



Columbus Water Works

*Serving our Community
Protecting the Environment*

November 16, 2020

Due to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention declaring Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) a health emergency and pandemic, this Board may alternatively utilize virtual meetings during the period of emergency in accordance with O.C.G.A. 50-14-1(g).

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners of Columbus, Georgia was held as a virtual meeting due to the COVID-19 virus. It was held on Monday, November 16, 2020, at 1:30 p.m. Chairman Reynolds Bickerstaff took the roll call and the following Commissioners were present:

Reynolds Bickerstaff, Chairman
Sanders Griffith, Vice Chairman
Becky Rumer
Rodney Close
Mayor Skip Henderson

Receipt of the Minutes from the regular meeting on October 19, 2020, were presented to the Board. Motion was made by Sanders Griffith and seconded by Rodney Close to approve the Minutes as written. Motion carried.

Secretary Hinton presented the Financial Report for the month of October including Ft. Benning to the Board. Motion was made by Becky Rumer and seconded by Mayor Henderson to approve the Financial Report. Motion carried.

Secretary Hinton introduced Brian Rutledge of Robinson, Grimes and Company to present the Columbus Water Works' Annual Audit Report. Mr. Rutledge provided the Board with a brief summary of the financial audit ended June 25, 2020. He advised the

Board that Robinson, Grimes and Company was issuing an auditing opinion, dated November 11, 2020, for fiscal years ending June 25, 2019 and 2020, advising that the financial statements are fairly presented in all material respects. Mr. Rutledge advised the Board that the Columbus Water Works' accounting staff did an excellent job in preparing the Financial Statements and providing assistance during the audit process. A copy of the annual audit report is on file at the Columbus Water Works' office. Following the presentation, motion was made by Sanders Griffith and seconded by Becky Rumer to approve and acknowledged receipt of the audit. Motion carried.

Adriann Deering gave a brief overview of our customer's comments/interactions through the different platforms of social media: Facebook, Website, LinkedIn and E-newsletter in regards to our proposed rate increase as outlined below:

Virtual Town Hall Events Overview **Promotional Messaging for the Town Hall Events**

Traditional Platforms

- Save-the-date message on October Water Bills
- Press Release issued on October 19, 2020
 - Press Releases are promoted:
 - Website (Blog Message)
 - Facebook
 - Internal Email

Digital Platforms

- Website, E-newsletter, Blog, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube
- Used multiple content formats on each of the sites:
 - Video invitation to the events
 - Custom Infographics
 - Facebook Event
 - Traditional informational messages

Events were aired live on YouTube. Links were posted on all promotional messaging.

Engagement Options

- Questions Submissions:
 - Before the event:
 - Email: Contactus@cwvga.org
 - Private message us on Facebook
 - During the event:
 - Live through YouTube
 - Facebook Private Message

Community Response

- Minimal questions submitted
 - Received one Live Question
 - No emails were submitted
- 113 total event views
 - 86 views: October 21st Town Hall
 - 27 views: November 4th Town Hall

City Council Response

- Several Councilors expressed their concerns about the rate increase and requested the Columbus Water Works consider delaying the increase due to the hardships faced by the citizens in the community due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Social Media Response

Media Coverage

- WTVM and Ledger Enquirer posted articles on the rate increase proposal.
- Both articles were posted on their Facebook pages.
- Both articles were shared on Facebook Community Group pages.

Summary of Comments

- Overall, comments were opposed to an increase in rates.
- Many cited their reasoning as follows:
 - Timing not conducive to rate increase
 - Rates are too high
 - Pay too much for sewer and garbage

Direct Customer Interactions

- Customer inquiries related to the proposed rate increase were limited.
- A small number of calls were received that referenced the town hall meeting and the rate increase.
- CWW did not receive any direct emails or Facebook messages related to the rate proposal.
- A few employees reported hearing from their contacts in the community that the Town Hall was informative.

The Board acknowledged Ms. Deering's report.

