



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Customer and Community Service  
Committee Meeting  
Thursday, May 13, 2004  
10:00 a.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Board Members in Attendance**

**Michael Dutton  
David J. Bardin  
Stephanie Nash  
Lucy Murray**

**WASA Staff in Attendance**

**Jerry N. Johnson, General Manager  
Paul Bender, Chief Financial Officer  
Johnnie Hemphill, Interim Public Affairs  
Director  
Wendy Hartman Moore, Interim General  
Counsel  
Leonard Benson, Director, Department of  
Engineering and Technical Services  
Linda R. Manley, Board Secretary**

Mr. Dutton, Acting Chairman called the meeting to order at approximately 10:10 am.

**Lead Service Line Update**

Mr. Johnson stated that WASA is continuing to work in concert with other city agencies and that there would be a meeting on May 14, 2004 to ensure proper coordination. He reported that Councilmember Carol Schwartz scheduled a follow-up meeting of the Committee on Public Works and the Environment for May 26, 2004 regarding the Lead Service lines.

Mr. Bardin asked that the Committee be provided with a list of recommendations from the final report of the task force.

Mr. Dutton asked if there had been any Congressional inquiries regarding lead service lines. Mr. Hemphill stated that Congressman Michael Crapo has submitted a request for information. Mr. Hemphill informed the Committee that the House Committee on Government Reform has a hearing scheduled for May 21, 2004, and Mr. Gerstell has been invited to testify.

Mr. Johnson informed the Committee that the Authority missed a deadline responding to one of the Congressional inquiries. Mr. Bardin asked who was tracking all of the inquiries. Mr. Johnson stated that since Pat Wheeler, is no longer serving as Interim Public Affairs Director, Johnnie Hemphill has resumed functioning in a dual role (Government Relations and Public Affairs).

Mr. Bardin shared with the Committee a "good news" article in the NW Current that Tom Sherwood wrote about Pat Wheeler.

Mr. Bardin requested that the Board be provided with a copy of Senator Jeffords' letter and the text of the bill with a section-by-section analysis.

### **Command Center Update**

Mr. Bender provided the Committee with a Lead Services Hotline update. Overall the command center is running well. All functions have been moved to 810 First Street, and the call volume has decreased to about 200 calls per day.

Mr. Dutton asked what is the Authority's strategy to encourage customers to return kits. Mr. Johnson stated that the Authority mailed out a letter requesting that customers return kits, there was a call for kits to be returned at the Mayor's press briefing and a press release was sent out requesting customers to return the kits. Mr. Bardin asked if the Authority could have someone randomly sample the customers who haven't returned their kits to determine why they haven't returned them. Mr. Johnson stated that the lead service hotline personnel can be utilized to randomly poll some of the customers who haven't returned the kits.

Mr. Bardin stated that staff needs to determine who is actually using the filters. He suggested that there should be an insert in the customer's bill that requires them to complete a request for a filter.

Mr. Hemphill briefed the Committee on the Authority's general outreach efforts. He stated that the Authority is continuing to improve the website. WASA held a productive meeting with approximately 100 leaders in the Latino community at the Festival Center on Columbia Road in northwest. The Authority hired a Latino agency to assist with communications in the Latino community. The Authority has been producing Public Service Announcements (PSA's) for over a year now, but has yet to hear one on the air. The Authority is in the process of hiring a PR firm, and the firm should be on board by the end of the week. Mr. Hemphill informed the Committee that the revised communications plan was forwarded to EPA and he will provide a copy of the plan to the Board. The Authority participated in a video produced by channel 16 along with the Washington Aqueduct and the Health Department. The Authority is putting together a video-featuring Michael Marcotte's power point presentation to share with Channel 16, libraries and other outlets. In addition, the Authority is seeking direct interviews with CNN and WTOP.

Mr. Dutton asked if WASA has adequate resources to deal with communications. Mr. Johnson stated that he is in the process of hiring a Public Affairs Director and believes it best to allow the selected candidate an opportunity to access the office to determine the needs. He stated that interviews will be held the week of May 17th.

Mr. Dutton asked what is WASA's message to pregnant women and nursing mothers? Mr. Johnson stated that WASA does not have a message. The Health Department's advice to pregnant women and nursing mothers is to avoid drinking unfiltered water if you have a lead service line.

Ms. Murray asked what is being done to restore confidence in WASA as an organization and noted that it would take some time. She added that WASA has come a long way since the 1996 boil water alert, but thought that this issue has set WASA back.

Mr. Johnson informed the Committee that he recently met with the Hotel and Restaurant Associations and after reading all the hype in the newspapers, they were amazed at the facts. He added that because of the volume of water these businesses use, they don't have an issue.

Mr. Bardin expressed his concern that according to Pat Wheeler, we were unable to contact the D.C Federation of Civic Associations and the various citizens' organizations. Mr. Johnson informed him that the Public Affairs office does in fact have a current list for these organizations.

