



Columbus Water Works

*Serving our Community
Protecting the Environment*

March 10, 2025

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners of Columbus, Georgia, was held on Monday, March 10, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. at our main office Chattahoochee Room. Chairman Nick Smith took the roll call, and the following Commissioners were present:

Nick Smith, Chair
Jennifer Upshaw, Vice Chair
Wes Kelley
Oz Roberts
Mayor Skip Henderson

Receipt of the Minutes from the regular meeting on February 10, 2025, was presented to the Board. A motion was made by Jennifer Upshaw and seconded by Oz Roberts to approve the Minutes as written. Motion carried.

Secretary Burchfield presented the Financial Report for the month of February 2025, including Ft. Moore to the Board. A motion was made by Oz Roberts and seconded by Wes Kelley to approve the Financial Report. Motion carried.

John Peebles gave a brief update to the Board on the Combined Sewer System Permit as outlined below:

- On Wednesday, February 19th, Jeremy, Vic and I met with EPD leadership:
 - Jeff Cown, Director
 - Ania Truszynski, Watershed Protection Branch Chief
 - Whitney Fenwick, Wastewater Regulatory Program

- The meeting went very well and EPD agreed to:
 - Expedite 2025 Permit Renewal - April instead of July
 - Recognize the need to sunset overwhelming sampling requirements– focus on data already provided and what more would be needed to satisfy EPD (no reasonable potential analysis)
 - No End-of-Pipe Bacteria (E. coli) Limit

The Board acknowledged Mr. Peebles' report.

Next, John Peebles gave an update to the Board on the SCWRF Primary Basin

Emergency Repair work as outlined below:

- Successive failures occurred with the solids collection systems in three of six primary sedimentation basins
- Mechanical Crews worked 7 days/week to restore operation in one of the basins
- Unfortunately, these primary failures led to Total Suspended Solids (TSS) violations in the effluent discharges on three days.
- After five weeks of continued work, on March 3rd, the operation was restored in one of the basins.
- With two basins still down, and our in-house crews exhausted, we found a qualified contractor to work on a second basin.
- CWW will supply the parts, already on hand, and the contractor has agreed to install and restore operation in the next basin within four weeks for \$149,500.

The Board acknowledged Mr. Peebles' report.

Victoria Barrett gave a brief presentation on the Customer Service – Future Vision

to the Board as outlined below:

Enhancing Customer Experience and Operational Excellence

Overview:

A forward-looking strategy to transform customer service through technology, process improvements, and team expansion.

Objective:

To create a seamless, efficient, and customer-centric service model

Data-Driven Decision Making:

Using analytics to identify service needs and improve operations. Was recently used to evaluate staff utilization plan.

Short Term Technology Advancements

- Apply CIS Spot Builds (Minor Improvements to address eight current issues) (Approx 5 months)
- Create AI ChatBot for Customer Service Representatives to Utilize (Approx 5 months)
- Review Stop/Start/Transfer Request Process

Long Term Technology Advancements

- Upgrade CIS to Latest Version (v5)
- Implement improved IVR Functionality
- Create Customer Facing ChatBot for Customer Self-Service. Providing 24/7 customer support for common inquiries.

Immediate Goals

- Shorten response time threshold from 48 hours to 24 hours
- Fill all Vacancies
- Complete a Start/Stop/Continue Exercise with CS and Executive Leadership
- Implement Specialized roles:
 - Key Account Representatives: Utilize phone system to route calls to identified representatives.
 - Operational Expert: Responsible for ensuring staff are skilled in technologies, processes and customer service best practices while also being proactive on process improvement.
- Create and Execute a Customer Survey

Long Term Goals

- JD Power Customer Service Award
- Zero Voice Link Emails during Business Hours
- Move to New Customer Service Building

The proposed vision will elevate customer service, enhance operational processes, and leverage technology to meet future demands.

"You've got to start with the customer experience and work back toward the technology, not the other way around" - Steve Jobs

"The key is to set realistic customer expectations, and then not to just meet them, but to exceed them – preferable in unexpected and helpful ways." – Richard Branson, Founder of Virgin Group.

The Board acknowledged Ms. Barrett's report.

The following Departmental Reports for the month of February 2025 were provided to the Board as information only:

- Customer Service Report
- Meter Maintenance/Water Accountability Reports
- Engineering Report
- Field Services Reports
- Information Services/Environmental Services Reports
- Communications Report
- Employee Services Report
- Water Resource Operations/Managed Maintenance Reports

Chairman Smith had a question regarding our hiring process from our Employee Services' Report. Ms. Ruff explained the steps taken by CWW and she noted that we strive to hire the best qualified people for all departments.

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

- President Cummings received a Thank You note from Neal Richardson, Safehouse Ministries thanking one of our teams for going out to solve his plumbing issue. He stated they worked hard, shared smiles and had a positive attitude. Hats off to Daniel Cooper and his team.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Jennifer Upshaw and seconded by Oz Roberts to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.



Vic Burchfield, Secretary