

**Minutes of the November 9, 2020 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. Members attended via the Zoom app, either by calling in, or logging in through their computer.*

**Present**

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

**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 October 19, 2020 Water Authority Meeting, by a unanimous vote of all members present.

**Correspondence** – None

**General Manager's Report**

**1. COVID-19/Coronavirus Pandemic Status**

SCWA staff are continuing to work a full schedule with social-distancing measures and sanitation procedures in place. General Manager Cansler stated that as of today (November 9<sup>th</sup>), none of the staff at SCWA have been infected by the virus. Because of safety concerns, and the Governor's ban on in-person public meetings, the scheduled Authority and RAB meetings are being conducted virtually until further notice. In addition, DPH is still conducting weekly webinar meetings via computer, which the General Manager has been attending.

Mr. Cansler said that on November 3, 2020 DPH called an emergency virtual meeting to discuss planning and prioritizations for COVID-19 vaccinations in the State of Connecticut. In alignment with federal guidelines, a workgroup convened by DPH has developed a list of critical workforce sectors and subgroups that will be considered for early vaccination efforts. There are likely to be three phases to a statewide mass vaccination:

Phase 1a – In this phase, the vaccine will be targeted to people serving in healthcare settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials, and are unable to work from home. In this phase, supply will be limited, and a Governor's Advisory Committee will be making decisions on how the supply will be directed.

Phase 1b - In this phase, the vaccine will be targeted to people who play a key role in keeping essential functions of society running and cannot socially distance in the workplace, and people at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness, including people 65 years of age or older. In this phase, supply will be limited, and a Governor's Advisory Committee will make decisions on how the supply will be directed.

Phase 2 – In this phase, the vaccine will be available to the general public and others who did not get the vaccine during Phase 1a and Phase 1b. A large number of doses are expected to be available, and supply is likely to meet demand. In this phase, people should be able to get vaccinated through their primary care physicians, or at pharmacies and other locations.

Two doses of COVID-19 vaccine, separated by 21 or 28 days, will be needed for some vaccine candidates. Both doses will need to be with the same product.

## **2. Consolidation of Ledyard Division and Gray Farms Division**

In August and September SCWA installed a Pressure Reducing Valve (PRV) along the interconnection between the Ledyard Division and the Gray Farms Division. This PRV allows SCWA to bypass the Gray Farms pump station by using water from the Ledyard Division, which is currently operating at only about 20% of its capacity. The Gray Farms Division needs a complete upgrade of several equipment systems, to include the hydro-pneumatic pressure tank. Testing of the interconnection and PRV was successfully conducted on September 11<sup>th</sup>. SCWA is currently awaiting approval from DPH to turn the interconnection on, and close-down the Gray Farms pump station. DPH received the application in early September. General Manager Cansler said he has been pressuring DPH to approve the application as soon as possible because there are several immediate repairs needed at Gray Farms, and it doesn't make sense to invest money in a pumphouse that will be abandoned.

## **3. Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) and DWSRF Projects**

Last month the Authority closed on the issuance of a Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) for \$175,000 from Chelsea Groton Bank. The purpose of this BAN was to complete several capital projects to include replacement of the water main from the Tower Division pumphouses to the main distribution line; replacement of Tower Division Well #3; replacement of the pumphouse roofs at Chesterfield and Birchwood Stations; and replacement of the hydro-pneumatic tank at the Spicer Hill Booster Station. SCWA intends to roll the BAN over for 2-3 years, possibly adding a few more small projects each year, and eventually rolling these BANs into a new 20-year bond. In addition, DPH has offered a 25% subsidy with a 75% loan on the Tower Division Upgrade (estimated project cost \$800,000), and a 50/50 subsidy/loan for the Seven Oaks to Montville Manor Interconnection project (estimated project cost \$435,000).

### **a) Tower Division – Main Replacement**

SCWA plans to replace the main leading from the Tower Division pump stations to the main distribution located on East Drive. This will be a two phase project. The first phase will include installation of a new water main from the Tower Small pumphouse to East Drive. General Manager Cansler stated that this project will take about 7-10 days, and will require a 6-8 hour water outage, followed by a boil water notice which will last about 24 hours, assuming test results come back negative. The second phase will include installation of a new main from the Tower Large Pumphouse connecting to the new main at the Tower Small pumphouse. The second phase will be completed in the spring.

**b) Tower Division – Well #3**

When the bottom portion of Well #3 inside the pumphouse at Tower Division collapsed in 2018, the well had a capacity of 250 gallons per minute (gpm). As a temporary measure a smaller pump was placed at a higher level within the same well. The temporary well is currently producing 100 gpm. Originally SCWA sought to replace Well #3 at a location outside the pumphouse, and a lot of time and effort went into replacing the well; to include test wells outside the wetlands constraints (which failed), and special legislation allowing the well replacement within the wetlands constraints.

