



Sammy Rich, City Manager
Mike Hackett, Director
John Boyd, Assistant Director
WATER AND SEWER DIVISION
Customer Service Department
Bryan Parris, Director
Operations Department
Brandon M. Cook, Director
Water Reclamation Facilities
Jeff Hill, Director
Water Treatment Facilities
Wayne Stanley, Director

WATER AND SEWER COMMITTEE MEETING
City Hall, 601 Broad Street, Sam King Room
Thursday, August 3, 2023
9:00 AM

PRESENT: Chairperson Jim Bojo
Commissioner Craig McDaniel
Commissioner Elaina Beeman
Mr. Sammy Rich, City Manager
Mrs. Meredith Ulmer, Assistant City Manager
Mr. Mike Hackett, Division Director
Mr. John Boyd, Assistant Division Director
Mr. Bryan Parris, Customer Service Director
Mr. Wayne Stanley, Water Treatment Facilities Director
Mr. Jeff Pope, Assistant Water Treatment Facilities Director

VISITORS: David Crowder WRGA News
Tom Couch, citizen
Diana Hopper, citizen

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jim Bojo welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

REVIEW OF THE MINUTES

No changes to the July 6, 2023, minutes were suggested, and minutes were approved by common consent.

Minutes prepared by: Bryan Parris, Customer Service Director
Water and Sewer Committee/ Commission Minutes, August 3, 2023

FINANCIAL REPORT

In the absence of Mrs. Rhinehart, Mr. Hackett gave a brief update of the Divisions financials reporting Operating Revenues were up by nearly \$2 million year to date from this time last year at \$15.6 million versus \$13.8 million. Expenses totaled \$10.1 million year to date, up about \$300 thousand. He pointed out in Reserves we could see that some of the settlement was starting to come in and that would continue through September.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Customer Service, Mr. Parris updated the committee of the daily activities in Water Billing providing a breakdown of the number of customers and types of service requests the department handles on an average day. He reported there were about 80 walk-in customers and around 130 utilizing the drive-thru per day coming in to make payments and/or to request service turn on/off for a total of around 210 customers. The department also receives around 16 request per day for service through email. Four field service crew members respond to the daily service connection request as well as repair to meters and around 85 nonpayment disconnections and around 68 reconnections per week.

Chairperson Bojo asked how many people work in the office and how many in the field. Parris report there was a total of 7 in the office and 4 in the field.

Commissioner Beeman asked if there was an increase in the Hispanic population coming into the office. Parris responded that was probably the largest group of walk-in customers however it has gone down slightly most likely due to the phone payment system which has a Spanish option. Commissioner Beeman asked if we had anyone who could translate in the office because she had some complaints that there was no one. Parris replied we do not have anyone in the office, but we could get someone in if there was a major issue that needed to be addressed. He also stated the department would like to have someone who could translate and was attempting to find someone anytime there was an open position with no luck in the last two postings. Mr. Boyd and Mr. Rich said there are people within the city who can help when needed but it would be great to have someone on the front line.

Floyd County Water Wholesale, Mr. Hackett reported since the Division changed from a wholesale rate of \$1.46 to more a demand rate of \$3.52 there is not a major change in the revenue, showing a 5-year average of about 196 million with a profit of almost \$90,000.00 on the wholesale rate and now on the demand rate the county purchased 32 million at a profit of almost \$77,000.00. Adding this reduction in our demand means we can look at as smaller plant, the 24 million versus the 30 million which could save around \$20 million.

Mr. Rich stated so what you are saying is we are selling them 16% of the water we were but profit wise we are making 85% of what we were making. So, we are basically making the same amount of revenue with less wear and tear on equipment and less chemicals. Mr. Hackett replied yes.

Citizen Tom Couch asked, since Floyd County is buying water from Calhoun does Calhoun have problems with PFOAS? Mr. Hackett state they have reached out to us about it. Mr. Couch then asked if Floyd County was testing for PFOAS? Mr. Hackett said that was a good question.

Leak Protection

Minutes prepared by: Bryan Parris, Customer Service Director
Water and Sewer Committee/ Commission Minutes, August 3, 2023

Mr. Hackett explained how the program works and how other surrounding areas programs compare. Explaining we currently charge \$1.65 per month and have built a reserve of approximately \$400,000.00. He went on to show the current average collections as well as the average claims. Mr. Hackett also explained that there has been a major increase in credit card use in past couple of years and he and Mrs. Rhinehart had briefly discussed using these reserved funds to offset the expense of credit card merchant fees, adding our attorneys stated if there is funding to cover the programs cost that would not be a problem. Mr. Hackett then stated we would like to propose changing the current monthly charge of \$1.65 to \$1.50.

