

**Draft Minutes of the July 13, 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, 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 June 8, 2020 Water Authority Meeting, by a vote of 7-0.

Correspondence – None

General Manager's Report

1. July RAB Meeting/Public Hearing

At the June 8, 2020 meeting the Authority approved the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 budget. The Authority also approved a motion that the Authority notify the Representative Advisory Board (RAB) of its intention to increase water usage fees during FY 2021, and request a public hearing prior to the July RAB meeting. General Manager Cansler stated that the next RAB meeting is scheduled to be held this Thursday, July 16th, at 7 pm. He said this RAB meeting will be held virtually, via the Zoom app, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and current Governor's guidelines pertaining to the virus. Mr. Cansler said the Zoom meeting link and call-in numbers are on the RAB Agenda, which was mailed out on July 6th.

2. Refinancing of 2007 Bond

At the December 2019 meeting the Authority approved the Bond Resolution for refinancing of the 2007 bond, to allow for capital funds to complete some key projects, such as Tower Division upgrade and well, interconnection of Seven Oaks and Montville Manor, and replacement of some hydro-pneumatic tanks. General Manager Cansler stated that at the last meeting the Authority approved a motion authorizing the Chairman, on behalf of the Authority, to sign the formal request letter to the Bond Commission. The Bond Commission is scheduled to meet the last week in July; the first time they have met in several months. Mr. Cansler said that DPH was setting up a virtual meeting between DPH, Bond Commission representatives, and Authority Chair Monahan. He said all of the Authority members were invited, and that he would send out the time/date of the meeting as soon as he has it.

3. SCWA Operations during the COVID-19/Coronavirus Pandemic

The General Manager said SCWA staff are continuing to work a full schedule with social-distancing measures and sanitation procedures in place, and that as of today 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.

4. Board Member Officers and Members

At the last meeting the Authority elected officers for the next year. In addition, General Manager Cansler pointed out that the Authority term for Mr. Watson will expire on September 18, 2020. His appointment is for one of the two positions on the Authority which are nominated by the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG), and approved by the Representative Advisory Board (RAB). Mr. Cansler said he sent a letter on July 1st, signed by the RAB Vice-Chair/Acting Chair, to the SCCOG requesting nominations for this seat. The letter stated that Mr. Watson has expressed a desire to serve another term. Mr. Cansler stated that he received confirmation that the letter was received, and would be discussed at the July SCCOG meeting.

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

Last September, 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. General Manager Cansler said that a Hearing has yet to be scheduled.

6. CodeRed Implementation

In 2019 SCWA contracted with the company OnSolve to service SCWA with the CodeRed system, which offers the ability to send voice or text messages based on specific geographical areas, to all our customers, at one time. Mr. Cansler stated that SCWA has now successfully used the CodeRed system on several occasions for both emergency alerts and general maintenance alerts. He mentioned that the latest use of the CodeRed system was to alert customers in the Tower Division on July 1st of possible low pressure, as the result of a customer who broke a water main while doing home maintenance. All CodeRed alerts are also posted on the SCWA website and Facebook page.

7. Installation of Pressure Reducing Valve (PRV) between Ledyard Division and Gray Farms Division

SCWA plans to install the Pressure Reducing Valve (PRV) along the interconnection between the Ledyard Division and the Gray Farms Division next week. The interconnection was installed by Groton Utilities last year as part of project to install emergency water main interconnections between all five SCWA Ledyard divisions, and the Ledyard WPCA system.

Once the PRV is installed SCWA will be able 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. Installation of a PRV will be significantly cheaper than upgrading the Gray Farms pumphouse, and will eliminate future operational and maintenance costs at the Gray Farms pump station. Mr. Cansler said that they had hoped to complete the PRV installation this week, but the PRV pit was still on backorder.

