

**Draft Minutes of the July 12, 2021 Water Authority Meeting
Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority
1649 Route 12, Gales Ferry, CT**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this meeting was held virtually using public meeting guidelines established by the Governor to limit the spread and impact of the virus.

Present

Authority: Chairman Edward Monahan, Vice-Chairman Harry Watson, Treasurer Paul Eccard, Barbara Lee Franciosi, Peter Balestracci, Nick Mullane, and Claudia Koerting.

Authority Staff: General Manager Josh Cansler

Call to Order

Chairman Monahan called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

Public Comment on any Item on the Agenda – None

Approval of Prior Minutes

On a motion of Mr. Eccard, seconded by Mr. Mullane, the Authority approved the minutes of the June 14, 2021 Authority Meeting, by a unanimous vote of all members present.

Correspondence

General Manager Cansler discussed an article titled “Lebanon Homeowners Face Big Bills for Small Water System” that appeared in the *Connecticut Examiner* newspaper on June 29, 2021. The article discussed a community water system supporting a 41 home subdivision in Lebanon that is trying to address huge aging infrastructure issues. Mr. Cansler said he included this article primarily because it discussed a small community water system similar to many of the SCWA systems. He added that the enabling legislation that created SCWA intentionally specified that SCWA has the right to acquire any water system within, or outside, the SCWA District; except within the Town of Lebanon.

General Manager’s Report

1. COVID-19/Coronavirus Pandemic Update

General Manager Cansler stated that SCWA staff are continuing to work a full schedule with social-distancing measures and sanitation procedures in place. He said that as of today (July 12th), none of the staff at SCWA have been infected by the virus. He also mentioned that at the June meeting the Authority decided to suspend until this meeting discussion of in-person meetings versus continuing virtual meetings. As of June 30th the Governor has relaxed the emergency COVID measures instituted last year. Mr. Cansler added that the Chairman of the SCWA Representative Advisory Board (RAB) intends to hold their next meeting in-person rather than virtually. Chairman Monahan asked everyone their opinion on this subject. Three members indicated they felt better at this time continuing with virtual meetings, one member stated his was ready to go back to in-person meetings, and three indicated they were fine either way. Since at least one member will not be able to attend in-person next month, Chairman Monahan stated that the Authority would continue with virtual meetings until the subject can be discussed again.

2. Capital Projects Update

a) Montville Division Tank and 7 Oaks/Montville Interconnection Project

General Manager Cansler stated that in May SCWA used Mass Tanks to clean-out and power wash the raw water concrete storage tank at the Montville Division. In June the tank was sealed by SCWA crews and coated with a special concrete paint. This was a requirement of the last DPH sanitary survey conducted at the Montville pump station, and is part of an overall effort to upgrade the facilities and capacity at Montville Division.

The second part of this project involves the construction of an interconnection between Seven Oaks and Montville divisions. At the March meeting the Authority accepted a proposal by Lenard Engineering to complete the design and engineering for this project. Installation of this interconnection will greatly relieve pressure on the Montville system, and make it much easier to repair the tanks and other facilities serving the Montville Division. Construction of this project will be funded through the State DWSRF program.

In May SCWA reached out to the current owners of the parcel between the end of the Montville water main extension and the existing Seven Oaks distribution system (100 Waterfall LLC) requesting a meeting to discuss an easement across their parcel. The attorney for 100 Waterfall responded by asking for time to develop concept drawings for a proposed housing development, which they plan to build in the future.

Mr. Cansler stated that on June 26th the developer indicated they would be ready to meet by the end of July. Chairman Monahan asked about a possible easement that might have been obtained when the first part of the water main extension was installed in 2007. Mr. Cansler said he would verify whether an easement was ever filed on behalf of SCWA.

b) Tower Division Upgrades

In November SCWA crews installed new valves in the existing water mains leading from the Tower Division pump stations to the main distribution located on East Drive in Gales Ferry. Over the past few years there have been several breaks in this water main, each resulting in system wide outages. General Manager Cansler said the second phase of this project, installation of a new water main from the two Tower pumphouses to East Drive has been rescheduled multiple times due to weather, material shortages, and most recently, diversion of assets due to water main breaks. The second phase should not include a system wide water outage.

