



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

**Customer and Community Service
Committee Meeting
Thursday, September 9, 2004
10:00 a.m.**

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members in Attendance

**David J. Bardin
Stephanie Nash**

WASA Staff in Attendance

**Jerry Johnson, General Manager
Paul Bender, Chief Financial Officer
Avis Russell, General Counsel
Charles Kiely, Customer Service
Director
Karen Dewitt, Public Affairs Director
Linda R. Manley, Board Secretary**

Board Member David J. Bardin called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.

Customer Information Systems Data

Mr. Kiely reported that the Automated Meter Reading (AMR) project for residential services was substantially completed resulting in improved meter reading performance and billing. Mr. Kiely presented a chart depicting meter reading performance and reduced estimated billings. The data presented for the 3 years is as follows:

FY 02: 33, 837 readings of which 5.2% estimated
FY 03: 63,333 readings of which 3.75 % estimated
FY 04: 98,570 readings of which 2.05 % estimated

Mr. Bardin requested that the Committee be briefed on issues impacting the completion of the Automated Meter Reading (AMR) and meter replacement project. Mr. Bardin also wanted the Committee to be briefed on potential issues that may impact the program budget.

Mr. Kiely presented a chart depicting residential customers and CAP customers' consumption patterns based on actual billing data collected from October through July 2004. The data was presented in quartiles from high to low usage as follows:

1st Quartiles average of 16.35 ccf/month
2nd Quartiles average of 7.63 ccf/month
3rd Quartiles average of 4.85 ccf/month
4th Quartiles average of 1.90 ccf/month

Mr. Kiely reported the average WASA residential customer uses about 7.9 ccf per month or 5,909 gallons per month. This usage corresponds to 197 gallons per day and the median customer average is 144 gallons per day.

Mr. Kiely also presented a graph depicting WASA's average residential usage compared to other utilities throughout the country. The chart showed that WASA's average usage was lower than the other utilities. Mr. Bardin requested a residential consumption comparison on the Authority's neighboring water utilities, WSSC, Fairfax, and Arlington, which will be presented at a future Committee meeting.

Mr. Kiely reported that effective with October's billing, all WASA customers are now being billed monthly. Mr. Kiely also distributed to the Committee members, 14 recent customer surveys to show the members the information being collected to measure customer satisfaction. Customer Services will continue to collect this data to establish a baseline to measure customer satisfaction.

Mr. Bardin wanted to know if WASA planned on making the AMR data available to academia for research. Mr. Johnson reported that there are no plans to make the information available for academic research at this time. Mr. Bardin requested this be discussed further at the next meeting since Mr. McPhail had expressed an interest in making this data available for research.

Mr. Kiely presented the new bill, highlighting several improvements that were made. He reported that the font on the message section was being darkened to ensure readability. Mr. Bardin suggested that the total amount due section should stand out to make it easier to find. He also requested that we not abbreviate terms if we do not have to, for example, ACT should be changed to Actual. Staff agreed to make the changes, if possible.

Committee Work Plan

Mr. Johnson reported on the Customer and Community Services Committee Strategic Goals

Goal 1 Meet and respond to customer needs

Measures

a.1 AMR program completed in 2005

Mr. Johnson reported that the Authority is on target for completion of this project. The project has gone extremely well. Mr. Johnson emphasized the Inspector General's review that demonstrated that there is no relationship between the AMR program and high bills. He also reported that the AMR billing data is proving to be accurate as evidenced by the reduced number of high bill complaints. In addition, measured consumption is increasing as a result of AMR and we expect higher consumption as we complete the large meter installations.

Mr. Bardin wanted to know if the Authority was still the largest implementer of the AMR technology. Mr. Johnson replied that the Authority has the largest fixed network system and WASA remains one of the larger AMR installations in the water industry.

a.2 CIS upgraded every two years to enhance direct customer benefits.

Mr. Johnson reported that the CIS upgrade has been completed and tested. The upgrade has resulted in a number of process improvements that allows WASA to offer more services to improve customer satisfaction.

b.1 Bi-annually establish focus groups and administer a customer survey to measure customer expectations.

b.2 Based on the outcome of b.1 establish a plan to address issues (early FY 2005)

Mr. Johnson reported that we have not done the focus groups primarily because of the lead issue that took up a lot of time and energy of the organization.