8. Tower Division - Well #3

SCWA is continuing to move forward on the replacement of Tower Division Well #3. In September 2019 SB Church Well & Pump installed a test well and conducted an analysis of the potential capacity of the replacement well, and in October DPH approved installation of the well. In mid-October SCWA received an estimate of \$122,000 from SB Church Well & Pump to install the permanent well. Their estimate was approximately three times what SCWA and Lenard Engineering estimated for installation of the well.

As a result General Manager Cansler reached out to LaFramboise Well Drilling Inc. for another estimate. Their estimate, for a slightly smaller diameter well, was for \$66,000. Mr. Cansler reached out to Jim Ericson of Lenard Engineering for their thoughts on the differences between the two estimates, and the well diameters. Mr. Ericson thought that the larger diameter wasn't justified by doubling the cost. At the February Authority meeting Mr. Cansler stated that he preferred the LaFramboise estimate based on cost. The General Manager stated that installation of the well is pending refinancing of the 2007 Bond.

9. 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, Gladfelder Insurance. They hired Attorney Stephanie Berry, of the law firm of Tang & Maravelis, 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 last April 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, 2020, SCWA received word that the judge sent the appeal back to the State Supreme Court for adjudication.

10. 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. Mr. Cansler said 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.

11. Thames Aquatic Club –Ledyard

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

12. 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 Sanitary Survey for Tower/Ferry View Division was conducted on September 10, 2019. Inspections were completed for Hillcrest, Chesterfield, and Seven Oaks Divisions, on November 7, 2019, and for Montville and Ledyard Center Divisions on November 14th. Mr. Cansler stated SCWA finally received results of the Sanitary Surveys on July 1, 2020.

13. Four-log Applications and North Stonington Chlorine Treatment Application

Applications were submitted to DPH in January 2019 requesting 4-log certifications for all SCWA systems which treat water with chlorine, and meet minimum storage requirements. Currently 10 of our 14 systems meet both requirements. If the applications are approved, SCWA will be able to reduce our sampling/testing requirements, and SCWA will not have to conduct a public notification for positive e-coli results, from samples taken before treatment. After 18 months SCWA finally received approval of our 4-log applications, on July 2, 2020.

14. Consumer Confidence Reports

In June, SCWA distributed Consumer Confidence Reports, also referred to as “Annual Quality Reports”, to each of our approximately 2800 customers. Because of the nature of SCWA’s water service operations, sixteen distinct reports were prepared and distributed. These reports were researched, written, and copied completely in-house. In the past, processing the reports for mailing was carried out by Viability, Inc., SCWA’s co-tenant. However this year, due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis the processing was all handled in-house by SCWA staff, because Viability Inc. was closed.

15. Regional Considerations

a) State Legislation impacting Water Utilities: The State Water Plan was approved by the legislature last June. A State Water Plan Implementation Workgroup has been created by the Water Planning Council (WPC) to monitor adherence to the plan, and provide guidance to the WPC regarding implementation. Several bills proposed during the 2021 Legislative Cycle that might have impacted water utilities were all put on hold when the State Legislature had to end their session early as a result of the Coronavirus lockdown.

b) Drought Update: The State’s Interagency Drought Workgroup has determined that while precipitation has improved over the last several weeks, streamflow and groundwater levels have demonstrated some volatility, and remain vulnerable. As a result the State is currently at Stage 1 – Below Normal Conditions. Stage 1 is a preliminary preparedness stage that serves to alert the parties who should be prepared to respond to potentially worsening drought conditions. Typically, this stage is activated in response to early signals of abnormally dry conditions and serves as a “heads up” for the possibility of a developing drought. Chairman Monahan stated that, according to *The Day* newspaper, the total rainfall was currently 6 inches below average for this time of year.

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).

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 November and June, however due to the COVID-19 crisis CWWA has not met since February.

Other Business- None

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 5:40 p.m.

It was noted the next Authority meeting is scheduled to occur on August 10, 2020, at 5:15 pm, either virtually, or at 1649 Rt. 12, Gales Ferry, CT.

Josh Cansler
Secretary