

A workshop of the Town Board of the Town of Moreau was held on December 1, 2021 in the Town of Moreau Municipal building, 351 Reynolds Road, Moreau, New York for the purpose of having discussion with the Water Consultant on Water Department operations.

The Supervisor apologized for the delay and opened the meeting at 5:12 p.m.

The meeting was held live as well as broadcast via Zoom.

Town Board Members Present

John Hogan	Councilmember
Kyle Noonan	Councilmember
Alan VanTassel	Councilmember
John Donohue, Jr.	Councilmember
Theodore T. Kusnierz, Jr.	Councilmember

Town Board Members Absent

None

Also present: Leeann McCabe, Town Clerk; Ron Laberge and Don Rhodes, Laberge Group; Mike Mooney, Water Consultant; Jana DeCamilla, Post Star Reporter; Town Residents: Mike Shaver and Jesse Fish

The Supervisor stated, that at the last Town Board meeting, the Town Board expressed an interest in meeting with the contractor who's operating the Water Department. The Supervisor stated, that after the contractor had a chance to see how the Town operates its Water Department, he wanted to point out some things that the Town might not be aware of and may have some constructive ideas on how to make the Department more efficient. He introduced Mike Mooney.

Mr. Mooney stated that he has been at the Town of Wilton for 28 years. He stated that the Town of Moreau is at the point the Town of Wilton was at 28 years ago, with the added development. He stated, that when he started the Town had just acquired a private water company that had about 700 customers. At present, they have about 3,800 customers, which serves approximately 10,000 people.

Mr. Mooney stated that it appears the Town has invested in a system that's very well kept. It operates on elevated tanks, which cuts down on power usage. He stated that there were SCADA systems and chlorine monitors at all sites. He stated that he's just starting to get familiar with the Master Meter reading system for billing purposes.

Mr. Mooney stated that he was asked to look at the Town's rates and developer fees and such. He put together a spread sheet, which reflected what other towns charge, and passed it out to the Town Board members. He stated that the Town of Moreau bills semi-annually and that most other municipalities bill quarterly. He also stated that some municipalities with large users even bill monthly. He stated that people would rather have four smaller bills than a few large bills. Mr. Mooney stated that about 2,400 of their 3,500 customers are on an auto bill pay plan. When the bill is produced quarterly on the 15th, it automatically takes the funds necessary from whatever account they have set up. The Supervisor asked if other municipalities offer different rates (i.e. Industrial, Residential, Municipal)? Mr. Mooney stated that he hadn't seen that but that it wouldn't be unheard of. Mr. Mooney stated that buy-in fees for those new customers, catches them up with what the previous owner had been paying. He did suggest that the Town evaluate their rate schedule each year.

The Supervisor asked Mr. Mooney if the Town of Wilton puts the buy-in fees in a reserve account to purchase reserve capacity. Mr. Mooney explained the fees on his spread sheet. He stated that they split the buy-in fee into two parts. Part one is required prior to town approval. The second part is paid after approval.

The Supervisor questioned that the Town of Wilton requires the developer to install water lines. Mr. Mooney stated that they do. They're charged \$1.00/foot and the Town inspects the work. Once the Town is satisfied of the proper installation, the lines are turned over to the Town with a two-year letter of credit,

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which is based on 20% of the value of the installation for year one and 10% for year two. He stated that it was in case something goes wrong with the installation. He stated that they've never had to act on a letter of credit in 28 years.

Councilmember Noonan asked how the Town would be protected if they aren't installing their own lines. Mr. Mooney stated that the Town engineer monitors the work.

Mr. Mooney stated that they have a flat rate for sewer and that it's not based on water usage like some other municipalities do. He did say that there is one subdivision that has a different rate because they have to use grinder pumps. He stated that they have 63 pumps, which means 63 electrical services. Their rate is different to adjust for the extra cost of the electricity.

Mr. Mooney stated that they have fees to turn the water off and on as requested.

Mr. Mooney provided the Board members with a copy of his 2022 Budget and Financial Statement. He mentioned how much money they put into reserve fund for the replacement of lines if need be. He stated that they won't have to borrow money.

The Supervisor asked how many employees work with him. Mr. Mooney stated that they had four full-time employees, but right now they have three full-time and two part-time. The Comptroller for the Town, who retired, went to work for them. She does the bookkeeping on a part-time basis. Their clerk does all the billing and handles all the phone calls coming into the office. The Supervisor asked if the clerk was full-time and Mr. Mooney replied that she was. He stated that she does their payroll as well.

Mr. Mooney touched on final water readings. He stated, that with all the apartments they have, they have to get readings often. He stated that their system allows them to do a final reading on the spot. He stated that they bill the tenant as a service but ultimately the owner is responsible.

Councilmember Noonan stated that the Town isn't equipped to do this right now but that the information was informative. Mr. Mooney stated that there are some good programs out there, where auto bill pay can be integrated right in. Councilmember Noonan asked if this takes some of the burden off the employees and Mr. Mooney replied that it does. He stated that they have 2,400 customers that get billed on the 15th and with auto pay, the payments are all applied at the same time the next day.

The Supervisor asked what program they use. Mr. Mooney replied RES out of Austin, Texas. Mr. Mooney stated that for the 2,400 customers that pay by auto pay, it costs them about \$28,000 to process.

Councilmember VanTassel stated that the Town is struggling to backfill the position of Water Superintendent and thanked Mr. Mooney for stepping in. He asked Mr. Mooney if he found anything within the Water Department that the Town needed to be concerned with. Mr. Mooney replied no, as far as the system goes.

Councilmember VanTassel asked Mr. Mooney how many employees he thought the Town should have. Mr. Mooney suggested four people total. An administrator, someone for billing and one or two for the field. They had two full-time employees and one person left. He stated that they're doing fine, however, the one issue is that someone needs to be on-call at all times. There needs to be coverage for vacations and sickness, as well as on weekends.

Councilmember VanTassel asked for clarification on installs. He heard that Mr. Mooney was surprised to hear that the Town did their own. Mr. Mooney stated that he doesn't provide that service but that other municipalities do. He didn't think that it was worth it, by the time you spend money on materials, labor and insurance. He stated that it could be done either way, however, it's important that the Town witness the tap to make sure it's done properly.

Mr. Mooney stated that repairs of lines 2" or less, they do themselves. Anything larger, they have a contractor do it. He stated that they have an arrangement with a contractor.

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Councilmember VanTassel asked if there's anything the Town does that we shouldn't be doing. Mr. Mooney stated that they don't clear snow from the fire hydrants. The other thing he noticed was that the sewer station is checked daily. He stated that it's alarmed in case it goes down, so it doesn't need to be.

Councilmember VanTassel asked if Mr. Mooney had any other large purchases that will need to be made and Mr. Mooney replied no.

Councilmember VanTassel stated that the Town had an initiative of swapping out meters that had bad batteries. He asked Mr. Mooney if this was on his radar or if the project is on hold. Mr. Mooney stated that it's a staffing thing. He mentioned that there are companies out there that can do this. He stated that it wouldn't be free, but it would take the burden off the staff and it's efficient.

There were no other questions for Mr. Mooney. The Supervisor thanked him for coming.

The workshop ended at 5:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leeann McCabe
Town Clerk