



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

**Tuesday, September 15, 2009
11:00 a.m.**

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Alan J. Roth
Howard Gibbs

Other Board Member

David J. Bardin

Staff Present

Avis M. Russell, Interim General Manager
Johnnie Hemphill, Chief of Staff
Meena Gowda, Acting General Counsel
Donna Lewis, Customer Service Manager
Michele Quander-Collins, Public Affairs Director
Linda R. Manley, Board Secretary

Call to Order

Mr. Roth called the meeting to order at approximately 11:07 a.m. He noted that he would no longer be available on Tuesdays at 11:00 due to an unavoidable change in the date and time of a meeting he chairs related to his work. He apologized to the Committee and asked them to consider moving the Customer and Community Services meeting to 12 noon on Tuesdays and noted that if that time doesn't work for everyone the Committee and the new General Manager will discuss an alternate date and time. He also noted that if Congress goes into recess by November, it may not be necessary to move the Committee's November meeting.

AMR – Internal Meter Data & IT Review

- **Review of High Residential Bill Situations**

Ms. Lewis provided responses to several questions in e-mails received from Mr. Roth and Mr. Bardin. In response to a concern that recent high bill incidents on Brandywine Street, NW and 29th Street, NW might point to a systemic IT problem or any other issue in that area of Northwest Washington, Ms. Lewis noted that the meter on 29th Street was tested and was found to be recording at 98.8% and that the Brandywine Street meter also tested slightly slower, i.e. the customers used more water than they were billed for. No systemic problems were found. There was also concern as to whether there could be any technical or other reasons a typical home could experience an extremely high meter reading apart from an internal plumbing problem. Ms. Lewis noted that there could be an underground leak on the customer side of the meter that could go undetected until the customer received their bill or it is possible the high bill

could be the result of a faulty meter. In the case where there is an underground leak, the customer is eligible to receive a 50% credit on the high bill.

There was also a question related to the number of plumbing fixtures one would have to have in a house to accumulate such a large bill. Staff noted that one leaking toilet over time could result in an enormous bill and that, when the opportunity presents itself, WASA distributes information on detecting leaks that includes a dye tablet to test for leaks. The Committee asked staff to look at what the cost and available methods would be for distributing the leak detection information and dye tablet to every customer on a yearly basis.

The Committee asked how in these two cases the HUNA system missed the extreme over usages. Ms. Lewis noted that HUNA did alert both customers, one by phone and the other by e-mail. She pointed out that the established threshold for HUNA to alert customers of high usage is four consecutive days with an average of 10 times their normal usage. The Committee asked staff to report back on how the parameters were set at that level, together with the pros and cons of adjusting the parameters downward to provide earlier HUNA notification.

The last inquiry in the e-mails was about how vulnerable are WASA's water meters, communication system, recordkeeping, billing system, etc. and whether WASA has policies and procedures concerning the security of these systems in writing. Ms. Lewis introduced Mr. Terry Rankin (representing Mujib Lodhi) who provided copies of the Data Management Policy and the Identity Management Policy. He explained that both policies provide a high level of safeguards and technical controls to protect data integrity.

Mr. Roth provided the Committee and staff with a copy of a media article regarding a hearing of the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee on the subject of cybersecurity and the vulnerability of various systems in both the government and private sectors. He noted the increasing focus on this subject in Congress, the Executive Branch, and the private sector. Mr. Roth has asked the Environmental Quality and Operations Committee to take this issue up at its October 2009 meeting. Ms. Russell reported that Mr. Lodhi and Mr. Fry both attended the hearing and that Mr. Lodhi reported that the focus was mainly on financial information. Ms. Russell also noted that Mr. Lodhi believes that WASA is well ahead of the discussions that took place at the hearing.

SPLASH Update – Delegation of Authority

At the Committee's last meeting Mr. Hemphill reported that WASA had just submitted the application for authority to receive private donations. Mr. Hemphill reported this month that the application has been reviewed by the Mayor's office and has met legal sufficiency. The next phase in the process is to draft an MOU that will accomplish the necessary delegation. The General Counsel's office had a conference call with the Mayor Office to discuss the issue, after which Mr. Hemphill received several follow-up

questions. He provided the responses to the inquiries and WASA expects to get a draft MOU by Friday or early next week. Once the MOU has been executed it is WASA's understanding that we will have the immediate ability to move forward. Mr. Hemphill suggested the next step would be to make some decisions on how to proceed with raising and allocating funds.

Customer Services Update

- **IAC Implementation Status Report**

Ms. Lewis noted a correction needed on the Customer Service Report – there are 17 large meters (16 federal and 1 commercial) remaining to be converted to AMR, not 18. She also noted that there are 584 small meters to be converted (220 residential and 364 commercial) representing less than 1% of retail revenue. Staff reported that WASA is making slow progress in getting all the meters changed out.

There was also a discussion on how to revise the Customer Service Report so that the Board has a better sense of the progress with AMR. The remainder of the report was handled by exception.

As a budget billing customer, Mr. Roth pointed out that his last three bills were inconsistent and that the explanation of charges on the bills was difficult to understand. He pointed out that the main advantage of budget billing is a uniform and predictable monthly bill, which is undermined when the customer receives three different charges in the course of three months. Staff explained that the anomaly in this instance stemmed from the implementation of the IAC and District stormwater charges at an unusual time in the billing year. Mr. Roth asked staff to think about better aligning budget billing with our rate setting process and to look at adding an additional line on the bill to clarify and separate out the IAC/Stormwater charges from other so-called “non-budget” items.

Ms. Lewis informed the Committee that the annual Joint Utility Day is scheduled for Thursday, September 17th; in addition, the annual Tax Sale has been canceled this year.

Public Affairs Update

Ms. Quander-Collins reported that the September Board meeting was the first to be broadcast on the internet live. Ninety-three people have viewed the September Board meeting (this excludes internal viewers) while 88 people viewed the July meeting.

WASA's 2007 Annual Report received the Award of Excellence in the Communicator Awards international competition honoring creative excellence for communication professionals.

The Nation's Triathlon was held on September 13th. WASA participated in the event and passed 600 gallons of WASA water to the runners at mile mark #2.

Ms. Pam Mooring, Public Affairs Specialist informed the Committee that she has been working with a freelance photographer who is working with the Washington Post Magazine on a photo essay of "hidden DC". The photographer visited several WASA sites during a course of three days. The photo essay is expected to appear in the Washington Post Magazine in late September.

Ms. Quander-Collins noted that in July the Committee was given a presentation from two consultants on the results of two surveys. Public Affairs worked with them to develop a broad communications plan. The elements of the plan require additional resources, and a number of the actions are predicated on the approval of the FY2010 budget.

In the interim, Public Affairs has been running a 60 second public service announcement on catch basins. In addition, the water drop icon is slowly being introduced to the public and some "did you know?" tips and "news you can use" items have been inserted in some of the public service announcements and in the weekly newspapers, etc. IT has also installed an application on the web that will allow customers the opportunity to have monthly chat sessions with the GM or designated staff.

Other Business

Ms. Russell informed the Committee that Mr. Jay McCoskey and Mr. Hemphill have both resigned effective the end of September.

Mr. Hemphill reported that the construction permit process improvements are moving forward. WASA is in the process of negotiating a lease with the District for space in DCRA's permitting facility, and by the end of this month applicants will be able to view the status of their applications on the web.

Hearing no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1: 00 p.m.