 40% or something.

Tim:

And we didn't get a breakdown as to where that is. But that in itself is of interest I think as a furtherance.

Peter:

Excuse me. Don't forget that pandemic had a lot to do with that too.

Mario:

I think we fared pretty well.

Tim:

There is some of that, but I thought the pandemic wasn't so bad for us. Some of this is just new. It's new information.

Stephen:

We actually filled a lot of water during the pandemic.

Tim:

Yeah, so some of the delinquencies, I would agree Steve, they're very surprising.

Peter:

But they're new and they're not like through the last few years.

Tim:

Well, it's probably cumulative. We don't have enough data probably to answer you correctly.

Peter:

Because I'm sure there's been rules and regulations in the consumer protection. Jeff might know a little better how to protect the people, in all fairness, the regional water.

Mario:

Well we weren't allowed to do shutoffs for a period of time so we didn't do that. I think it was about two years' worth. We're now back into that. I guess, Tim or Steve who added that as an agenda item

Tim:

Yeah, I think it actually is and I'm happy to take that up and get some information on it. Because I think it is a very good question and not one that I can answer well. You'd like to know where it's coming from. I mean, are we focused on some businesses? Are we focused on a lot of individual users? Is it poverty related? Is it just neglect? We're certainly making it easy, monthly payments.

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Peter:

Steve and Tim, you're both correct, but we have to look into more.

Stephen:

Tim, I was looking for some issues that really were crossover between finance and consumer. I do think this is a good one. We maybe have a joint meeting or something.

Tim:

Good idea. Joint meeting. Okay. Good idea. But actually we have to give Larry some heads up on it and Rochelle.

Stephen:

Oh yeah, it's down the road a little bit. We need more data.

Tim:

Okay. Well I don't mind starting that off with just a query to Rochelle that this has been expressed in our meeting and it should be a topic within the next couple of months, maybe two months. December's a quiet month. Why give them more time?

Mario:

All right. Very good. Any other capital projects? Questions? Comments? Okay. Move on to the RPB and committee agendas and issues. If you want, I could start. One of the items that kind of been thinking about is public participation. David and I have been going back and forth. He's leaning towards doing a call to the public, if you will. At the beginning of the meeting. There was some legal review done and nothing in the Freedom of Information Act requiring public participation at a meeting remote or in person. Similar, we do not see anything in the EL or RPB. Oh, enabling legislation or RPB Rules of Practice that includes such a requirement. Obviously public hearings is a different story. That's from Bruce McDermott.

So the thought was, do we want to have a public participation so we allow people to speak? Do we limit it to just the beginning of the meeting? Or do we do the beginning and the end? And/or do we limit it to items that are only on the agenda? Or do we just leave it open and people can have two minutes to speak? We don't get a lot of people, obviously, even at our public hearings, but it's a matter of do we want to entertain it? So I raise the question.

Charles:

How we handle it is we allow people to speak on agenda items before the meeting so that limits, we can get on with the business of the meeting and then after the meeting, we just open it up to random conversations. That's how we-

Peter:

Charles is- Yeah, Beacon Falls too.

Tim:

Pretty similar in Cheshire. However, I think probably what was contemplated in the early days when this whole thing was being formed was that the individual town representatives should be taking this on and bringing it to the board and the table. That probably was the original thing, and that's not a reason not to change. But I think as a measure of goodwill, it's certainly not a bad idea to include it with some stipulations because you'll probably get one a year show up anyway. I mean, not to sound cynical, but I don't think we're going to be overwhelmed by consumer questions at a meeting.

Mario:

And of course if it's a question about a bill specific, we'd want to refer it anyway.

Tim:

Right.

Mario:

Anyone else?

Peter:

Mr. Chairman, it's very important to let the public speak, but we also got to keep control of it.

Tim:

Well, it also I think, goes to policy issues. I think you can't be handing a consumer complaint because their water bill was too high. Well, I don't want to say that too high or too low. But if they got a leaking problem, that obviously has to be taken up with the central office and the operations as opposed to a board. So I think it has to pertain to policy issues and however there's a way to incorporate that into the message that comes across to those that want to comment.

Peter:

Correct.