Although the legislation was approved, the cost to install the replacement well was unfortunately much higher than anticipated. The original engineering estimate was approximately \$40,000. The two proposals received were for \$130,000 (to replace at the original capacity), and \$70,000 (to replace at 70-80% of the original capacity). For these reasons the General Manager and Foreman are considering putting funding into a storage tank on-site versus replacement of the well. DPH has already stated that a larger storage tank will be required with any future upgrades at Tower Division. The AWWA and state standard is a minimum of one day's capacity storage. Tower Division currently only has 10% of a day's storage. Mr. Eccard said that if SCWA staff was confident that the system could continue to provide water using the current wells and pumps he supported looking at alternative approaches to upgrading the Tower system.

**c) Replacement of Pumphouse Roofs at Chesterfield and Birchwood Divisions**

SCWA intends to replace the pumphouse roofs at both Chesterfield and Birchwood Stations in Montville before the end of the year. Both projects require replacement of the entire roof (rafters, roofing, shingles, and insulation). Each project is expected to take about a week to complete. General Manager Cansler said he had requested bids from 3 carpenters/contractors for the two projects, however two of them responded they were too busy to take on new projects at this time, and the third contractor had not returned phone calls. Mr. Cansler told the Authority he was still looking for other contractors to complete this project.

**d) Montville Division Tank and 7 Oaks/Montville Interconnection Project**

In July SCWA received the Sanitary Survey Inspection Report for the survey that was conducted at Montville Division by DPH in November 2019. As part of the survey DPH had requested another copy of the tank inspection reports for the three Montville Tanks. There is one concrete treated atmospheric water storage tank at the pumphouse, and two tanks (one concrete and one steel) that hold untreated (raw) groundwater. The inspection of these three tanks was conducted by Mass Tanks in 2016. Since the tank inspections are only required every 10 years the same tank inspection reports were provided at both the 2016 and 2019 Sanitary Surveys. In 2016 no mention was made of any deficiencies on any of the tanks; however in 2019 DPH stated in their Sanitary Survey Report that the untreated concrete tank had cracks that needed to be repaired. This was listed as significant deficiency and SCWA was given 120 days to make repairs.

General Manager Cansler stated that he had responded to DPH that New London County is currently in a severe drought, and Montville is under Mandatory Water Restrictions, so it would not be possible to take the tank out of commission and repair it until next spring. Mr. Cansler said SCWA's preference would be to put the money towards expediting the interconnection between 7 Oaks and Montville divisions prior to the next potential drought season. If that was not possible, he was requesting a 6-month extension on repair of the tank. He mentioned that since DPH did not say anything about the cracks when they had the tank inspection report 4 years ago, so an additional 6 months shouldn't make a difference. He also reiterated that the water in the tank is raw, untreated, water. The DPH DWSRF section responded that they might support expediting the interconnection project, and DPH did give SCWA an extension of six months to repair the raw water tank at Montville.

#### **4. Green Village II -- Salem**

In July SCWA was approached by a developer who is planning to construct a 48 unit, 55+ Community complex at 470 Norwich Road in Salem. It will be called Green Village II. Because Salem is in the SCWA ESA (Exclusive Service Area) the State DPH directed that SCWA own/operate the pumphouse and water distribution system once completed. The developer plans to complete the complex within a year. The complex will have townhouses with individual garages per unit. Each unit will have individual meters.

In September SCWA submitted an Offer of Service application which was approved by the Eastern Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC) on October 3, 2020. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Cansler said he sent a draft New Water System Agreement between SCWA and Green Village II to SCWA Attorney Nike Kepple for legal review. Mr. Kepple responded with his comments/ changes on October 20<sup>th</sup>. The modified agreement was presented to the developer and his engineering consultant the same day. Mr. Eccard made a motion to authorize the General Manager to sign the Agreement as presented, on behalf of SCWA.

#### **5. SCWA Response to Administrative Order DWS 19-072-063**

In September 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 hired Attorney Rich Cody, of Suisman Shapiro, to prepare a Request for an Appeal, and a Request to Stay the Administrative Order, on behalf of SCWA. On November 13, 2019 DPH granted the Request to Stay the Administrative Order. Although a Hearing has yet to be scheduled, the subject of the Administrative Order was discussed briefly during the July Bond Refinancing meeting with representatives from Treasury, OPM, and DPH.

#### **6. 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. They hired Attorney Stephanie Berry, of the law firm of Tang & Marvelis, in New London, to handle the case.

