



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

**Tuesday, October 16, 2007
11:00 a.m.**

Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present

Alan Roth, Chair
Brenda Richardson
Joseph Cotruvo
David J. Bardin

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 Manager
Avis M. Russell, General Counsel
Linda R. Manley, Board Secretary

Call to Order

Mr. Roth called the meeting to order at approximately 11:00 a.m. He noted that the Committee received the Customer and Community Services Report (C&CSR) in advance and asked staff to proceed with the report and any updates by exception.

Public Affairs

▪ **Monthly Report/Updates**

With regards to the C&CSR, Mr. Kiely noted that the AMR consumption figures for September were amended from 89.3% to a little over 92% and that the amendment is reflected in the General Manager Report. In addition, he pointed out that as suggested by the Committee at its last meeting, staff redesigned the AMR report to illustrate a clearer representation of the status of the AMR project, which is near completion.

Mr. Johnson noted that in addition to the community meetings listed in the report, staff will be giving a presentation on WASA at a community meeting hosted by the Civic Association of Chevy Chase on next Tuesday. In addition, he noted that staff will continue to forward news articles to the Board as they appear in the media and that Elissa Silverman from the Washington Post is writing a series of articles spanning the last week and half regarding the fire hydrant issue. The focus of the articles has been more on relationships and coordination. It is expected that Ms. Silverman will have another article published the latter part of this week. There was some additional discussion on suggested methods that could be used to improve a timely delivery of WASA responses and/or views on sensitive issues to the public. Mr. Roth pointed out the importance of WASA striving to become a primary trusted source of information about its activities, operations and services as outlined in the recently adopted Public Information Policy.

- **Impervious Surface Rate Structure – Communication Plan Development**

Mr. Roth provided some background on why development of a communication plan for the Impervious Surface Rate Structure was requested to be placed on the Committee's agenda. Going forward, Mr. Roth suggested that the best approach in developing this communications plan is to discuss and determine the best methods for approaching some of the key stakeholders to develop support before staff begin to roll out the Impervious Surface Rate Structure to the public and others. The Committee generally concurred in this approach.

Ms. Quander-Collins noted that as a result of the need to identify a dedicated source to offset the funding for the Long Term Control Plan (LTCP), it was decided that WASA would use the Impervious Area Surface (IAD) database for Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) cost recovery. In working with the consultants, the city of Detroit was the only other city identified that uses this process. When WASA contacted the officials in Detroit, they indicated that they did not do anything specific in terms of community outreach or community support because the cost has always been built into their wastewater rate until they separated it out.

Ms. Quander-Collins reported that WASA has formed a cross-functional task force consisting of the Acting CFO and various other department directors. The task force had its first meeting about a week ago in which the discussions centered around what WASA's message will be, how the public will be informed, and how to build support for this particular project. The new rate structure will create new customers who just happen to have impervious surfaces and will begin to be billed by WASA for the first time. The task force also discussed identifying some additional advocacy groups. She noted that WASA already has relationships with three Business Improvement Districts (North of Massachusetts Avenue (NOMA) BID, Ball Park BID, and Downtown BID). WASA will continue to move forward and identify other groups where we can do outreach and build support.

The proposed Impervious Area Surface Rate will provide an opportunity to further educate the public on CSO, the costs that are associated with this project, and the federal mandate to complete the project, which drives the timetable and the cost.

In anticipation of the Board's consent to move forward with the proposal for the Impervious Area Surface Rate structure at its January 2008 meeting, Ms. Quander-Collins stated that WASA will start coalition building and communicating over the next several months with groups who are going to be affected by the new rates as well as those who can help carry the message.

Mr. Bardin noted that a proposed Impervious Area Surface policy will be discussed at the Retail Rates Committee meeting scheduled for October 23 and it is anticipated that the policy will be forwarded to the full Board in November. He also noted that an Impervious Area Surface task force is being formulated by DC Council and expressed his concerns regarding the timing and parallel work of the DC Council's task force and WASA's task force.

Mr. Roth requested that staff identify all of the stakeholder groups and the best order in which to begin the communication process with them, keeping in mind the current timetable for the Board to announce its approval of a policy and/or new rate structure. Mr. Johnson noted that this would be the next step and committed to do so by January 2008.