Mario:

Anyone else? Jay, you've been very quiet. Bob, you've been very quiet.

Tim:

Tim's been very noisy.

Charles:

So I think we have to grant the public their opportunity, but enforcing them to stay until later in the meeting may not be the way to handle it. But if we can give them a chance early on or 15 minutes into it in allowed time and then see if we can direct it where it needs to go. I think that would be most suitable to whomever is bringing any information before us.

Tim:

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The way it works specifically at Cheshire, just because I know it's different than what Charles mentioned, public comments come at the monthly meeting at the beginning, and if there's an item on the agenda, we will take up that public comment on the agenda item. So if there's a vote or something that's sufficient, they would have to hang in and go through the minutiae of a meeting. So I think in general, to start out early is important, but just to qualify where they would get to speak is reasonable.

Mario:

Jay, thoughts?

Jay:

It had to be done at the beginning of the meeting. It's an agenda item and we have to bring that up first [inaudible 00:44:31] on the agenda.

Mario:

You're breaking up on my audio.

Jay:

Should I say it again?

Mario:

Yes.

Jay:

It was really in agreement with Tim's representation that we should take up any items for the public prior to the official agenda, even part of the agenda to give the public a chance to discuss it and we respond to it and not hold them if they're not there for the other eight, 10, 12 items on the agenda. Yeah.

Mario:

Yeah, I'm leaning in a... Let Steve talk, but I'm leaning more towards letting them speak to the agenda item at the beginning and not hold them for that agenda item, which make them sit through the meeting. Yeah, that's just kind of...

Charles:

Courteous.

Peter:

You can always ask them to stay if it's obvious that it's a complex issue that they need to be part of that discussion during the agenda. And they may be fine with that.

Jay:

If there's no reason they have to leave after that public hearing on their items, they can stay for the whole evening.

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Peter:
Right.

Tim:
Well, not to press my case, but the relevance of hanging around to the agenda item is the relevant comments and input from members of the board as well as them being taken in at the same time and they're part of the consideration closer to the action. Whether it always works out that way is another issue. I can't say we're overwhelmed at our town meetings, we're just simply not. We have a dearth of public input, not because we're perfect, but because people don't really care to show up. But that's how we handle it and I think it's reasonable.

Charles:
The only other thing we do in Guilford is in public comment, we don't engage in conversations and answer questions. Just hear what they have to say.

Tim:
Well in our case, the respondent is the chair. So Mario would be there to represent an answer if one was warranted or he could... If it's Larry or whoever.

Charles:
Don't engage in debate.

Tim:
Debate especially. No, they're comments, they're not debates.

Peter:
Absolutely. Charles. Charles is correct.

Jay:
We have to be flexible.

Charles:
Yeah. I mean, yeah, you can direct them to the right department and things like that, but it's not a conversation. It's, thank you for your interest. Here's what we'll do about it someday, maybe.

Peter:
Correct. Yep.

Jay:
Being flexible. I mean, if someone came in because they had a situation they couldn't be there when the meeting started, whatever item we're on, when we finish it, say we're on item three, we can then go to that question that the person's there for the-

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Jay:

And go to that question that the person's there for the public and take that up and then go back to their regular agenda, so that person doesn't have to wait for the next six items on the agenda to be open.

Tim:

The chair should have discretion. That's why you have a chair.

Jay:

That's exactly it. That it would be the discretion of the chair.

Tim:

Well, as Charles said, the opportunity is just to provide input for that item.

Tim:

Absolutely.

Stephen:

So once they've done that, they don't have to stay. And just to be clear, I mean there's an avenue for any personal issues, billing and things like that, through Consumer Affairs, the Office of Consumer Affairs or the customer service at the water authority. But we're not looking at those kinds of issues, correct?

Tim:

No, those would be short circuited, I would hope.

Mario:

Thank you. I think Jennifer and I will talk tomorrow maybe and tweak the agenda for the RPB meeting and we'll include a public comment at the beginning, probably after safety moment.

