



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
D.C. Water and Sewer Authority  
Board of Directors  
Customer and Community Services Committee**

**Tuesday, December 18, 2007  
11:00 a.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Board Members Present**

Alan Roth, Chair  
Brenda Richardson  
Joseph Cotruvo  
Howard Gibbs

**WASA Staff**

Johnnie Hemphill, Chief of Staff  
Michele Quander-Collins, Public Affairs Director  
Charles Kiely, Ass't GM, Consumer Services  
Eva Liggins, Customer Service Director  
Mujib Lodhi, Information Technology Director  
Avis M. Russell, General Counsel  
Linda R. Manley, Board Secretary

**Call to Order**

Mr. Roth called the meeting to order at approximately 11:06 am.

**Government Relations**

**Monthly Report/Update**

Mr. Hemphill reported that WASA maintained its funding level for CSO in FY 2007 in spite of last year's CR. He noted that it appears that Congress is out of the CR territory for FY 2008 and that WASA has been in the House and Senate Appropriations Committee bills. It is expected that WASA will be successful this year in terms of funding for CSO in the range of \$7 million.

Mr. Hemphill reported that the DC Council hearing held on December 10<sup>th</sup> regarding the fire hydrant emergency legislation was positive and went exceptionally well. Councilmember Graham congratulated the agencies and the Mayor on the work that has been accomplished on the MOU and subsequent follow-ups. Mr. Johnson has drafted a letter that reiterates WASA's position on the emergency legislation (Council has already accepted most WASA recommendations). This is in response to a question from Councilmember Graham regarding any concerns or questions the agencies might have about the permanent legislation.

A discussion ensued on some of the language in the emergency fire hydrant legislation regarding the Board's responsibilities and whether some of these responsibilities were delegable to the General Manager. Ms. Russell explained that the list of duties for the Board were mainly in the area of policy development. She noted that the Board could recommend that the bill's language be changed to ensure that the duties in question are added to the list

of duties that are delegable to the General Manager. The Committee agreed that it would be advisable to seek greater clarity from the Council on this issue.

### **Discussion on Resources and Needs**

Mr. Hemphill noted that there is no pending legislation in the Council or on the Hill that will significantly affect WASA apart from the pending appropriations bill. The Committee noted its appreciation of staff accepting responsibility for the recent missed personnel legislation and expressed its concerns regarding monitoring and addressing relevant legislation going forward. The Committee asked staff to examine whether they have sufficient resources and whether there is a need for additional staffing or outside assistance in this area. Staff assured the Committee that it has already taken steps to address some of the governmental relations challenges including an analysis of current resources, which includes filling an existing Government Relations vacancy and considering the engagement of external government relations assistance, particularly in light of the anticipated growth in the size of CSO outlays. Mr. Lodhi, Information Technology Director, is also exploring additional technology options, e.g. developing search engines to assist in more efficiently identifying legislation that might be of interest to WASA. Mr. Lodhi explained that he would be looking at designing some programmed search engines that would routinely perform broader automated searches with minimal efforts.

Mr. Hemphill also reported that WASA recently hosted a tour and briefing on Blue Plains for House Homeland Security Committee staff that was well received – the principal focus was chemicals.

### **Public Affairs**

#### **Monthly Report/Update**

With the Committee's consent, Ms. Quander-Collins presented the monthly report by exception and noted items she wanted to draw to the Committee's attention. She discussed a security management trade press article that not only discusses what industrial water and sewer plants are doing to heighten security, but also describes other approaches, e.g. chemical substitutions, and highlights Blue Plains as an example. She noted that it pointed out that one of the research areas WASA is looking into is different forms of sugar as a carbon substitute for methanol, which WASA uses in the denitrification process. She also noted that a CNN film crew out of New York recently used Blue Plains as a backdrop in an interview they were doing with an environmental group that is advocating more congressional control over chemical storage. Blue Plains was chosen because WASA was one of the first agencies to get rid of a dangerous chemical following the terrorist attacks in 2001. Ms. Richardson noted that this is information WASA should get out to the general public and suggested that staff contact Channel 8 news to arrange a story on this subject.

Ms. Quander-Collins also reported that Penn State Public Broadcasting will be producing a national program called Liquid Assets. The program will be a documentary on the condition of the water and sewer infrastructures across the country. They have interviewed various national utilities regarding a variety of subjects. They interviewed Mr. Johnson and talked

about the complexity of running a water and wastewater system in the nation's capital. In addition, the History Channel is producing a program called Cities of the Underground and was in town on December 17<sup>th</sup> recording footage of the Tiber Creek sewer (Louisiana Avenue and C Street, NW) with a WASA sewer crew.

