



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

**Customer and Community Service
Committee Meeting
Wednesday, November 10, 2004
10:00 a.m.**

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members in Attendance

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

WASA Staff in Attendance

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

Committee Chairman Alexander McPhail called the meeting to order at 10:10 am.

Splash/Cap Update

Mr. Kiely reported that WASA received \$2,692 in SPLASH contributions in October. He also reported that the Information Technology group (IT) successfully implemented a new website application that allows visitors that access www.dcwasa.com to contribute to SPLASH. Mr. Kiely provided a live demonstration of how the new SPLASH application works. Mr. Bardin requested that somewhere in the application we should reference that the donation is being sent to the Salvation Army. Mr. Bardin also requested that the General Counsel's office determine the actions needed to ensure that the donation is tax deductible.

Mr. Johnson later distributed a memo to the committee on this matter. Mr. Barnes (General Counsel's Office) reported that when the question was raised on the tax deductibility of contributions to SPLASH that past revenue ruling has held that WASA is a government entity and contributions on its behalf that serve the public purpose are deductible. Essentially any contribution to the Splash program we feel would also be tax deductible since it serves the public purpose; however, to be certain we should seek an IRS determination as to whether or not that is the case. Clearly, any contribution made directly to the Salvation Army is tax deductible.

Mr. McPhail clarified the point that anyone making a contribution to WASA would qualify for a tax deduction. Mr. Barnes replied that the donation has to be for the furtherance of the governmental purpose. Mr. McPhail requested the General Counsel's Office to pursue the letter of ruling with the IRS even if it takes two years.

Ms. Lewis reported that Joint Utility Discount Day was held on October 21, 2004 at the new convention center. She reported that approximately 75 WASA employees attended and they helped process over 6,700 applications for the utility discount. Mr. McPhail wanted to know how many applicants actually qualified for the CAP discount. Ms. Lewis replied that she spoke with D.C. Energy and they project that there were about 4,000 qualified applicants and the remaining 2,700 will have to provide some form of additional documentation. Ms. Lewis reminded everyone that it is early on in the process and that more accurate reporting will be available from D.C. Energy sometime in December. Mr. McPhail asked if the number of participants increased over past years. Ms. Lewis replied that the number of applicants was about the same as last year.

Automated Meter Reading

Mr. Kiely made a presentation on the current issues impacting the meter replacement and AMR project that Mr. Bardin had requested at the September meeting. Currently, we have installed about 115,000 meters, which is 95% of the total project. Mr. Kiely reported that the residential phase of the project is completed and the small commercial phase is nearing completion. Mr. Kiely reported that most of the issues on small meters are associated with access problems where about 1,000 meters are located inside. Mr. Bender remarked that WASA has the ability to force the access issue by leaving a notice and then terminating service. However, we will continue to take the less evasive approach at this time. He also mentioned that if customers continue to refuse access to the inside meters that we can recommend a meter reading fee to recover the costs of manually reading the meters.

Mr. Kiely reported that the large meter phase is over 50% completed. He also reported that there are 28 large meters that we cannot install amr devices because of physical obstructions in certain buildings. Most of these meters are in basements well below ground or in the lower sections of the Metro stations. In most instances, the length of wire needed to install an mtu device with the meter exceeds the maximum length of 500 feet. These accounts will probably be read manually in the future until a technology solution is found. We also have one embassy that refuses to have any radio devices affixed to their building.

Mr. Kiely reported that missed appointments on large-meter installations have impacted the installation schedule. The customer is informed upfront that there will be some discontinuation of service; however, this is not a problem until the contractor is on site. There have been several instances where the customer refuses to take a shutdown and demands that the installation be rescheduled. In some cases, we need the building engineer present to access the facilities and no one shows up. Mr. Kiely emphasized that we make every attempt to work around the customer's schedule. He added that we schedule two-weeks in advance and it is impractical to reroute the crew to another installation if the customer cancels the appointment when the crew arrives.

Mr. Kiely reported that installations at the D.C. Public Schools have also been a problem. We tried to schedule all the replacements during the summer months; however, some of the lead issues delayed this process. He reported that 31-meter installations required asbestos removal by the school department before the replacement could be scheduled. Sixteen installations required ancillary work by the school department personnel before the meter could be installed. These factors have

delayed completion of the schools and extended the schedule into the winter months. Mr. Johnson asked how much does it cost us to cancel a visit. Mr. Kiely reported that we are currently negotiating a rate with the contractor. Mr. Bardin requested that we consider the costs associated with canceled appointments during the next rate review.

Communication Plan

Mr. Johnson reported that we would be proposing a resolution at the upcoming Board meeting to acknowledge Hexagram's support of the SPLASH program. Linda Manley will have a plaque made acknowledging Hexagram's generous contribution. Mr. Johnson reported that Hexagram is still our leading contributor. Mr. McPhail asked if the award was similar to awards we have done in the past. Mr. Johnson stated that this is the first award that's been given. Mr. Bardin suggested that we also include the Salvation Army name on the plaque.

Mr. Johnson reported that he reviewed the existing Communication Plan. He is looking at a variety of issues regarding communication and contact with our customers and has assembled some general guidelines that speak to most of the communications efforts and activities that will be undertaken.