Mario:

Thank you. I did put out... I asked Jennifer to put out an invitation to attend committee meetings for people, so that if you saw an agenda item on one of your committees, that they could ask Jennifer for the team's link and that kind of thing to attend. My thought is similar to the public input, we're not going to get a big run of RPB members attending, but I would rather that they have the opportunity to attend a meeting without having to ask that question. Do you have a problem with that or have you seen a problem with that? I know everyone has their own committee that they're working on and the intent was never to interrupt the committee's work.

Charles:

I think it's a good idea, because especially whether whatever committee you're on, you see different perspectives. I've seen the different perspectives, especially on finance and public affairs type thing.

Tim:

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I think it's welcome. I see no hazard and I don't see a run up in dollars on extra attendees and all that kind of stuff, if you want to look at it purely from a budgetary point of view. I just think the invitation is great and it'll probably not be abused.

Mario:

Nodding yes, Jay. It might be on mute. Actually, you don't show on mute, but we can't hear you. Here you go.

Jay:

Back a little on, there's an [inaudible 00:51:21] say, member of the public that has an issue there, billing, then that we still go through the Consumer Affairs Committee and with our attorney to address it and hope pretty settling. Don't think that's a board manner.

Mario:

Correct.

Jay:

[inaudible 00:51:44] public being attendance.

Mario:

I think to answer your question, that would be, you have to talk to the customer service department. If they've already done that, then I would direct them to Jeff Donofrio, I think first, before Consumer Affairs and let Jeff get an opportunity to try and work that out.

Jay:

Whatever the procedure is. We don't want to get involved in a discussion of-

Mario:

No.

Jay:

Number of gallons and how much you're paying and why did you shut me off or something.

Mario:

No, I believe that-

Jay:

There's no place for it and [inaudible 00:52:26].

Mario:

And I think that at the end of the day, it ends up coming to us, if that is... I think that were the last resort, is that not true? Didn't we get one for one of the customers? Or was just informational?

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Stephen:

I think occasionally it's gone to a hearing for us and then we make a determination.

Mario:

That's what it was. It was a hearing in Consumer Affairs. I must have attended. I remember listening to that. All right. Anything else about how we did the invitation, length of the RPB meetings? I definitely got the sense last month that it was going long. I could see people tuning out.

Tim:

But that might have just been the one issue that happened, it made that happen. That was rare. What are you thinking, some kind of limit?

Mario:

Well, on other committees and commissions I've been on, and just to get a sense, how long do you think it should be? Not that we're locked to it, and we have a public hearing, we obviously do a half an hour meeting, but when we don't have a public hearing, is the hour our upset limit that we want to go for, or do we want to be more like land use and go three hours?

Tim:

They go that long. That's exciting.

Speaker 5:

Hey Bob Harvey, do you remember when we used to have two and three hour meetings?

Bob:

Yes, I do.

Stephen:

These guys have it easy now. Really.

Bob:

As long as all the discussion is remaining civil, I think it continues on.

Tim:

I would think so. And if someone looks bored they can sign off and with Facetime like this, you can just turn your video off.

Charles:

I agree. I don't [inaudible 00:54:33].

Mario:

How long would you feel is a reasonable amount of time?

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Bob:

I think it gets to be a problem, if we're approaching 9:30, 10 o'clock.

Tim:

I can't remember when that's ever happened.

Charles:

Two hours, I'd start to question the length of the [inaudible 00:55:15].

Stephen:

We used to have longer presentations at these meetings and outside people come in and they would take about an hour, mostly.

Tim:

I see.

Bob:

There was times they were working out of their-

Charles:

[inaudible 00:55:29] speaker or something, that's different.

Tim:

But does some of that have to do with more of that happens at a committee level now or am I just... I mean, I don't go way back.

Stephen:

I think it's good for the whole RPB to hear some of these issues.

Tim:

But is that maybe the distinction now, in more recent times?

Bob:

I don't think we're getting a lot of those anymore because it's being shared at the committee level rather than to the whole RPB.

Tim:

Well, I know the few instances I thought, and I think Steve has done the same thing, when something seemed like it should be shared with everybody, we've done that. There's been a few instances where it's ended up, but again, I never care when a meeting ends. That's not my top priority.

Bob:

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We're there for the duration.

Mario:

Very good. Thank you. Did you all have items that you wanted to bring up about your committee meetings and agendas and issues?