Mr. Cansler stated that in May SCWA installed a cellular monitoring system at the Tower Division. This system alerts SCWA crews of the status of low pressure, utility power, generator power, and changes to the chemical feed systems. He said these types of cellular monitoring systems have been installed at several pump stations and have been very effective at identifying issues before the water supply was impacted.

On July 1st the General Manager and Foreman met with the owner of Arrow Fencing to discuss upgrades and expansion to the perimeter fencing. Mr. Cansler said that he had received the fencing estimate the day before and requested that the Authority vote on approval of the funds for this project. Mr. Eccard made a motion to accept the estimate from Arrow Fencing, and approve the expenditure of funds in the amount of \$12,259.10, to replace the fence and gates at Tower Division. His motion, seconded by Mr. Mullane, was approved by a vote of 7-0.

3. Robin Division Water

At the April meeting the Authority approved a motion authorizing the General Manager to contract with Lenard Engineering to conduct a manganese treatment study, and chemical feed modification design for Robin Division in Montville. Over the past few years SCWA has received an increasing number of calls regarding discoloration, and occasional sediment in the water, from residents of Robin Division. Mr. Cansler stated that SCWA had received the results of the engineering study that same day.

4. Green Village II – Salem

In November 2020 the Authority authorized the General Manager to sign the New Water System Agreement between SCWA and Green Village II, on behalf of SCWA. Green Village II is a 48 unit, 55+ Community complex being constructed in Salem. The complex will have townhouses with individual garages per unit. Each unit will have individual meters. Once completed SCWA will take over as the owner/operator of the Green Village pumphouse and water distribution system. The developer plans to complete the complex in 2021. To date the site has been cleared and installation of most sub-grade infrastructure has been completed. In addition, the structural framing and roofing has been completed for most of the townhouse units.

5. Construction of Millwood Subdivision (part of Hillcrest Division) in Montville

Sun Communities, Inc. has finally started construction of the proposed development (called Millwood) adjacent to their Hillcrest subdivision in Montville. The roads and infrastructure were completed in 2019 before Jensen Communities was sold to Sun Communities. The proposed Millwood development will have 46 modular homes for people age 55+, and will tie into the existing Hillcrest water distribution system. General Manager Cansler said that SCWA staff have been working with Millwood contractors installing the water distribution lines and meter pits for each unit.

6. PFAS (Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances)

General Manager Cansler stated that the State Budget, signed last month by Governor Lamont, included \$408,000 in FY 2022, and \$420,000 in FY 2023, to support the Department of Public Health (DPH) in implementing certain recommendations of the Connecticut Interagency PFAS Task Force. This will include additional staffing for toxicological expertise, permitting of more Connecticut laboratories to do PFAS testing, support testing of public water systems, and a PFAS education program. In addition the State legislature approved bills that prohibit using firefighting foam with PFAS substance, and as well as banning the use of food packaging made using PFAS materials. Mr. Cansler added that Congress has also introduced a bill which would require the EPA to set a national drinking water standard for PFAS within two years, and the President's initial infrastructure program included funding to support cleanup of rural and small water systems.

7. Claim by Raspberry Junction Holding, LLC vs SCWA

In 2016, Raspberry Junction LLC, owners of the Bellissimo Grande Hotel in North Stonington, filed a legal claim against SCWA for losses incurred during the water outage that resulted from the rupture of a pressure tank in 2015. This claim was forwarded to our insurance company at the time, Gladfelter Insurance. After a series of hearings at the lower courts, the case was forwarded to the Connecticut Supreme Court, which issued a ruling in 2019 sending the case back to the trial court for consideration of the summary judgment argument. A pre-trial oral argument was held before the Connecticut Trial Court on January 15, 2021. SCWA was informed by the attorney for Gladfelter Insurance that the argument went well, and that a decision should be rendered by mid-summer.

8. Consumer Confidence Reports

Mr. Cansler stated that in June, SCWA distributed Consumer Confidence Reports, also referred to as “Annual Water Quality Reports”, to each of our approximately 2800 customers. Because of the nature of SCWA’s water service operations, sixteen separate reports were prepared and distributed. These reports were researched, written, and copied completely in-house. As in the past, processing the reports for mailing, via the U.S. Postal service, was carried out by Viability, Inc. (formerly Community Enterprises), SCWA’s co-tenant at 1649 Rt. 12, Gales Ferry.