Commissioner McDaniel made the motion to approve the recommendation. Commissioner Beeman seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimously to approve.

LIHWAP

Mr. Parris reported that the program has assisted 368 with a total of \$114,000.00 with the average customer receiving \$250.00. Program has been very simple for the department and very successful.

Chulio Hills

Mr. Hackett presented a map showing the proposed route that cost estimates of 3.25 million at the time would likely be much higher giving an example of the original estimates for Barwell Creek Sewer Project were between 4 and 5 million and our engineer said anything over 6 million would be gouging, 10 people take out the plans and we received 2 bids one was 12.2 million and the other was 13.3 million. This works out to be about \$81,000.00 per account based on 100 percent participation from all property owners and this does not include tap fees and plumbing which the customer would have to pay at around \$7500.00 unless the City absorbed which would bring totals to about \$90,000.00 per account. Mr. Hackett added at some point in the past some conversations took place, but we do not know exactly what was agreed to and in 1984 the City did make sewer extensions for development but in 2002 our policy changed, and the City no longer makes sewer extensions for development.

Commissioner McDaniel added as someone in the real estate business he is seeing this everywhere and has dealt with this type of situation at least 25 times himself, saying to develop a property the developer must pay for the sewer extensions.

Chairperson Bojo asked how long the payback would be on that 6 million figure. Mr. Hackett said we did not have it on that figure but on the estimated figure it was 132 years. Based on manufacturing recommendations you would have to replace it twice before it was paid for the first time.

Commissioner McDaniel asked is there anything along 5th Ave or Avenue A that we are doing water and sewer wise?

Mr. Hackett said some of the work we did as part of the ARC project, such as crossing Turner McCall at N 5th near Publics as well as laying new lines on Ave D so when we can loop those two lines together it will greatly improve the volume, flows and fire protection in that area.

Commissioner McDaniel asked in terms of additional guidelines from the EPA with everything going on with PFOAS are you aware of anything else coming down the pipeline as far as guidelines are concerned?

Mr. Hackett said things will likely shift to wastewater which could call for some changes at our wastewater facility but one thing about PFAS, if you solve the PFAS you just about solve all the other problems there are because the solution is RO.

Lead and Copper Rule

Mr. Stanley presented the EPA revisions to the lead and copper rules with the biggest one being the lead, sewer line inventory and must be submitted in 2024. We have a contract with 120 Water to perform this for us, we will have to do some of this, which includes some work being done with the meter changeout program. Once this is completed, we will have to develop a new tier one sample site list, which is a list of single-family residence with plumbing installed between January 1981 and mid-June 1988 with lead pipe, it could be copper pipe with lead solder. And it could also be a partial or entire service line of lead. Sample would likely be 2026 and requires 20% of schools and day cares to be sampled annually until completion. We will then notify customers if we have 15 parts per billion which I do not expect we will base on past sampling. We have been feeding a phosphate since around 91 or 92 which combats leaching of lead and copper into the water.

Mr. Hackett added the contractors who are changing our meters are collecting our service line and customer service line types while they are changing the meter at a cost of \$5.00 per home which is a huge savings compared to having to have this done separately. Additionally, the EPD has contracted with 120 Water to run the whole program for them, so we are essentially already working with the EPDs Program Administrator. This is something we were worried about, but we feel much better about this now. We are in the inventory part of this now and we expect after the inventory portion is complete the EPA to monitor the data and then determine what will be replaced, when and who will do it.

Mr. Stanley also discussed how the division increased our alkalinity in 2014 which creates a distribution system that is not corrosive thereby reducing the leaching of lead and copper. Mr. Hackett added in 2019 we added a zinc bulk storage tank.

Residual Solid Management

Mr. Hackett explained we currently have 4 lagoons where we do our residual solid management, the solids come from where we remove the silt from the raw water. In the past we could use these solids as a soil amendment for topsoil when we do work out in the system. We can no longer that so we will be building a residual solids management plant on site with the RO plant. This is a separate entity and had nothing to do with water production but dealing with a byproduct of production. He also presented a drawing showing the new plants layout. The current lagoons will be allowed to fill up then capped and abandoned which should coincide with the completion of the RO plant.

Chairperson Bojo asked what is the timeline for this? Mr. Hackett said he thinks it would still be in 2026.

OTHER

Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted.

Mike Hackett, Director
Rome Water and Sewer Division