Tim:

There was one time, Mario. Mario, Charles and I were a member of the Nominating Committee and I know we have had some discussions in that committee. Jennifer was going to try and get you some feedback. I don't know if that was... It was yesterday, right, Jennifer? I don't even know if you would've had the opportunity, but there's no forum for new business, so I don't know if we can bring this up, Charles, what do you think?

Charles:

I thought that was the plan.

Tim:

And we thought... I don't know, Jennifer, did you have a chance or didn't you have a chance?

Jennifer:

To talk to Mario? About the term expirations, the limits?

Tim:

Should we just bring you a general summary of what had gone on and what were some lively discussion issues or what?

Mario:

No, that's good. That's good.

Tim:

It was a very good meeting that we did have and Nominating was interviewing Kevin Curseaden as his term is up and whether he's going to be recommended, or if we're going to go forward with others, I will share. We are going to recommend him. But what did come up in the conversation was the concept of some kind of term limits. A consideration of term limits, not only for just a general member but also for officers, our board seems to have those. And Charles, correct me if I'm wrong, I don't think there was any member, of Nominating, that didn't think this should be a topic of conversation that comes up at some level. And Mario, that's up to you. I don't know how you want to go forward with reviewing this, it's not like we have a planning committee per se. I don't know where this kind of conversation starts.

Charles:

[inaudible 00:58:52] came up is, is it a matter of the enabling legislation or is it the responsibility of the Five Member board to make these changes? Because they are policy decisions. The other point that came up in Nominating Committee, which it really set the flag up for me, was the concern for continuity

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and succession at the management level. But that's not really our concern, other than to emphasize it perhaps for them to take a look at it. I bring that up, Mario, because I know you meet with Larry and Dave, so that might be something you could express.

Mario:

Absolutely.

Charles:

It's worth the discussion. And I think we have to find out, Mario, whether it's appropriate for our board, for the enabling legislation, if we're going to go after that again, or if it's something that the five member authority has to address. I think that's the biggest point. Not the decision which way to go necessarily is much as-

Tim:

Whether we could do it or not.

Charles:

Or do we want to do it.

Charles:

The other point was, maybe the need to expand it from five members.

Tim:

That's right, to maybe seven.

Charles:

Especially with the non-core avenue that maybe we got to expand, that people with more expertise in certain areas and that type of thing.

Mario:

The expansion was more to include the disciplines that they needed for what they were looking at.

Tim:

And also, I think, and I could be mistaken, I think there was the undercurrent of the fact that New Haven always has to have a member sitting there. I think that was something that couldn't be over or underheard, right, Charles, am I wrong on that?

Charles:

Yeah, I agree.

Mario:

And there were two issues with term limits. One was term limits on the board members, period. And the other one was on the officers participation.

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Tim:

So anyway, it was interesting, I think, don't you all?

Charles:

I think at some points that you got to bring up with Larry and David, Mario.

Mario:

Absolutely. And the expansion from five to seven members, I believe that's clearly an enabling legislation issue.

Charles:

And that's why we shouldn't tackle that type.

Tim:

No, it's not like we bring it up in our next RPB meeting.

Mario:

No. The term limit issue... I could see us maybe getting a small group from the RPB and a couple of members of the five member and just having a discussion. Because we've done that in the past. We did that with some of the bylaws revisions and some other thought processes, so that we had people from both groups and try to come up with a method. Because the term limits, we could unofficially invoke that, we can't necessarily do the officers.

Charles:

On the Five Member, we could do that? Because by not nominating somebody.

Mario:

If it was our policy that members of the Five Member Authority serve two of the terms, possibly a third, we could do that.

Tim:

You mean as a chairperson and vice chair?

Mario:

Not as the vice chair.

Tim:

You're talking about serving. That in a way is term limits.

Mario:

10 years is an optimum with sometimes you want to make it 15 because that person has a certain skillset that's in need and you don't want to create another problem or whatever. We could do that. I

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wouldn't want to try and railroad that. I would rather that be more of a discussion between the two boards or at least-

Tim:

Very thoughtful

Charles:

Absolutely.

Tim:

Plus they don't all retire at once. A term doesn't, which is good. That's obviously important for continuity as well.

