



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

**Tuesday, November 20, 2007
11:00 a.m.**

Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present

Alan Roth, Chair
Joseph Cotruvo
Steven McLendon

Staff Members

Jerry N. Johnson, General Manager
Johnnie Hemphill, Chief of Staff
Michele Quander-Collins, Public Affairs Director
Gordon Fry, Government Relations Director
Charles Kiely, Ass't GM, Consumer Services
Eva Liggins, Customer Service Director
Avis M. Russell, General Counsel
Olu Adebo, Acting Chief Financial Officer
Linda R. Manley, Board Secretary

Call to Order

Mr. Roth called the meeting to order at approximately 11:10 a.m.

Public Affairs

• **Monthly Report/Update**

With the Committee's consent, Ms. Quander-Collins presented the monthly report by exception and noted that there were three items she would like to draw to the Committee's attention. She provided a copy of the revised guide for preventing sewer backups and flooding which has been mailed out to approximately 115 customers who inquired about the information as a result of seeing the advertisement in the What's on Tap publication. The guide was developed as a result of the June flooding in the Bloomingdale and Military Road areas to provide tips and assistance for those who live in areas that experience flooding as well as provide information on preventing sewer back-ups. Mr. Roth asked what it would cost to mail the guide out to all customers as a bill insert. Staff indicated that the cost would be roughly \$12,000 plus postage.

Mr. Johnson noted that the publication was designed for very specific areas of the city and that the contents may not be applicable to other areas of the city because of the level of detail. Mr. Roth asked staff to add to next month's agenda a discussion on the feasibility and expense for a more widespread distribution by mail to billing customers in targeted areas. Mr. Johnson noted that staff could eliminate the feasibility study and simply mail the brochure out to all of the billing customers in the affected areas. The Committee concurred.

Ms. Quander-Collins noted that the Sewer Science Program is going well and is being marketed to District of Columbia High Schools. She commended the Community Relations Coordinator and the employees who serve as instructors for developing the program into an in-demand curriculum for the public high schools. The instructors talk about how wastewater is processed and the job opportunities in the wastewater treatment industry. There is a desire for the students to take a tour of the plant at the conclusion the program; however in many cases the schools do not have funding to absorb the associated costs for transportation. The Committee gave staff a few suggestions to pass onto the public school system that could possibly assist them in resolving the transportation issue. Mr. McLendon agreed to work with staff to determine if WASA could possibly provide some inexpensive assistance to bus the sewer science students for the plant tour in a manner that would not create any potential liability for WASA. In the interim, staff noted that in lieu of a physical tour the virtual tour could serve as a temporary resolution.

Ms. Quander-Collins reported that in looking at Mr. Bardin's suggestion at a previous meeting to feature employees in the What's on Tap publication, staff is proposing an alternative. Rather than have customers lose the valuable information that is provided in this publication, a separate bill insert was developed which is colorful, short, and easy to read and also incorporates a photo of the employee being featured. The Committee commended staff for its efforts.

- **Public Information Policy – Implementation Plan Update**

Ms. Quander-Collins reported on the implementation plan for the new Public Information Policy and noted that language has been added to incorporate the suggested changes from the recent email traffic as follows:

- **Under key message** – Capture WASA's commitment to protecting the environment
- **Under Tactics** – Include methods of reaching more of the general population that receive or otherwise benefit from WASA services
- **Under Strategies** - Do more to extend outreach to the suburban jurisdictions
In this area, WASA is already working with WSSC on the Can the Grease Program; utilizing the 60 second radio slots to get the message out on how to keep catch basins clean; and staff has contacted WSSC regarding the Sewer Science Program to see if WASA can assist them in integrating this program into their overall community outreach program

There was considerable additional discussion on capturing all of the key elements in the Strategic Public Information Plan Outline, and the Committee offered a number of suggestions and made a number of requests for revisions to be incorporated in the plan. In general, these changes dealt with improving WASA's visibility, outreach, responsiveness, and transparency; improving relationships with the media and key public officials; and using objective measurement metrics wherever possible to evaluate

performance in an area that sometimes does not lend itself easily to objective metrics. Mr. Roth asked staff to think about how best to implement the proposed “press tour (with “hook”) of Blue Plains, Bryant Street Pumping Station or other visual sites like the Anacostia river and speak to its history and WASA’s investment in its future.” The Committee and staff agreed there is a greater likelihood of getting the attention of reporters with tours that revolve around specific important issues (the “hook” as described by staff in the draft plan) than periodic general group tours.

Mr. Roth also asked staff to take a look at the website and think about ways in which it can be improved and more user-friendly. Specifically staff needs to focus on updating information on a daily basis. Mr. Johnson pointed out that the website is not directly under the purview of Public Affairs but rather under the Chief Information Officer. There is an assessment plan ongoing, which includes analyzing and updating the website in the near future. This process is done periodically and includes gathering information and suggestions from regular users and attempting to accommodate user preferences. Mr. Johnson noted that he would check with Information and Technology to see where they are with the process and report back to the Committee.

