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COMMUNICATION



OF THE

BOARD OF ALDERMEN,

WATER COMMISSIONERS,

In Relation to

LAYING DOWN THE

DISTRIBUTING WATER PIPES.

DOCUMENT No. 72.

NEW YORK:

BRYANT AND BOGGS, PRINTERS.

COMMUNICATION

WATER COMMISSIONERS

LAYING DOWN THE

DISTRIBUTING WATER TUBES

DOCUMENT NO. 12

NEW YORK:

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BOARD OF ALDERMEN,

MAY 4, 1840.

Communication of the Water Commissioners, in relation to laying down the Distributing Pipes. Laid on the table and ordered to be printed.

THOMAS BOLTON, CLERK.

WATER COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE, }
New York, May 4, 1840. }

To the Hon. the Boards of Aldermen and Assistant Aldermen, of the City of New York.

The Act of the Legislature under which the Board of Water Commissioners are appointed, appears to require that the Board should, from time to time, communicate such information as they may deem important, on subjects connected with the object of their appointment; and under this view of their duty, they take leave to call the attention of your Hon. Bodies to the subject of the connecting pipes between the city and the distributing reservoir, and the laying down of distributing pipes throughout the city; in the proper execution of which, they consider the city deeply interested,

At the time of first entering upon our official duties, we were informed by our predecessors, that they considered their duties terminated with the reservoir at Murray's Hill; and our Engineers, who were the Engineers of our predecessors, informed us that they were never, as they consider, consulted as to the important subject we refer to. The Chief Engineer of this Department informs us, that with the exception of one evening meeting (about eighteen months since) with a Committee of the Corporation, he has never been called upon, or consulted with, by any body, on this subject; and that at the meeting referred to, he disapproved, in part at least, of the plan proposed; and that the individual employed by the Corporation to lay down these pipes, was, however, directed to call on the Engineer of this Department, to confer with him, but that he never came, and that the above was the last interview, of a business character, he had with any one on this subject, except the present Water Purveyor, who called upon him in March last, and had some informal discussion in relation to pipes.

We take the liberty also, respectfully to say that, under our views of our duties, as prescribed by the law of the 28th of April last, directing "that no item of expenditure should be charged against this Water Stock Fund, except the same is approved by the Water Commissioners," we have considered it our duty to call the attention of our Engineers to this subject, and to examine the plans, and to make such suggestions to your Hon. Bodies, as the subject may appear to require.

The extent of the subject, and its importance, will be readily perceived, when it has been stated by our predecessors, that lines of pipes, to the extent of 165 miles, will be required, and as early as the Spring of 1842, according to the opinions of our predecessors, from which we see no reason to dissent. The lines of pipes now laid down, are in extent about 35 miles, which are to be mainly abstracted from the length of line, believed to be required. Now by the progress made

the last year, and understood to be making for the present year, it would require 14 or 15 years to complete the laying down of the distributing pipes, supposing the city to remain stationary.

Whether this is a duty which is likely to be *properly, economically, and seasonably* executed by the Committees of the Corporation, which may, from time to time, be in power, or whether it be decided to have it executed by this department, are points to which we ask the serious consideration of your Honorable Bodies.

We are the more led to express our anxiety on this subject, from the fact that we are unable to learn that any thing has been accomplished, or even ordered or directed by the Common Council, towards laying down any *distributing pipes for the purpose of supplying our citizens with water, or with a view to reimburse the city for the very large debt to be incurred for the introduction of water, or even to meet any part of the interest which will be accruing on the same.*