Mario:

We definitely don't want that. That would be really [inaudible 01:06:13].

Mario:

I'll turn it around. Do you think that the RPB members should have term limits?

Tim:

I think they certainly could. Now, Dave Borowy I think has been on it a long time and I replaced him and before him there was a long-termer. A lot of you guys are real long-termers, right? It seems to me there's a lot of long-termers on this board and that's important.

Mario:

But they're political appointees.

Tim:

That's true, but to sustain a political appointment for that period of time is pretty miraculous, for many people, if you think about it.

Mario:

It goes to show your levelness.

Tim:

Well, I can understand a town where the politics doesn't change a whole lot, but there are towns where it does change and we still have sustained membership of a member, I would assume. I don't know for sure with every case.

Mario:

We definitely have. And I think the three year term is a good thing, because-

Tim:

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I love it. I think that's ideal.

Mario:

You extend beyond that two year term of a local elected official.

Tim:

But I also think it's good that the committee chairs, and the chairperson in general, has to rotate here. I think that's very important to the whole group and what we do here. And it should be no different with the Authority, in my opinion. Whether we can do it or not, I don't know. So what's the next step?

Mario:

This is great because usually I just have boring things to bring up to our non-breakfast breakfast meetings. So this one I might want to actually be in the same room with him. Jay, you were quiet again.

Jay:

I was [inaudible 01:08:58] Jennifer in the middle of this picture here and meeting assistance in her position as well to handle everything that's going on. I'm not sure if there's a set... I'm not sure if management has a setup where there's an assistant to the executive administrator.

Mario:

That I can talk to, because Jennifer was kind enough to clue me in. She does have a backup in case she hits the lottery. Correct, Jennifer?

Jennifer:

I'm training somebody, as a backup.

Tim:

Good. It's a lot of meetings. It's a lot of minutes. It's a lot of work.

Jennifer:

Well, if anything ever happens, or I can't make it, or I'm on vacation.

Tim:

No question.

Charles:

Wasn't that part of the Beth situation and what we were talking about succession is fairly critical at the Authority right now. And I think that's that they've got to address sooner than later, frankly.

Jennifer:

I've actually been trying to train somebody for a few years now. I've had three other people that I started training, but haven't been able to fully train somebody.

Bob:

Well, is this becoming a problem with the water company? That people are leaving dramatically? I know the organizational chart came out, but it seemed like there have been a lot of people who've left the organization and I know we don't hear about it all the time, every now and then we get the email, but I guess I'm just questioning if management understands that people are leaving more than they ever have in the past.

Tim:

Well, I think some of it speaks... That's just a guess. I think a lot of it speaks to, some of them just age out. We know some of the people that have retired in significant positions. Of course Beth was an obvious example of someone who left, because she had an opportunity to work with her husband all day and also live at home with him, which is amazing. But some of the other positions we don't really know and they happening with younger persons. So it's a fair question.

Stephen:

Tim, there's been a number of people. We had Lisa Burns. Who was there four months and left?

Tim:

There was also the young person in engineering who was terrific. I can't remember her name. She had long blonde hair, as I recall. But I met with her a couple of times on local issues in Cheshire. Very professional, very, very smart. And she did leave for another opportunity.

Mario:

Rose?

Tim:

Rose, yes. Right.

Stephen:

Yeah. And the other thing is there's a lot of people who, we've known this for a long time, who've been there a long time. And that's an asset, and they're about to retire and age out. And if people coming in aren't staying there or getting any experience in it, that's a succession problem.

Tim:

Well, I know that Larry spoke about how important it was to have people coming up through the education process, to attract people like that, just like tool and dye makers. Pratt and Whitney had to work on cultivating that sort of thing into our vocational programs. I think there is a dearth of people, that are interested in some of these types of industries, maybe. But then, there's just a shortage of people going to work these days, in every field. I don't see it. I don't see it anywhere else, where it's different.

Stephen:

But if they're coming and not staying, that's a different issue.

Tim:

Well, that's true. But if there's competition, that can be lucrative with every job move, people have been availing themselves of that. So I don't know if it's a culture thing or if it's just a current economic situation in the United States, in our state.