Mr. Roth asked when the revised implementation plan would be ready for presentation to the full Board for its review. Mr. Johnson said that could be done at the December Board meeting, which would closely approximate the 60-day time frame directed by the Board in its October resolution.

Customer Service

- **WAS-9087-AA-AB Alliance Data Systems (Customer Information System Contract Extension Fact Sheet)**

Mr. Kiely explained that the fact sheet was originally presented to the Environmental Quality and Operations Committee and they deferred it to the Customer & Community Services Committee. The contract was originally signed as a seven year agreement in 2001 with a seven year extension. The contract covers the essential part of the Customer Information and Billing System and since the Board is currently considering a new Impervious Rate Structure, staff thought it would be best to negotiate a two year extension prior to end of the current contract next year. There is a reduction in the actual cost of the original contract price because of language and accounting clarifications. Mr. Kiely explained that approval of this contract will ensure that when the Board implements the new Impervious Rate Structure, the vendor will be in place to program the new bill structure. The Committee agreed to recommend the contract to the full Board.

- **Monthly Report/Update**

Ms. Liggins reported that Customer Service is looking into providing bills in Braille and large print. Staff is currently reviewing a proposal and will be making some decisions regarding the proposal by the first of the year. Staff will also be working with the American Federation of the Blind to identify customers who may need this service. Ms.

Liggins also reported that eCheck is going to be available to customers soon. This payment option will allow customers to make payment by check over the phone and will allow customers to make a one-time payment by check online.

It was also noted that the total dollar amount of the outstanding delinquent accounts is currently one million dollars lower than a couple of months ago. Mr. Johnson pointed out that this is an all time low for the Authority and that the progress will be posted in the accounts receivable area for everyone to see. Staff was commended for their outstanding work on this project.

Government Relations

Mr. Fry reported that there are no major bills or initiatives pending on the Hill or D.C. Council that affect WASA. Councilmember Jim Graham is planning to have a follow-up hearing on the Fire Hydrant Legislation on December 10th and wants WASA to talk about the MOU and the fire hydrant list. Also the House Homeland Security Committee has requested a tour of WASA to learn more about Blue Plains and its operations. The tour is anticipated to occur before December 7th.

Mr. Cotruvo asked if there was any activity ongoing on the previous legislation and the reconciliation of the new legislation regarding the DC CFO and WASA CFO. Mr. Fry indicated that he was not aware of any.

Ongoing Community Outreach Project Updates

- **Impervious Surface Rate Structure Outreach**

Mr. Adebo gave a brief report on the Impervious Area Billing Project schedule of activities. He noted that the early stakeholders have been identified and the message to the early stakeholders has been defined. As the cross-functional communication task force interviews the early stakeholders and solicits their input and interest on the matter, the task force is refining the message. Areas of focus for the task force are communication, equity and a joint program of the wet weather and MS4 and LTCP programs. It is anticipated that the message for customers will be completed in December and at some point the task force will have to decide what media to use to get the message out. The kick-off for the outreach to the customers will take place after the Board approves implementation of the new rate in January 2008. The task forces will continue to meet monthly to develop communications strategies for the Impervious Area Billing Project and to oversee the implementation of specific activities related to this effort.

- **LSR Replacement Policy Review Plan Update**

Mr. Hemphill referred to the two handouts mailed to the Committee prior to the meeting. He reported that staff basically laid out a calendar that includes an outreach plan for non-governmental and governmental agencies as well as specific stakeholders and

customers. The approach is to develop specific authoritative sources of information for non-WASA related lead in drinking water issues. Staff has begun to work on a first draft summation of WASA's program and its history and hope to have it in final form for the General Manager's review by the end of next week.

Mr. Hemphill also noted that when the Board approved the modification to the lead policy in 2006, they included a plea to the District government to modify its policy with respect to lead service lines. Mr. Johnson added that it is intended that staff will have completed all of the planned activities related to this project and will present the findings to the Board in time to make a decision on the current policy by the May 2008 Board meeting.

Mr. Roth asked staff to talk to the Board Chairman and David Lake to ensure that they are comfortable with moving forward with the plan as well as the sequence of actions as listed on the schedule.

The Committee decided to defer the showing of the Water Conservation video until next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:26 p.m.

Follow-up Items

1. With regards to the brochure developed for the Bloomingdale, Military Rd and Trinidad Avenue areas on preventing sewer back-ups and flooding, staff will mail the brochure out to all of the billing customers in the affected areas.
2. Mr. McLendon will work with staff to determine if WASA could possibly provide some inexpensive assistance to bus the sewer science students for the plant tour without creating liability for WASA.
3. Staff to revise and finalize implementation plan for Public Information Policy for presentation to Board at December meeting.
4. Staff to think about how best to implement press tours
5. General Manager to discuss status of website review and updating with CIO, and staff to think about ways in which website can be updated so that it can be improved and made more informative and user-friendly.

6. Staff to talk to the Board Chairman and Ops Committee Chairman David Lake to ensure that they are comfortable with moving forward with the LSR outreach plan as well as the sequence of actions as listed on the schedule.