9. Sanitary Surveys

Sanitary Surveys are conducted at each community public water system (PWS) by the DPH Drinking Water Section every 3 years, and at each non-community PWS every 5 years. A Sanitary Survey is an on-site inspection of the water sources, treatment, distribution system, finished water storage, pumping facilities and controls, monitoring and reporting data, system management and operation, and operator compliance with State requirements. The general manager said the first of the surveys for 2021 occurred on July 8th at the Preston Town Hall and Preston Library. He said other SCWA community systems that are due sanitary survey inspections this year are:

Mohegan Division, Montville
Barrett Division, Ledyard
Chriswood Division, Ledyard
Robin Hill Division, Montville
Birchwood Division, Montville
North Stonington Division

10. SCWA Response to Administrative Order DWS 19-072-063

In 2019, SCWA received an Administrative Order from DPH requiring a series of corrective actions in response to the vandalism at the Tower Division pump station on September 23, 2019. The Authority requested an Appeal, and a Stay the Administrative Order, which were both granted in November 2019. The Hearing has yet to be scheduled.

11. Regional Considerations

- a) Drought Update:** The State’s Interagency Drought Workgroup met in June and determined that currently conditions were normal to date. They cancelled their July meeting indicating there have been no changes.
- b) Planning for Future Water Demands North Stonington:** Last fall General Manager Cansler discussed long-term water needs in North Stonington, specifically the area near the Rt.187/Rt. 2 traffic circle, with Attorney, Ken Labbe, who is representing the Town. Mr. Labbe indicated that they are trying to involve all the regional utilities.
- c) Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC):** The Eastern Connecticut Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC) last met in May 2020. A meeting scheduled for June 2021 was cancelled and has not been rescheduled. A Statewide WUCC meeting was held on May 19, 2021. This meeting included an update from the WUCC workgroups to address: Interconnections/Regionalization; Non-Community Water Systems Design Requirements; Updating Process requiring Non-Community Systems to Connect to an Existing Community Water Systems, Conservation/Drought. General Manager Cansler is serving on the Interconnections and Regionalization Workgroup.

d) SCWA Interaction with SCCOG: SCWA and the SCCOG continue to interact cooperatively. To this end, Chairman Monahan attends the monthly SCCOG meetings if there are items relating to water on the agenda. He also attends meetings of the SCCOG Regional Water Committee, which meets only as needed. The General Manager participates on the SCCOG Regional Water Committee's Technical Advisory Subcommittee (TAS).

e) SCWA Interaction with the Water Planning Council (WPC): The General Manager, representing SCWA, is co-chair of the CT Water Planning Council Advisory Group (WPCAG), which meets monthly. All meetings are currently being conducted virtually via Zoom.

f) SCWA Interaction with AWWA and CWWA: General Manager Cansler is also a member of the Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA) Legislative Affairs Committee, which generally meets monthly between Nov. and June.

Other Business

General Manager Cansler said that CWWA's efforts to eliminate the Safe Drinking Water Primacy fee had been successful. Public Act 19-117 had authorized community water systems to collect a pro rata share of the Safe Drinking Water Primacy Assessment amount from customers through State Fiscal Year 2021. This legislation, which was originally intended as a temporary measure to assist in funding DPH staffing had ended on June 30th. Although DPH had tried to extend the Primacy Assessment indefinitely, the State Legislature had not supported it.

Mr. Cansler said that he had received a letter from the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) nominating Mr. Nick Mullane for re-appointment to another 5-year term on the Authority. His re-appointment will need to be approved by the Representative Advisory Board (RAB) at their next quarterly meeting, scheduled for July 15, 2021.

Report from Chairman - None

Report from Authority Members- None

Public Comment – None

Adjourn

On motion of Mr. Eccard, seconded by Ms. Franciosi, the Authority voted to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:00 p.m.

It was noted the next Authority meeting is scheduled to occur on August 9, 2021, at 5:15 pm, either virtually, or at 1649 Rt. 12, Gales Ferry, CT.

Josh Cansler
Secretary