Mario:

Tim to the technical side. We're seeing this across the country, that people have been jumping ship between engineering firms. There is definitely less of an a... How do I want to put this? So when I took a job, I expected I would be there a number of years. For a long while.

Tim:

Sure. That's sort of our generation.

Mario:

My daughter, and her generation. A couple of years, a year, two, three, four, and onto the next, because there's another opportunity. Or it just didn't work out the way they did. I think maybe our generation, we thought more of, "Well, I'll make it through this and then, I'm going to get my five to 10 years and then, I'll consider moving on."

Tim:

Well, it's like upholstering furniture, buying new. Young people wouldn't reupholster a thing. Not that that matters. But as an example, they're just going to buy new and move on. And is it wrong? It's just a fact.

Mario:

Yeah, it is definitely a fact. We see it. There's also, I think, the attraction that there may have been for the Water Authority, 20, 30 years ago in the benefit side is not the same. Because I believe the pension plan has been closed for many years. So it doesn't have that level of long term benefit to say, "Well, if I stay here 30 years, I now have a pension that's X percent of my salary, landing salary." Whatever it is. I think that's been driving people, not attracting people as...

Tim:

Well, it makes them like everybody else. And then, you get to decide, "Well, do I want to be an engineer working for ABC or working for RWA?" And suddenly you're the same, and ABC just might pay a lot more. Who knows?

Mario:

Yep. Now what's interesting is, I think, at the higher levels, the RWA does pay very well. Because they did do a study years ago, and I think they've now finally reached that level. So it's a good point. I can definitely bring it up as a area of question. Other items that you all had? On meetings, agendas and issues? So Jennifer, I'll ask if... Oh, go ahead, Charles.

Charles:

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No, I just commented I think you got your hands full with what we've scheduled for you.

Mario:

Oh, that's good. I should have had a meeting in the summer.

Tim:

No, actually I think some of this really just kind of popped up. What do you think? I think some of it did.

Mario:

Yeah, no, definitely. One of the items that I had decorum for RPB meetings, respect. And I'm not sure how the best way is to address it. I would think that if I could approach an individual and speak with them about how they reacted during the meeting, I think that would be the best way to do it. I don't think there's any other way of trying to do it. I think some of us get to be real passionate about certain items.

Tim:

Well, there is Robert's rules. There is speaking through the Chair. To me, every member should address their question through the Chair. I think I make an effort to do that, Mr. Chair. And I think when you can govern people's sort of behaviors with procedure, it can help them. And I think if that can just be reminded of members, that we have rules and all questions should be directed through the Chair, then somebody might think twice in between shouting out to Larry about this, that, and the other thing, about doing it. And also I think the Chair can have a gavel that works.

Mario:

Yeah. Jennifer won't let me in the building.

Tim:

You don't have to have a gavel, but you can speak up when you have to.

Charles:

Can probably be accused of having a weapon or something.

Tim:

Not with a board that's following Robert's rules.

Mario:

Yeah. Okay. And yeah, please, I asked all of you if you see that there's something I can do better, please let me know.

Tim:

You do a great job. I'm just trying to give you the best tools available without a member necessarily, such as myself, having to speak up and tell him, in a polite way, he's out of order. And I think Jay did the

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same thing. But sometimes some people are out of order and they just need to be told they're out of order.

Mario:

Okay.

Stephen:

Mr. Chairman?

Mario:

Yes, Steve.

Stephen:

Just with regard to agendas, Prem has brought a number of good issues to our committee. I've had a few things I wanted to do, but I do think there's some issues that maybe cross over. So if the other committee Chairpersons have an issue they think consumer affairs may be interested in, just let me know and we could possibly do a joint meeting on it.

Tim:

Perfect.

Mario:

Cool. Very good. Jeff, you've been quiet.

Jeff:

Well, this is your purview. It's the RPB'S discussion. I'm just an observer.

Mario:

No, I understand. But I think I speak for everyone on this call. I'm using the word "call," or this meeting, that we appreciate your input and your knowledge and what you bring to the table. So I'm reaching out.