We are aware that pipes, for the last six or seven years, have been under process of being laid down; but they have been laid down, and wisely too, for the extinguishment of fires; and although, to a considerable extent, they will no doubt be used for supplying the inhabitants of our city with water, yet this was not looked to as the main object; and our predecessors, in their report of 1837, doubted whether the iron would admit of being drilled to draw the water; but whether that be the fact or not, these pipes have not been laid down, *to a very great extent*, in the parts of the city where the water is *most required*, will be *most sought after* and *most readily paid for*. To elucidate our meaning, we beg to enumerate the streets designed to be *piped*, during the present year, and ordered, on the supposition (as appears by the report of the Committee of the Corporation) that the water would be at least partially introduced in 1841. Your ordinance of February, 1840, directing the laying down of pipes for the present year, is as follows:

“Broadway, from Thirteenth to Twenty-first street; Third avenue, from Thirteenth to Twenty-eighth street; Greene, from Canal to Amity street; Sullivan, from Canal to Amity street; Greenwich, from Charles street to the Ninth avenue; Ninth avenue, to Twenty-first street; Second street, from the Bowery to avenue A; avenue D, from Houston to Tenth street; Ninth street, from the Third to the Second avenue; Second avenue, from Ninth street to Houston street; Chapel, from Chambers to Canal street; Laurens, from Canal to Amity street; Allen, from Grand street to the First avenue; up the First avenue to Fourteenth street; Attorney, from Grand to Houston street; through Houston street to intersect the line of pipes at the corner of avenue D and Columbia street.”

Now it will be perceived, by reference to the reports of the Board of Assistant Aldermen, in February last, when the subject of laying down pipes for the ensuing year was under consideration, and when the above streets were adopted as the proper streets to be *pipéd*, that not one word is said of these streets being occupied by a dense population, requiring the water, or of their being ready to pay for it. The fact appears to be obvious, that the eleven miles of pipes, directed to be laid down during the present year, will be in the parts of the city having most of the good water, and which even supplies, to a considerable extent, the rest of the city; and that on many of the said streets there is but a sparse population, who would probably not purchase the water. This is certainly the case in the Third avenue, up to Twenty-eighth street; in the Ninth avenue, up to Twenty-first street; and avenue A, up to Fourteenth street. If these pipes have been laid down for the extinguishment of fire, as we presume is the case, it but makes good our remark, that but little or nothing has been done with a view to revenue from the disposal of this water. If this motive had at all governed your Honorable Bodies, you would not, for instance, have left the dense population on all the north side of the town, from

the Battery to Greenwich, below Hudson street (and with hardly a well of drinkable water) up to this time, without a pipe laid down to furnish them water, when it may be introduced from abroad. The like remark might be made as to the east side of the lower part of the city, and also apply to the lower part of the city generally. For although the dense part of the city has either every third or fourth street (parallel or across the Island) been supplied with pipes; yet these, if suited for the supply of families, would yet leave, it is supposed, *nine-tenths of the population*, who would be glad to take the water, unsupplied with pipes to conduct it. This deficiency becomes more important as but a limited supply of pipes can be cast and procured in any one year, and for this purpose the order must be given the year beforehand.

We respectfully remark, that our citizens must soon be taxed, to provide for the large amount of interest annually to become due on the cost of this work (increased by accumulated interest during its progress) or some department must, with industry and economy, carry on this business of laying down the distributing pipes in those parts of the city, and those, at present, only, which require, and are ready, to take and pay for the water, and by this means liquidate the interest which from time to time will become due.

If we urge this subject earnestly, it is from the wish to have the Croton Water Works made to support itself, and provide for the interest which will be accruing on its cost at its completion; but it is respectfully submitted, whether it would not be preferable hereafter for the city to provide for the interest accruing during the construction of the work, rather than to take for such purpose the monies intended for its construction.

In connection with this subject we beg leave further to suggest, whether it would not be expedient to lay a tax, or assessment, on each lot, fronting on which these distributing pipes are or shall be laid. Could our citizens object to pay

for, say $12\frac{1}{2}$ feet of pipe, to which their connecting or service pipe is to be attached? This would amount to about \$30 per lot, and we think it would not be an onerous tax on the owner of the lot. The owners of the lots who petitioned first to have the pipes laid down, under this plan, might be first *accommodated*. It would settle all questions as to where the pipes should be *first laid*. The tax, or assessment, would reduce the water debt *a million and one-half of dollars*.

