



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

**Customer and Community Service
Committee Meeting
Thursday, June 9, 2005
10:00 a.m.**

Meeting Minutes

Board Members in Attendance

**Alexander McPhail
David J. Bardin
Stephanie Nash
Brenda Richardson**

WASA Staff in Attendance

**Jerry N. Johnson, GM
Paul Bender, CFO
Avis M. Russell, General Counsel
Michelle Quander-Collins, Public Affairs
Director
Linda R. Manley, Board Secretary**

Mr. McPhail called the meeting to order at approximately 10:15 am.

CUSTOMER SURVEY

Michele Quander-Collins presented the Committee a draft WASA Customer Survey (timeline). Ms. Quander-Collins reported that the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority (WASA) seeks proposals from consulting/research firms capable of conducting a valid business-specific evaluation of WASA customer satisfaction. She also stated that this project seeks feedback from various constituent groups in order to evaluate customer satisfaction, as well as attitudes and perceptions about WASA and the various services WASA provide.

Ms. Quander-Collins stated that we need to know who we want to survey: It was suggested that we survey the retail customers, and in particular customers who have experienced some type of impact, such as low water pressure, service disruption, and sewer backups. We may want to survey these customers with respect to the timeliness of our response. In addition, there are the construction contractors, who we provide permits as well as the commercial customer associations such as hotels, apartment buildings, office buildings etc. The survey will assist us in determining their perceptions of the job we do.

Mr. McPhail asked if we had an indication of what the numbers would be or the overall numbers of customers we would survey. Ms. Quander-Collins replied that at this moment she did not have the numbers and this would be determined in consultation with the firm contracted to carry out the work. Ms. Quander-Collins said that she expects the survey results will be ready to present to the full Board by December 2005.

Ms. Richardson asked where would the mixed income communities such as Old Valley Green and Wheeler Creek fit in since they are having such problems with sewer back

ups. Mr. Johnson stated WASA has been in and out of Wheeler Creek a number of times and they have groundwater problems that are serious enough to raise some questions with respect to whether or not all of the construction that was done there should have been done.

Ms. Quander-Collins went over the timeline for the survey with the Customer Service Committee. Mr. McPhail requested that the Customer Service meeting for November be in line with the final analysis referenced in Ms. Quander-Collins timeline (draft). With this in mind, Linda Manley will coordinate the scheduling of the November meeting of the Committee.

AMR UPDATE

Mr. Bardin stated that at the Retail Rate Committee, the Committee heard a retail customer saying that her bill had suddenly increased. Ms. Edith Lanum of Customer Service replied that an internal water audit is pending for the customer. Mr. Bardin wants Customer Service to take this customers account and develop a daily chart of what her usage looked like for that period in question. Mr. Johnson suggested that staff wait until the internal water audit is done.

Mr. McPhail suggested that we use this case in our public relations case study. Mr. Johnson replied that staff could make that happen.

Statistical Data

Mr. Bender distributed an AMR Consumption Analysis handout to the Committee noting that this is WASA's first time at reviewing the analysis of the meters and the AMR system. Mr. Bender also stated that we have some data on residential accounts and spot data on multi-family accounts. He added that the report would be more useful when additional data is available.

Notification to Customers Regarding Abnormal Water Flows

Mr. Bender reported that staff is working on this project and the target date is September 2005. Mr. McPhail asked how would it work? Mr. Bender replied that staff is refining the matrix such as contacting customers by telephone, emails, automated notification, and outbound dialing. Mr. McPhail asked is anyone else doing this in the industry?

Mr. Bender replied no, they are not.

Mr. Bardin asked after how many days of extradorinary high water flow would you consider before contacting the customers? Mr. Bender replied that a decision has not been made on that, however, we want to look through some of the accounts that use more than we determine to be normal, run those accounts through the process and notify the customers within the first day.

Mr. Johnson asked the General Counsel to research how WASA can license the AMR chart/analysis process.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DCMR REGARDING THE UNDERGROUND LEAK ADJUSTMENT

Mr. Bender referred the Committee to the write up on page six of the customer service report, and distributed a copy of the previous language of the DCMR to the Committee. Mr. Bender explained the requested adjustment. Mr. Bardin ask when was the error published in the DCMR? Mr. Bender replied in January 2003. Mr. Bardin asked whose job is it at WASA to assume that there might be an error between the days a decision is made and the day the DCMR is printed and to read what is actual in the register.

Mr. Johnson replied that he didn't know if there was a single point of responsibility. Typically it is going to be the agency or the department director who has the responsibility of whatever that change is. Mr. Johnson explained to the Committee that the document undergoes multiple reviews, by the legal department, customer service and others, who are involved in making the change. Mr. Bardin stated that unless it is a hardship or on a case-by-case basis, he is opposing the change to the language.

Mr. McPhail asked how many cases dealing with this issue that the Authority receives? Grace Beaman responded that WASA had about 60 customers with this problem this fiscal year. She stated that we do not adjust for leaking internal fixtures, which is totally the customer's responsibility. This change is applicable for certain situations such as underground leaks, silent leaks etc. Ms. Nash agrees with Mr. Bardin based on the fact that in the past WASA did not have the AMR graph. She stated that since we now have this tool, customers can be notified early on when we see that they have a leak and the repairs can be made accordingly.