Ms. Quander-Collins noted that the Water: Use It Wisely video, which is a 12 minute video on water conservation has passed Channel 16's standards test and that they have been airing it as a filler because it doesn't have a definite time that fits well into a programming slot. She also pointed out that Channel 16 is working with WASA on two other productions – "How WASA responds to water main breaks" and "An overview of WASA".

The Committee agreed to review the progress of the Implementation Plan of the Public Information Policy at the Committee's June 2008 meeting.

#### [www.dcwasa.com](http://www.dcwasa.com) Content Management

Ms. Quander-Collins noted that the last major update of the website took place in 2004. In addition to updating old information in 2005, WASA has added some new sections including a water quality section. Currently staff is working on getting the permitting section up and running. Another challenge for staff from a content standpoint is how the website can be utilized to market the organization to raise public confidence in the Authority and to educate the public on what services WASA provides. Ms. Quander-Collins noted that Public Affairs is fully staffed with adequate resources and is committed to content management and regular monitoring of information.

With regards to content flow, each department is ultimately responsible for creating the content that relates to its respective area. The information is forwarded to Public Affairs for review and then automatically posted on the website if there are no revisions within a brief period time. The Committee noted that some information on WASA's website is difficult to locate and that WASA's website needs to be more appealing, organized, and user-friendly.

Recognizing the Board's concerns, Mr. Lodhi noted that staff is in the process of doing a major update of the website (see below) and that staff is committed to undertaking the following interim initiatives within a 2 to 3 month period:

1. Addressing high impact areas – organize the publications, news and reports sections
2. Addressing the Permit Section
3. Introduction of an eBoardroom Section

#### **Website Structural Review Process**

Mr. Lodhi informed the Committee that staff is in the process of doing its third major assessment of the website. He explained that in 2001 a taskforce was formed that included various department heads. He noted that a marketing consultant was hired and after benchmarking 40 utility and agency websites throughout the country, the team choose the

top 25 and interviewed the organizations. The taskforce also received 500 online surveys, surveyed WASA managers and Board members and developed an executive summary. In 2004, WASA did its second assessment using the same process, but only benchmarking 10 of the top utility and agency websites throughout the country. This same process is being used to conduct the third assessment and Information Technology has developed four phases, which they expect to be accomplished in 8 to 9 months:

1. Phase One – Compile comprehensive report (using 25 of the top utility and agency website throughout the country, and input from customers and Board Members)
2. Phase Two – Design (Present three prototypes for selection)
3. Phase Three – Comprehensive content review
4. Phase Four – Programming, development and launching of updated website

The Committee asked staff to include the Mayor's website in the list of websites to be benchmarked. Mr. Lodhi noted that the District is one of the websites used in the assessment process. He noted that WASA has had 300,022 visitors to its website in the last six months. He pointed out that 28% have visited the customer service portal, 21% visited the employment portal, 26% visited the front page only, 5% visited the news section, 3% used the search portal, and 13% visited the vendor portal.

### **Customer Service**

Ms. Liggins reported that accounts receivable greater than 90 days are down to \$6.0 million for the month of November, an all-time record. In addition, most of the customer service managers and supervisors have completed their online National Incident Management Assistant (NIMS) training and will receive their certifications from FEMA.

Ms. Liggins reported that on December 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Greater Washington Urban League will be airing a 30 minute radio program on SPLASH on WPGC 95.5 and Heaven 1580 between 6:00 and 6:30 am. Mr. Roth suggested that staff consider contacting WPFW 89.3 which is a community based radio station to see if they would be interested in airing some of WASA's messages.

The Committee had a brief discussion of where the AMR program stands as a percentage of total customer revenues. Mr. Kiely assured the Committee that revenues from customers who had not yet had their meters replaced represented a very small fraction of total revenues, particularly after accounting for certain meters (such as the Pentagon's or schools that DCPS has announced will be closed) that are unlikely ever to be replaced. The vast majority of problems in achieving completion of the AMR replacement program stem from customers who have repeatedly refused access to their premises so that WASA can do the work. The Committee discussed the possibility of WASA imposing a penalty or fee of some sort, consistent with its legal authority to set rates and charges, on those customers who have repeatedly refused access. Although Mr. Kiely indicated that the situation is not critical as of this time, he agreed it might reach that point by the time the next round of rate-setting

by the Board is completed. The Committee did not come to any conclusion on this question, but Mr. Roth asked Messrs. Gibbs and Cotruvo to please raise the issue at the next day's scheduled Retail Rates Committee meeting.

### **Community Education**

The Committee watched the 12-minute water conservation video and offered several complimentary comments to staff for the production.

### **Adjournment**

Hearing no other business Mr. Roth adjourned the meeting at 12:51 p.m.