Mr. Dutton asked if the PR firm that the Authority will retain could come to the next Customer Service Committee meeting to discuss their strategy. Mr. Johnson affirmed that the PR firm would be in attendance at the next meeting.

Mr. Johnson stated that because the Inspector General's review was very positive, it hasn't received any attention. The Authority needs to find a way to package this and get this message to our customers. We can use the PR firm to get our good news out.

Ms. Murray stated that the Authority should consider buying ad space to get our good news printed.

Leonard Benson, Director, Department of Engineering and Technical, briefed the Committee on the lead line removal planning. 3000 customers asked for consideration for priority replacement of those requests, 1,500 customers are eligible, specifically due to health risks. 500 of the requests came from pregnant women or nursing mothers, day care centers and homes with elevated blood lead levels based on the Dept of Health's criteria.

Mr. Benson stated that the Authority projects that 50% of the replacement will be done this year. The Authority will work with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to coordinate the work as they are resurfacing and reconstructing streets. There is a draft memorandum of understanding to DOT outlining a specific number of services. DOT is questioning what is in it for them. The Authority is trying to meet an EPA regulatory requirement but if the Authority is unable to come to an understanding/agreement, then the Authority will have to come up with other alternatives.

#### Private Property Replacements

The Authority mailed 1000 letters advising customers that the Authority is replacing public lines and asking the customers if they are interested in having their private lines replaced in conjunction with the public repair at a reduced cost.

The Authority plans to replace 1600 lead service lines next year. The Board of Directors is considering an accelerated program, which will require 4,000 a year. Staff will re-work the schedule to meet the Board of Directors objectives.

The DOH/EPA requires that the Authority discontinue the cutting of lead pipes, but instead separating at a fitting (joint). Staff is seeking direction from the Board on how to proceed with the lead line removal planning.

Mr. Hemphill provided the Committee with an update on the George Washington University Public Health Team Work. He stated that staff is sharing information such as the Consumer Confidence Report with GW so that they can provide comments.

Lucy Murray asked about the issue with the vandalism of the meters that was reported by management. Mr. Bender stated that the issue has ceased.

### **Customer Service Update**

Grace Beaman provided the Committee with an overview of the new bill format. She accepted recommended changes from the Committee for the new bill design and stated that the Authority will roll out the new bill in July.

Mr. Dutton asked what is the Authority doing to notify customers that the new bill was coming. Mr. Bender stated that the customers were notified on the previous bills.

### **Planning for Customer Assistance Programs and Activities Update**

Donna Lewis reported to the Committee that the Authority had 998 contributions to the SPLASH program totaling \$6,600.00. She stated that when the bill round-up is implemented, this should bolster contributions.

Verizon will host Joint Utility Discount Day this year, which is scheduled for October 21, 2004 and will be held at the new convention center.

### **Other business**

Mr. Johnson reported that the Washington Aqueduct will add zinc orthophosphate to the water supply in the Northwest quadrant, on or about June 1, 2004 and due to the possibility that some residents may see rust-colored or "red water" from their taps during this chemical change. He stated that the Authority should be prepared to deal with customer inquiries and should ensure the customers that the water is safe to drink after a short period of flushing.

The Authority received the District of Columbia Auditor's report and staff is working with the Auditor's office to revise a number of the comments and have WASA's responses printed as an appendix to the report.

Mr. Dutton asked what efforts are being undertaken to keep employees abreast of developments regarding the lead service line issues. The General Manager stated that he has written two letters to employees and continues to meet with first line supervisors, department heads and managers to keep them informed. The letter was also posted on WASA's website.

Mr. Bardin suggested that the Chairman send a letter to employees expressing confidence in WASA and its mission.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:33 pm

### **Deliverables/Action Items**

Provide the Committee with a list of recommendations from the final report of the task force.

Assign an individual the role of tracking all inquiries from Congress, etc.

Provide the Board with a copy of Senator Jeffords' letter, the text of the bill with a section-by-section analysis.

Invite the PR Firm that is working with the Authority to the next Customer Service committee meeting to discuss their strategy

Randomly sample the customers who haven't returned their kits to determine why they haven't returned them.

Include in the customer's bill a form to complete to request a filter

Consider other options for filter distribution criteria, even if it requires clearance from EPA

Provide the Board with a copy of WASA's revised communications plan.

Provide the Board with a copy of the "priority replacement letter" that went out to customers with the list of questions they were asked to determine health risk.

Contact the City Council to get on the agenda to talk about the positive Inspector General's report.

Provide the Board with the IG's specific comments

Have PR firm schedule the Authority for the Kojo Nandi show (News Talk 6.30 WMAL)

Work with the District of Columbia Auditor to have WASA's comments/responses attached to final report as an appendix

Request that Chairman Gerstell send a letter to employees expressing confidence in WASA and its mission.