

**CHARLOTTE WATER  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
February 17, 2022**

Charlotte Water Advisory Committee Remote Meeting Conducted via WebEx Events on Thursday, February 17, 2:30 pm. The remote meeting was conducted by WebEx in accordance with statute law

**Members Present:** Barbara Bleiweis (Chair), William Cornett and Gordon Miller

<b>Staff Present:</b>	Angela Charles	Director
	Ronald Hargrove	Deputy Director
	David Czerr	Deputy Director
	Jackie Jarrell	Deputy Director
	Keri Cantrell	Chief Utilities Engineer
	Chad Howell	Utilities Manager
	Scott Clark	Utilities Manager
	Nicole Bartlett	Division Manager
	Jon Behrendt	Customer Services Manager (interim)
	Carl Wilson	Chief Utilities Engineer
	Thomas Powers	Assistant City Attorney
	De Nona Paden	Management Analyst Senior

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made by William Cornett and seconded by Gordon Miller to approve the January 2022 minutes as a correct record. The motion was **approved**.

**Operations and Capital Update**

Ron Hargrove (Deputy Director) provided an Operations Update relating to the Charlotte Distribution and Collection System and referred to special topics which could be considered at future meetings.

Arising from his report, the following key points were highlighted:

- The drought condition in some parts of North Carolina was continuing with average water demand recording 103 MGD ytd. Average rainfall for 2022 was 4.1” with drought conditions currently categorized as “abnormally dry conditions”. If conditions improved, it was hoped that the area would not escalate to CW DMAG LIP Stage 1.
- The only water plant previously out of service was now fully operational which had increased overall capacity to 174 MGD.
- In terms of the distribution system, the leak response had improved since the last meeting and it was taking (on average) 22 days to respond to leaks.
- The wastewater update highlighted that the current average flow had hit 83.8 MGD and, as reported at the previous meeting, one toxicity incident had been recorded; the eventual outcome of the incident would be reported to the Committee.
- In relation to water collection systems, debris and grease were the main factors generating SSO problems. It was also reported that, to date, reducing SSOs concerning ‘Compliant with Collection Systems Permit’ had achieved 90 or 2/100 mi.
- As reported at the previous meeting, only one civil penalty (and associated state enforcement action) had occurred recently involving an external contractor.
- At least 10% of water collection systems must be cleaned and a concerted effort was taking place to achieve 20% to surpass the regulatory requirement.

Carl Wilson (Chief Utilities Manager) reported that, instead of him providing a Capital Update, Nicole Bartlett (as the relevant project manager) would present an update concerning the Stowe

Regional Water Resource Recovery Facility (RWRRF). Arising from Nicole Bartlett's presentation it was noted that:

- The current RWRRF involved a large number of stakeholders and Charlotte Water's five existing major wastewater treatment plants. Stowe would become CW's sixth wastewater treatment plant and a regional approach was being undertaken to link western Mecklenburg county, Belmont and Mount Holly communities in eastern Gaston county.
- The timeline for the \$250M project had commenced with a consultation in 2017. Permit applications were being submitted now with construction commencing shortly and concluding by the second quarter of 2026. The draft site plan at Stowe was outlined and mapped out which showed the facility positioned alongside Catawba River and Long Creek.
- The new plant would meet future wastewater needs and process 15 MG of wastewater per day, be more energy efficient, and consolidate two plants into one state-of-the-art facility.
- The project was based on a regional bio-solids approach and included components for constructing pumping facilities to bring Mount Holly and Belmont wastewater flows to Charlotte Water.
- The details of the pipeline installation under the river were outlined and a picture of the model Mount Holly Pump Station was shared. Further project details were also available at <http://stoweregionalwrrf.com/>
- The RWRRF program included a Community Benefit project which was involving local workshops, community engagement and feedback to help shape its key features; responses to date included a number of suggestions for the Southern Bridge.
- Members raised questions and there were discussions relating to future growth capacity, the location of the plant in terms of the fault line in the Catawba River, the large number of permits required for the plant, the future use of the Long Creek pump station as a second pump station, and the prospects for including a conservation project as a community benefit program.