Jeff:

Thank you. Well, I think the meetings are... It's amazing how much business has been able to be done through very, what I consider to be, almost dysfunctional tool. Video conferencing was never supposed to be for people who geographically are close together. I can remember my father. My father's been retired for 29 years. So I can remember using a video conferencing room at Long Wharf, when my dad was at the phone company, to take a deposition, that was going to take about 90 minutes of a guy in Los Angeles. And we said, "Gee, instead of flying out there and taking a 90 minute deposition, is there any technology available, so we can do this friendly deposition?" So that's really what the tool was supposed to be. And of course, the pandemic brought on a whole new array of... I had one day, a couple weeks ago, where I had a WebEx, a Google Meets, a Zoom meeting, and a Teams meeting.

And I'm not kidding you, at the end of the day, my computer was just not working for any of them. I was changing the microphone settings around. I look forward to being back in person, because I do think

that the group operates better when everyone's in the same room. I certainly understand the pandemic, the waves of the pandemic. My son just had it down in Virginia last week. He was pretty sick with it. So I certainly understand that it's, I think, having the availability of a hybrid meeting for people who just don't feel comfortable being in a room under the weather, whatever, I think, is important. But the only comment I really have is, I look forward to being back in person.

Charles:

Mario, I have another point, which I don't know, I guess it's just a discussion. I'm a little worried about bumping up against this meeting's time limit. But in Nominating Committee, the other night I, near the end, when we were getting ready to make a decision, I brought up that I wanted to hear from Jeff as the OCA. And I was a little taken aback, and I don't think it was just the Chair, but a number of people said that that was inappropriate.

Tim:

That was me and Greg. I don't think the Chair thought it was inappropriate. Greg and I.

Charles:

Why, at any given point, would consumers of fair advocate be inappropriate?

Tim:

Because he couldn't vote on the matter. He could provide guidance. But I saw the role, I saw Jeff's role, the same as I would see his role as the town attorney, for the town of Cheshire. You've got a nine member committee council taking up actions and voting upon it. He is not involved in that vote. He may have provided some guidance along the way, if it's a decision that related to his role. Nor does the town manager have a vote. So that's how I responded. I can't speak for Greg. It had nothing to do with the competency of the person.

Charles:

No, no. I never was going there. It would seem to me, at any given point, any decision that, either we are making or even recommendation that we are making, that the Office of Consumer Affairs' opinion would be important. Just to know if there's something that we don't know that he knows or aware of. I got to tell you, I was a little taken aback by that.

Tim:

Well, that's why I thought I should give you my explanation. Because I didn't give an explanation. I wasn't asked, but I figured it's worthy of an answer since you asked the question. Can't speak for Greg, but that's where I was coming from. I thought, when you get to votes, whoever gets to vote in this case.

Charles:

Let me ask the question another way. Is there any situation where the opinion or the input of Jeff as OCAs is inappropriate?

Mario:

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Interesting your description, Tim, of why you did that. And I read it completely differently. So I would say, if Bruce McDermott was there, that Bruce McDermott would be playing the role of the town attorney at the town council meeting, because he is our attorney. The opinion of the OCA is the representative of the consumers, as opposed to our legal counsel. And although we have leaned on Jeff probably beyond his role as the OCA, in trying to give us some guidance and legal opinions on the way other communities do it or other boards do things, he's there representing the consumer. So definitely not a vote. I agree with you there.

Charles:

I could interrupt though. I wasn't looking for Jeff's opinion. I was just looking if he had any information that would be relevant to our decision making.

Mario:

And I'm not sure...

Charles:

I didn't ask him to make it a judgment call on it or a vote, as Tim pointed out. I just wanted to know if there's anything that he knows about the five member authority, because he goes to the meetings, that we should know about.

Mario:

And I was getting there.

Charles:

Okay. I'm sorry.

Mario:

So to ask if he has, and I'm sorry I was long winded, to ask if he has any information to share, I don't think that's inappropriate. But that's my thing.

Tim:

No, but the thing is, you probably more clearly stated the distinguishing role between the OCA and the attorney for the education. So I did not make that distinction. And I'll tell you why. Number one, I'm not as smart as you. And number two, Jeff is our town attorney in Cheshire. And I know where he sits and where he stands and how important he is, nonetheless, how important he is. So I think that's probably where I was coming from. I can't speak for Greg. I can't, and I'm not going to ask Jeff what he thought of my opinion either.