Mr. Bardin asks if the Committee and staff will revisit this goal in January. Mr. Johnson replied that we would not wait until January to revisit the goal. He stated that the goal would be included in the work plan for FY 05. Staff will present a new work plan at the November meeting.

Goal 2 Promote internal and external stakeholder involvement

a.1 Community Meetings- planned and conducted in FY 2004 and beyond including ANC, and Civic Citizen's associations meetings.

Mr. Johnson reported that the Authority is behind schedule on some of the items in the Comprehensive Communication Plan. He would provide a more comprehensive action plan at the next meeting. He stated that one of the items in the Plan is the Authority's Annual Report, which was due in March, and we expect that to be completed by the end of September and presented at the October Board meeting.

Mr. Johnson reported that the Authority participated in fifteen (15) legislative hearings, held eleven (11) media briefings that were initiated by WASA. In addition to participating in the Mayor's weekly briefings, we attended thirty-eight community meetings, and hosted eighteen (18) community meetings.

a.2 Actively participate in industry-related seminars and conventions; publish articles periodically in industry trade journals.

Mr. Johnson reported that several WASA employees were spokespersons at different industry events. We would provide a report of these activities at the next Committee meeting.

a.3. Implement an internal and external communications plan according to schedule in the plan.

Mr. Johnson reported that Karen DeWitt is getting WASA issues out to the employees. He stated that during the lead issue, he sent letters on a regular basis to employees

encouraging them to continue to do what they are doing to keep the organization going and informing them on what is happening with the lead issue. Since the appointment of Ms. DeWitt, we have rejuvenated the WASA newsletter for employees to incorporate more information on individual employee accomplishments and activities.

Goal 3 Carryout effective government relations

a.1 Develop and implement a government relations plan

Mr. Johnson reported that the plan would be presented at the October Committee Meeting.

Goal 4 Foster additional non-revenue generating public service activities.

a.1 Develop and implement a plan for community service involvement (February 2005)

Mr. Johnson reported that although the Authority has been doing a fair amount of community service involvement, we wanted to develop a more comprehensive involvement plan by February 2005.

b.1 Identify and implement at least two specific additional public service activities by February 2005.

Mr. Johnson reported that on an annual basis the Authority sponsors coat and toy drives and continues to be involved with Fort Stanton Elementary School, which is the Authority's adopted school.

Holder Report

Mr. Bardin reported that the Chairman of the Board requested each committee to review all the recommendations in the Holder report and to work with management on implementing some of the recommendations. Mr. Johnson stated that he and staff are in the process of reviewing the recommendations and will present their plan of action in October.

SPLASH Program

Mr. Kiely reported that the Joint Utility Discount Day would be on October 21, 2004 from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the new Convention Center.

Mr. Kiely reported that the Authority received \$10,000 from customers through the SPLASH program. Mr. Bardin asked what was the time period that the Authority received the \$10,000. Mr. Kiely stated that the reporting period is from October through August of the current fiscal year.

Mr. Bardin asked how much money has the Salvation Army paid out to customers for assistance. Mr. Johnson replied that the information would be provided at the next committee meeting.

Mr. Bardin requested that the Committee receive the information being provided by the Salvation Army concerning SPLASH distributions. He also requested that the General Manager add a section in the General Manager's monthly report to the Board on the amount collected for the SPLASH program.

Mr. Bardin suggested that the Authority develop an outreach plan to those customers that do not receive their water bills directly so that they can contribute to SPLASH. Ms. Nash also requested that WASA provide customers with the ability to donate to SPLASH when they use the online payment services. Mr. Johnson stated that a plan would be presented at the November Committee meeting.

Lead Service Line Replacement Program

Karen Dewitt distributed to the Committee a brochure that is being prepared for customers on lead service replacement program. She stated that the Authority is still revamping the letters to ensure clarity and conciseness and that the wording is easily understood.

Mr. Johnson reported that this was a work-in-progress. Mr. Johnson reported that the initial flyer is going out to the 4,000 customers that WASA is targeting for line replacement for FY 2005.

Mr. Bardin adjourned the meeting at approximately 12:30 p.m.