After a series of hearings at the lower courts, the case was forwarded to the Connecticut Supreme Court, which issued a ruling in April 2019 reversing the trial court's granting of the summary judgment motion. The case was remanded back to the trial court for consideration of the summary judgment argument, based on the alternative grounds of the economic loss doctrine, which the trial judge declined to rule on. At a Pre-argument Conference in February 2020 the judge proposed a settlement range that was much higher than our insurance company was willing to accept. On March 9<sup>th</sup>, SCWA received word that the judge sent the appeal back to the State Supreme Court for adjudication. On September 30, 2020, attorneys representing Gladfelter Insurance filed their Brief to the Courts for the next round. The Plaintiff filed their reply brief in late October, and the oral argument is tentatively expected to occur in mid-December 2020.

#### **7. Vitale Aquatic and Tennis Club --Ledyard**

The new Vitale Aquatic and Tennis (VAT) Club in Ledyard opened for business in July 2019. Because the club is within the SCWA Exclusive Service Area of Ledyard, and DPH originally granted the VAT club approval based on SCWA being their certified operator, the Authority sent a letter to DPH in September 2019 requesting more clarification regarding SCWA's responsibilities related to water purification at the club. As of November 9, 2020 SCWA has not received a response to our letter.

## **8. Insurance Claims**

Recently SCWA has reached out to our insurance carrier with two claims by SCWA customers. The first claim, by a homeowner claiming that a SCWA water main break caused his basement to flood, was found to be unjustified by the insurance adjustor. The second claim was regarding an exceptionally high invoice from a contractor who repaired a service line for a customer, even after pointing out that the service line leak was on the other (SCWA) side of the curb box. Mr. Cansler stated that the insurance company is still working on this case, as of November 9<sup>th</sup>.

## **9. PFAS (Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances)**

To address concerns regarding PFAS, Governor Lamont released a State PFAS Action Plan last November. The Action Plan calls for the establishment of a Safe Drinking Water Advisory Council to advise DPH regarding the potential development of Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs), prioritize testing locations and parameters, and establish treatment requirements. There has not been any updates over the past 6 months regarding PFAS, presumably due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, which has shut most state offices down.

## **10. Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Audit**

Sandra Welwood conducted her annual audit visit of SCWA in August and September. She intends to present her audit findings to the Representative Advisory Board (RAB) Finance Committee and the Authority prior to the January 2021 RAB meeting. Based on the ongoing pandemic her presentation will probably be virtual. Ms. Welwood will be available to answer questions during the Finance Committee's presentation to the rest of the RAB that same evening.

## **11. Regional Considerations**

**a) Drought Update:** On October 5, 2020, the Connecticut Interagency Drought Workgroup announced a Stage 3 drought for Hartford, Tolland, Windham, and New London counties. Stage 3 is considered a "Moderate Drought", potentially impacting water supplies, agriculture, or natural ecosystems. The highest drought stage is Stage 5. SCWA posted Drought Advisories on our website and our Facebook page. SCWA staff are continuing to monitor well production at all Divisions, which are all operating normally to date.

Mr. Cansler stated that in early September SCWA sent out a notice, through CodeRed and our website, asking customers of the Montville Manor Division to voluntarily reduce outdoor water usage. This was followed a week later by a Mandatory Conservation Notice, after the voluntary notice failed to have enough of an impact. Although the wells and system at Montville Manor are keeping up with demand, this system generally operates close to the maximum daily well production capacity.

**b) Planning for Future Water Demands North Stonington:** In late September SCWA received an inquiry from an Attorney, Ken Labbe, who is heading up an effort to address long-term water needs in the area near the Rt.187/Rt. 2 traffic circle in North Stonington, and the I-95 interchange at Pawcatuck. They are also trying to solve a short-term shortage of quality water at the KOA in North Stonington and several surrounding facilities. Mr. Labbe indicated that they are trying to involve all the regional utilities. Potential solutions include development of the so-called Romanella aquifer/wellfield near the 187/2 circle, extending the water main from Groton Utilities down 187 (7 miles), and extending a water main from the Westerly water main in Pawcatuck. General Manager Cansler suggested extending our North Stonington system 1.5 miles down Route 2 to the circle. He also mentioned that North Stonington Town staff had requested to be involved in a WUCC workgroup being developed to address regionalization and interconnections statewide. Mr. Cansler said he had also volunteered to be in the same workgroup.

**c) Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC):** The Eastern Connecticut Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC) last met (virtually) on May 27, 2020, to elect new officers and discuss implementation of a Statewide Coordinated Water System Plan (CWSP). On November 5, 2020 there was a Statewide WUCC meeting to discuss the CWSP.

**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, however due to the COVID-19 crisis CWWA hasn't met since February.

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 6:05 p.m.

It was noted the next Authority meeting is scheduled to occur on December 14, 2020, at 5:15 pm, either virtually, or at 1649 Rt. 12, Gales Ferry, CT.

Josh Cansler  
Secretary