Ms. Dewitt reported that the past communication plans were mostly task oriented and they did not take advantage of the high profile of being in the Nation's capital. Ms. Dewitt distributed a package to the committee. She reported that the overall communication goal right now is to restore public confidence due to the lead crisis and to educate the public about the Authority's challenges.

Ms. Dewitt reported that WASA has many high profile projects; such as the 23,000 lead service line replacement program as well as the Combined Sewer Overflow and Long-term Control Plan, the digester project and others that will impact customers and rates. Ms. Dewitt referred the committee to the goals and timetables contained in the communication package she distributed.

Ms. Dewitt reported to the committee that we have a Kids section on the website. She also reported that she has been talking with the National Association of Science Teachers about whether they are interested in a certification program. Mr. McPhail replied that this is something that other utilities have implemented. Ms. Dewitt also reported that we work with many consultants and she expressed the need to have a more structured outreach to ensure consistent communications.

Mr. Bardin expressed an interest in a permanent WASA museum. Mr. Johnson replied that it's a matter of placement and that we have a museum that is located at 301 Bryant Street, the building now being renovated. Ms. Dewitt also reported that the employee newsletter would be approximately 14-pages this month.

In the context of the overall Communications Plan, Mr. McPhail asked if there are ways we can monitor how well we are doing or to judge how we are meeting our goals. Ms. Dewitt replied that she is working on a timeline so that you can see the goals and when the goals are completed.

Committee Work Plan

Government Relations Plan

During the Committee's review and discussion of the Government Relations Plan, Mr. McPhail requested that the "12309-law" wording is put into laymen's term. Mr. McPhail asked whether our plan for winter operations is coordinated with DDOT. Mr. Johnson stated that it's considered to be more an internal operation issue and that we do communicate our plans with DDOT. It was agreed that the winter operations item would be deleted from the Plan.

Mr. McPhail wants to know if there is any value in having regular scheduled meetings with public works and the Council. Mr. Johnson replied that we do have meetings; one is a performance-based meeting that is held at the end of the fiscal year. There is a follow up meeting to review budgets and scheduled activities and there are regularly scheduled hearings. Mr. McPhail emphasized that WASA should have at least two meetings per year before the City Council's Committee on Public Works and the Environment, and we should take these opportunities to present the council with new and informative material, and not just use these occasions to respond to questions.

Mr. Barnes reported on a proposed policy on Board Confidentiality. This proposed policy is designed to provide the General Manager and other WASA staff with guidelines on what information can be made public. Mr. Barnes reported that certain information WASA is required to make public specifically concerning regulatory compliance requirements that prevent the withholding of certain types of information being requested. Mr. Barnes stated that information of a personal nature, such as names, addresses and social security numbers will normally not be provided to individuals or governmental entities unless required by law. He also mentioned that the proposed policy on board confidentiality is consistent with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Mr. Johnson reported that this is a first cut at a policy to address access to customer information. Mr. Bardin asked what kind of customer information do people request. Ms. Gowda replied that we do not provide information unless required to by FOIA. Mr. McPhail requested that the proposed policy be presented to the full Board for action and gave the committee until Wednesday to make any comments.

Lead Service Line Replacement Program

Inspector General Draft Report

Mr. Johnson reported that the report is in draft.

Call Center Performance

Mr. McPhail and Mr. Bardin raised an issue regarding the call center performance. Mr. Kiely responded that we have a large turnover rate and we are in the process of hiring people. He reported that our business is complicated and we cannot hire someone today and then put them on the phones tomorrow. He added that we generally answering the telephone quickly but we are not hitting our goal, which is the standard we use to evaluate our performance. Our IT department is looking at telecommunications

equipment and we will also be upgrading our IVR and switch to better manage call volumes.

Mr. Bardin asked how many people have you lost? Mr. Kiely replied nine employees: some people have accepted other positions, some were terminated and one is out due to injury. Mr. Bardin wanted to know if people are getting burnt out. Mr. Kiely stated that burn out is not the reason people are leaving. The main problem is that the recruitment takes several months as does the training and it is difficult to find good people. Mr. Kiely reported that we hired seven people this month; however, this recruitment was difficult mainly because many applicants failed the customer service test.

Mr. Bender replied that since the reorganization three years ago, we have never been fully staffed. He reminded everyone that in the past year we had the lead issue and also consolidated the command center, which increased call volume significantly. Mr. Bender mentioned that we needed to show everything the call center does, which we will do on future reports. Mr. McPhail concurred.

Mr. McPhail asked about the policy regarding the lunch hour? Mr. Johnson replied that FLSA has very specific provisions in term of how you pay people and the number of hours that they work during the course of the day. Mr. Kiely mentioned that 60-minute lunches are inconsistent with other call centers. He also mentioned that operationally we could not have the fewest amount of staff on the phones during our busiest times, which is the lunch period. Mr. Johnson added that we have other operations that have the same issue and we only provide a 30-minute lunch period for them.

Mr. McPhail commented that we are making some wonderful progress on the Work Plan and he wants to thank everyone for all the hard effort.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned approximately at 12:30 p.m.