Jeff:

Well, to be honest with you, the enabling legislation says that the Office of Consumer Affairs shall intervene in any matter in the consumer's interest. So it's really kind of, and I've talked to other people about this since I became OCA, it's really kind of a bizarre role. Because the OCA's appointed by the RPB, but really reports to nobody. If I decide the RPB's doing a bad job, I can give that opinion. Now, I don't know who the heck I'm supposed to give that opinion to.

Tim:

Give it to me.

Jeff:

But I certainly don't have any jurisdiction over the Five Member Authority, because the five member authority is appointed by the RPB. So, So we're all on the same page. If there was something that I wanted to say, you should know by now, I would say it. With all due respect to Tim and everybody else, if somebody said, "I don't think he should weigh in," If I thought it was something that, "Hey, I think you're making a big mistake here. This guy's all wrong for the organization and here's why," I would certainly speak up, whether I was invited to or not. So I didn't have any problem. I'm not a voting member of any committee or the RPB. So I know that all I can do is express opinions.

I don't have any veto power over anybody. I get it. But certainly, that language in the enabling legislation is very broad. And if I felt like someone was going to be appointed, either to the RPB in one of my member communities, and I have been consulted from time to time by chief elected officials about, "What are the qualifications to be on the RPB? And do you think so and so is a good member?" And that kind of thing. And I think that's within the purview of the OCA, because it affects the consumer interest. So yeah.

Charles:

Procedurally, where I thought I was coming from, and I could be off base, but procedurally, I would think that maybe not required, but it's good to have in the minutes that you didn't have any objection. That's where I was going with it. I was requesting your input, no different than Mario asks at an RPB meeting, at the end of the RPB meeting, whether or not you have anything to let us know. And I thought, procedurally, for the minutes, that we ought to have your statement as OCA. And I just trying to... If I'm off base, I'm off base. I don't have a problem with it.

Tim:

Well, I thought we were also very close. I thought we were in the conversation about actually advancing Kevin's appointment. And that's where I didn't think... I thought we were past the point.

Jeff:

That's how I took it.

Tim:

That's how I interpreted the timing of that.

Jeff:

That's how I took it, based on the timing. Yep.

Tim:

Yeah, I think that's important that that be stated. We were at a point where we were almost looking for the sixth vote.

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Mario:

So to clarify, the OCA's charge is broad. I guess, seeking their opinion is okay, is kind of how I'm hearing this discussion.

Tim:

Of course.

Mario:

But if you're at the point where you're just about ready to vote, I guess, yeah, maybe it was a little too late.

Tim:

That was my interpretation. Now maybe I'm mistaken, but I can only speak for why I said it.

Charles:

That's a little bit why I brought it up tonight. I just wanted to know if there was something that I was misreading or something. Because the way it was stated that it was inappropriate or something, that struck me as odd, frankly.

Tim:

And I believe those are my words.

Mario:

And I'm glad you brought it up.

Tim:

And Charles, we do nothing but get along.

Charles:

Right. No problem. Although you do seem a little wound up lately. Everything all right?

Mario:

Anything on meetings? Meetings and issues. Too many meetings.

Charles:

Yeah. We're bumping up against your time limit here.

Mario:

Yes. Okay. Thank you all. This was a good discussion, I think.

Stephen:

Yes, very good.

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Charles:

Yeah. Let's not wait until next summer to have another one.

Mario:

No, we should reconvene in January, Jen, after the first. Make sure we get through New Years. And we're sharp as a tack. And this way, we can cover some of the other issues. And I will definitely have a... Excuse me, I may meet with David separately, initially, before I bring these up, some of these topics up at a joint meeting with Larry.

Tim:

I think that's important.

Mario:

I may see if he's available for a cup of coffee. But thank you very much for your assistance and all the input and all the long meetings that you go through.

Tim:

Thank you.

Mario:

Since we are a special meeting, who wants the motion to adjourn? Because we can't add any items.

Tim:

So moved.

Speaker 6:

So moved second.

Mario:

Second. Okay. All in favor?

Charles:

Goodnight, everyone.

Mario:

Thank you all very much.