President Davis presented the following items related to the rate increase events

for the 2021 water and sewer rate increase:

- Letter to Board – Proposed 2021 Water and Sewer Rate Increase
- City Council Minutes from Public Hearing
- Board authorized Management to proceed with two Town Hall Meetings – October 21st and November 4th and a Public Hearing at City Council Meeting – Public Hearing was held on October 27, 2020
- Proposed 2021 Rate Resolution:

A RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, a thorough study and evaluation was made of the water and sewer system facilities in 2018, resulting in the acknowledgement by the Board of a five-year Capital Improvement Plan in May 2020, and

WHEREAS, since 2002, Raftelis Financial, Inc., has been engaged to conduct and update a cost of service study annually to ensure that water and wastewater rates are equitable, consistent with the cost of providing utilities and provide sufficient revenues to address the long-term operation and financial needs of Columbus Water Works, pursuant to the study a series of rate increases were adopted for bills rendered during fiscal years 2003 through 2020; and

WHEREAS, the Board did direct, as part of that process, that an annual review of Columbus Water Works' financial condition be conducted and any necessary adjustment to the proposed rates be identified, and

WHEREAS, a financial review of the Audit was performed by Raftelis Financial and CWW Staff; and,

WHEREAS, at its regularly scheduled meeting on November 16, 2020, the Board did receive the Columbus Water Works annual Financial Audit performed by Robinson, Grimes and Company; and

WHEREAS, a presentation of the FY 2020 Rate Update was made to the Board at the October 19, 2020 Board meeting; and,

WHEREAS, the Board directed CWW staff and our Financial Consultant to conduct public hearings on the proposed rate increase at City Council on October 29, 2020, as well as two virtual town hall meetings held on October 21, 2020 and November 4, 2020, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the recommendations contained in the financial review entitled FY 2020-21 RATE UPDATE dated October 19, 2020 be hereby adopted, and become effective for all water use initially included in bills rendered on or after a date specified by the Board in the November 16, 2020 meeting, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Columbus Board of Water Commissioners will continue the practice of making an annual financial review and the planned rate program and make any necessary adjustment.

SO RESOLVED THIS 16TH DAY OF NOVEMBER 2020.

Chairman

Vice Chairman

Member

Member

Member

ATTEST:

Following discussion, Chairman Bickerstaff recommended implementing the rate increase be effective April 1, 2021, providing a delay of three months. Motion was made by Sanders Griffith and seconded by Rodney Close to adopt the above Resolution regarding the 3.75% water and sewer rate increase as outlined to become effective April 1, 2021. Motion carried.

The following Department Reports for the month of October were provided to the Board as information only:

- Customer Service Reports
- Customer Advocacy/Meter Maint/Water Accountability Reports
- Engineering Reports
- Field Services Reports
- Information Services/Security/Environmental Services Reports
- Corporate Relations Reports
- Employee Services Reports
- Water Resource Operations/Managed Maintenance Reports


There was no discussion.

President Davis provided the following items of information to the Board:

- President Davis received a thank you note from Frank Brown regarding our employee, Ricky Layfield. He stated Ricky was very professional and cleared up the matter of his water leak which was on his property.
- Savonne Monell received a letter from Kristin Barker, Program Manager of Hiring Well Doing Good thanking her for representing CWW on their Employer Subcommittee. They did a video interview with Inez Godbee and Kevin Johnson on regarding companies that give second chances to individuals.
- John Peebles was awarded the Arthur Sidney Bedell Award at the 2020 Annual GAWP WEF Section Conference. The criteria for this award includes organizational leadership, administrative service, membership activity and stimulation of technical functions.
- Environmental Services achieved two GAWP Gold Awards, one for Wastewater Lab Quality Assurance and one for Water Lab Quality Assurance.
- William Kent, Manager of Environmental Services, earned the GAWP N.M. DeJarnette Award for outstanding service to the Georgia Association of Water Professionals. William has been a member of the association for over 28 years.

There being no further business, motion was made by Becky Rumer and seconded

by Rodney Close to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.



Alex D. Hinton, Secretary