### **Finance and Budget Update**

Chad Howell (Utilities Manager) presented the Finance and Budget Update, and the following key points were noted:

- The current budget was healthy with revenues exceeding forecasts due to deferred revenues, and growth in user fees as a result of increasing developments in the area. Expenditure was currently below forecast due to the impact of Covid on operations.
- A brief video was played concerning *#OneWaterStrong* promoting Charlotte Water services, resources, and achievements.

Angela Charles (Director) updated members on the latest developments relating to the 2023 budget, and the following key points were noted:

- A number of CW presentations were being scheduled with the city manager and council to finalize the next budget to meet joint Strategic Plan objectives, progress shared capital improvement projects, achieve sustainable energy action plans, and complete the procurement transition by June 30, 2022.
- Over \$200M had been invested in Corridors of Opportunity, including plans involving Beattles Ford/Rozzelles Ferry, Central Avenue/Albemarle Road, and Sugar Creek.
- The *#OneWaterStrong* philosophy was focusing on promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in terms of organization and community endeavors to support delinquent accounts, provide jobs and apprenticeships programs. CW's economic impact in the local community had been estimated to generate \$1.88 in the six-county region for every \$1 spent on projects.
- The general locations of delinquent accounts were outlined in heat maps and it was noted that delinquent numbers had significantly declined over the past few months.
- CW's pandemic challenges were also highlighted in terms of staff vacancies, departmental operations, supply chain problems and increasing costs of service. Recent Charlotte Water

achievements were cited, including CW qualifying for a Peak Performance Award and recent improvements involving several large-scale projects such as the McAlpine Creek reliability plan.

- The proposed budget for 2023 was \$537M (with 63% to be spent on capital) and the typical CW customer would experience a 3.5-4.5% monthly rate increase. The proposed capital investment program would be \$2.65BN over the next five years with 54% earmarked for capacity for growth.
- A member raised a question about future funding and project opportunities presented by the recent Federal Infrastructure Act which were currently being explored and evaluated by CW with a view to seeking an annual allocation.

### **Customer Care Update on Delinquent Turn - Charlotte Water Accounts**

Jackie Jarrell (Deputy Director) and Jon Behrendt (interim Customer Services Manager) provided updates on customer billing (in relation to delinquency), and the following key points were noted:

- The delinquency process had resumed on October 4, 2021 and was currently focusing on accounts with the highest balances.
- As of February 8, 2022, 4,766 residential, 52 commercial and 41 multi-family accounts were eligible for delinquent turn-off.
- There are 17 billing cycles each month which means turn-offs occur regularly between 8am to 12noon Monday to Thursday with no turn-offs occurring on Fridays and near holidays.
- The operational goals were to complete delinquent turn-ons within 24 hours of payment and it was expected that the volume of delinquent accounts would return to pre-Covid levels before May 1, 2022, probably in March 2022.
- There were a variety of community agencies (including Dream Key) supporting customers to have their water services restored. The Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) was working well and closely with Mecklenburg County DSS to match and currently protect 6,054 accounts (costing \$2.5m) from being turned-off.

### **Federal Infrastructure Funding**

Ron Hargrove (Deputy Director) referred to the city's directors' presentation slides concerning the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act, and the following key points were noted:

- There were up to 43 upcoming application processes underpinning the Act involving 87 projects. CW was engaging with 3 stormwater and 15 water potential projects such as asbestos replacements, watermains, system improvements, water infrastructure, and vehicle electrification.
- The city had already identified one project for CW to progress the funding application and multiple projects with other partners were being explored.
- Some of the Act's funds were capped at \$100M and there was a request for the cap to be lifted for more ambitious projects to be explored.
- The Chair asked if there was scope for the future funding of larger transmission mains projects, and it was noted that CW was currently exploring this area with a view to prioritizing schemes as part of developing a distribution system master plan.

### **Open Discussion**

The guests at the meeting were asked to introduce themselves and Rachel Goslee mentioned that she was the Business Development Manager at Garney Construction.

### **Meeting Adjourned**

Gordon Miller moved to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Barbara Bleiweis. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 4.30pm.

*The next CWAC meeting was scheduled for Thursday, March 17, 2022 at 2:30pm.*

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