We respectfully ask, whether, as it regards the part of the pipes now in process of being laid down, and contemplated to be used to supply the dwellings of citizens with water, it would not be expedient to lay down the cross service pipes, which come under the pavement, so as to prevent the pavement from being again broken up.

There is also one subject certainly worthy of consideration, connected with these distributing pipes. The Manhattan Company have already laid down about 14 or 15 miles of pipes; these will be unproductive to that company when the Croton water is introduced into the city. They now present obstruction, to some extent, in laying down the Croton pipes. Is it not expedient to possess all the information, in relation to these pipes, that can be procured, so as to form an opinion if they can be used by the city for the purpose of distributing the Croton water; and what consideration, if any, would be charged the Corporation for the same; provided the Corporation undertook to do the duty of distributing the water, which the Manhattan Company are by law bound to do, and which was the *bonus*, or consideration for their Bank Charter.

We have said that the work should be done with *economy*, and this is certainly necessary, to prevent taxation for the interest and cost of the Croton Water Works. It is believed that all the improvements of the city, carried on by *days work*, and by Committees of the immediate representatives of the people, will, of necessity, cost the city a much larger

much more able to form an opinion, in relation thereto, than their successors will be enabled to do for some months to come.

But whoever may perform the duties herein referred to, it appears to be highly desirable that the wishes of the Corporation, whatever they may be, should be *frequently* and *fully* communicated to the Board of Water Commissioners; so that by conference and union of the judgment of your Committee, and whatever information this Board and their Engineers may be supposed to possess, should be brought to bear on the subjects above referred to; and as the main and very arduous duties of the Fire and Water Committee of the Corporation relate principally to the extinguishment of fires, it is respectfully suggested whether a Special Committee should not be appointed, having for its duties the consideration of the plans which the Water Commissioners might propose for supplying the dwelling houses, the shipping, manufactories, and cleaning the streets and sewers, and especially the subject of revenue to be derived from the sale of this water.

In conclusion, the undersigned respectfully submit these remarks, in the hope that they may be useful, and that they will be received in the same spirit they are communicated.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

SAMUEL STEVENS,	} <i>Water</i>
ZEBEDEE RING,	
JOHN D. WARD,	
BENJAMIN BIRDSALL,	
SAMUEL N. CHILDS,	
	} <i>Commissioners.</i>

amount than if done by contract, and directed and executed by departments.

By contract our predecessors have done almost all the work executed on the aqueduct, and in the same manner we respectfully urge that the distributing pipes be laid down.

We have gone the more fully into this subject, because it appears that our predecessors, who brought much honesty of motive, industry and attention to the subject of their charge, and to whom the city on these accounts are largely their debtors, construed the law under which they acted, as terminating their duties at Murray's Hill; and it is understood they were disinclined, and did not think it expedient for the Board of Water Commissioners to take charge of the subject of this communication.

In neither of these particulars do we agree with our predecessors; but whatever doubts may have been entertained, as to the law under which they acted, there can be none as to the law of April, 1840, requiring that no item of expense shall be charged by the Corporation to this Water Fund, except it shall be approved by the Board of Water Commissioners.

We disclaim wishing for ourselves, or for any object, (other than what we consider the interest of the city,) to bring this business into this department; and if the Corporation think it expedient to appoint a separate department for the execution of the objects herein contemplated, we will furnish such supervision as will enable us to judge of the reasonableness of the plans, the economy of the execution, and the propriety of the "items" charged in relation to the same.

We do not, in this communication, advert to other subjects connected with the great and highly interesting works under our charge; deeming it advisable to defer, for the present, all other subjects, in the hope that the present Boards will, before going out of office, act on the one which has led to this communication; as we consider the present Boards