Public Information Policy

▪ DCWASA Communication Plan

Ms. Quander-Collins gave an overview of the draft implementation plan for the recently approved Public Information Policy. She reported that the plan was prepared as a situational analysis which looks at the Authority's strengths and weaknesses. It also addresses the problems that continue to plague WASA in terms of image and public perception.

The goals identified in this plan are intended to inform and educate the public about WASA's policies, programs, services, operations, contributions and performance achievements. The goals are also intended to increase public understanding of water and wastewater issues, the impact to the customer and the environment, and to enhance public perception as an effective, credible, caring agency.

Ms. Quander-Collins also discussed the audience, key messages, and strategies for moving forward with this plan. Mr. Roth asked that the document be emailed to all of the Board members for review and comments. Mr. Johnson also mentioned that Ms. Quander-Collins has been in contact with Channel 16 and that discussions are ongoing to do some form of production.

Ms. Richardson asked staff to consider adding to the messages that WASA cares about being a good steward of the environment (page 6 of the plan). Mr. Cotruvo added that there is a need to focus on the real objective - to build public confidence and support in drinking water and wastewater management. He noted that another goal WASA should incorporate in the plan is the need to develop a relationship with the media. Mr. Cotruvo also discussed the need for visibility of WASA Leadership in particular when there are sensitive issues being discussed in the media. Mr. Roth added that there is also a need for media training and that every employee who has the responsibility of conversing with the media should be appropriately trained, particularly employees who do not have a media relations or public affairs background.

Mr. Johnson noted that the draft plan was intended to implement the recently approved Public Information Policy. He pointed out that this plan gives the Committee a look at the broader communications issues within the organization and that staff will come back with specific details on how the plan will be carried out and what the evaluation portion will look like.

Mr. Roth informed staff that Mr. Bardin received a suggestion from a District resident that staff should consider featuring an "employee of the month" to include a short story and maybe a photo in the What's on Tap publication. Mr. Johnson stated that he would look into it.

DCWASA Permit Process Implementation Plan

Mr. Hemphill reported that staff is moving to cede ownership of the process and implementation of the plan for improving the permitting process. He pointed out that the preliminary schedule outlines implementation of five parts of the process that involve 15 months of activities focused around ensuring that WASA's web page is user friendly and accessible. The long term effort is centered around organizational change. As previously reported, there are approximately 30 people currently involved in the process and this will be a significant challenge in terms of transition.

Mr. Kiely added that the biggest challenge is redefining roles and responsibilities and making sure there are adequate people. As the project continues to evolve, staff will update the Committee. In response to a question from Mr. Roth, Mr. Hemphill stated that the typical applicant is projected to see significant changes in the permitting process by the end of this calendar year.

With regards to the spreadsheet that DCRA distributes to the ANCs, Mr. Roth suggested using the information to encourage developers to plan ahead. He suggested targeting those that have projects within a certain range of dollar amounts and sending them correspondence in advance with helpful advice on the permitting process, e.g. plan ahead, what you'll need from WASA, what should they expect, etc.

Customer Service

- **Monthly Report/Update**

Mr. Kiely informed the Committee that WASA recently received the 2007 Metering Award from UPN's Global AMI Utility Peer Group for Best Use of Metering as a Customer Care Tool.

Government Relations

- **Monthly Report/Update**

Mr. Fry informed the Committee that Councilmember Yvette Alexander has introduced a bill titled "Fire Hydrant Inspection and Maintenance Act 2007." He also noted that Chairman Graham is planning to introduce emergency legislation on Tuesday to make this part of an overall package.

Adjournment

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

Action Items

1. Mr. Roth requested that staff identify all of the stakeholder groups with an interest in the proposed Impervious Surface Rate Structure and the best order in which to begin the communication process with them, keeping in mind the current timetable for the Board to announce its approval of a policy and/or new rate structure. .
2. Mr. Roth asked that the draft public information implementation plan be emailed to all of the Board members for review and comments.
3. Ms. Richardson asked staff to consider adding to the messages that WASA cares about being a good steward of the environment (page 6)
4. Staff to consider featuring an employee of the month in the What's on Tap publication.