Ms. Richardson disagrees with the changes stating that there should be more flexibility. She further expressed concerns as to whether residential customers should pay at all for underground leaks, and that commercial customers should pay if they can afford to. The language needs to allow for more flexibility.

Mr. Bender replied that the flexibility that the General Manager has does not include underground leaks. Mr. McPhail suggested that the remedy is to change the language to insure the General Manager has authority for appropriate discretion with respect to adjustments and underground leaks. Mr. Bardin objected indicating he is not comfortable with the change.

Mr. Johnson asked what if the discretion of the General Manager was broadened to address these kind of issues? Mr. Bardin agreed that the General Manager should address these issues. Mr. McPhail asked the General Counsel what can WASA do to make the changes to allow the General Manager to develop standard policies and procedures. Ms. Russell stated that the Board would have to approve the amendments to the DCMR and amend the resolution. Mr. McPhail requested that the revised text be distributed to the Customer Service Committee members via e-mail for their review and then a final draft can be distributed to the Board, for full Board approval at is July Board meeting.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2.a.1 COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Mr. McPhail asked how many of the community meetings has the Authority attended? Michele Quander- Collins reported that since the start of the fiscal year 60 meetings to date. Mr. McPhail asked what were the two or three things customers typically asked at the community meetings. He wanted to know if customers are mostly interested in their own individual problems or are there some general concerns as well. He further wanted to know do we get a sense of what customers think of us in the community

Mr. Bender replied that they are positive comments about responsiveness, catch basin cleaning, and water leaks that they would like to have checked out. Mr. Johnson reported that the commercial customers have been very complimentary, and that we have been working with the Hotel Association to get information in their newsletter regarding rates, etc. Mr. Bender also stated that the commercial customers have been very responsive and supportive of the meter changes, ownership and the maintenance of the meters.

Mr. McPhail stated that the idea of getting on the agendas of the community meetings is working for WASA allowing WASA to get in front of the people much more frequently than had been the case in previous years. Mr. McPhail asked how many WASA employees attend these meetings. Mr. Johnson reported that it depends on the issue or the request. However, it is typically representatives from the Public Affairs Office, Water Service Department and Customer Services.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4b.1- IMPLEMENT AT LEAST TWO SPECIFIC ADDITIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Mr. McPhail asked if WASA have a "flagship" non-revenue related community service project. Mr. Johnson reported that WASA employees contributed about \$6,000 to the race for the cure. In addition, forty (40) employees participated in the actual run or walk on last Saturday plus the contributions.

Mr. Johnson reported that we would probably want a project that is non-revenue related and something that is not expensive. Mr. Johnson suggested that the Committee give staff an opportunity to work with our employees of whom we will require buy in from.

Mr. Bardin indicated he thought this was a great idea.

Mr. Bardin also asked if WASA employees had done anything with regard to affordable housing projects. Mr. Johnson replied that WASA participated in the Christmas in April and that their name has since changed. Mr. Bardin asks what organization is this and what do they do? Mr. Johnson replied that Christmas in April is a group of volunteers that come together and in some cases fully renovate houses for low- income customers in the City. This program is supported by contractors, Home Depot and others who donate materials. Mr. Bardin asked is this once a year? Mr. Johnson replied yes that this is once a year.

SPLASH UPDATE

There was another discussion on improving commercial customers support of this program.

Mr. McPhail stated that although WASA is reaching its monetary goal, he would like to see an increase in the number of participants. Mr. Bender replied that SPLASH participation is growing every month with the residential customer's. Mr. Bender said that staff is beginning to consider ways in which the Commercial Customers can participate in the program and will be reporting back to the Committee on this issue with ideas.

Mr. McPhail asked to what degree current contributions to the SPLASH program are meeting the demand for assistance to the Salvation Army. Staff replied that currently SPLASH donations are covering about half of the amount requested.

Mr. McPhail informed the Committee that he requested that an external or internal audit of the splash program be conducted. Mr. McPhail stated that Mr. Johnson referred this matter to our internal auditors and the SPLASH program will be part of the internal audit plan this year.

EMERGING ISSUES

Ms. Richardson asked what is WASA's role in the Anacostia Water Park initiative?

Mr. Johnson reported that we have a number of different things as part of the Water initiative. On a continuing basis, we run boats on the river to clean up all the floatables.

Mr. Johnson reported that we are doing a lot of analysis since the water main break at 13th and Florida Ave. We have been looking at break history, and water pressure in that particular zone. We had twenty or more water main breaks in that one pressure zone since April. Based on this data and observations, WASA will switch over some pumps and change some of our operating procedures to lower the pressure in that entire zone.

Mr. Johnson believes that there is a direct correlation between increased pressure and the number of water mains breaks. This new procedure will not put any customers out of water and most cases customers will not notice the pressure change. This will be done over a three to four-week period while we change out some additional pumps and do some more work at Bryant Street.

ADJOURNEMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.