



February 10, 2020

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners of Columbus, Georgia was held at the office of the Columbus Water Works on Monday, February 10, 2020, at 1:30 p.m., the following Commissioners being present:

Reynolds Bickerstaff, Chairman
Becky Rumer
Rodney Close

Absent: Sanders Griffith, Vice Chairman
Mayor Skip Henderson

Sanders Griffith and Mayor Henderson were excused from this meeting.

Receipt of the Minutes from the regular meeting on January 13, 2020, was presented to the Board. Motion was made by Rodney Close and seconded by Becky Rumer to approve the Minutes as written. Motion carried.

Alex Hinton presented the Financial Report for the month of January including Ft. Benning to the Board. Motion was made by Becky Rumer and seconded by Rodney Close to approve the Financial Report. Motion carried.

Kevin White presented the following Oscar Range Water Supply Improvement Project to the Board for their approval:

- This project consists of:
 - Installing approximately 54,600 feet of 8-inch ductile iron water main, four flow meters with vaults, required connections, and other appurtenances, near Chattsworth Road in Columbus, Georgia and alongside Boundary Road on Fort Benning, Georgia.

- On January 30, 2020, eight bids were publicly opened and read as follows:

Contractor	Bid Amount
Crawford Grading and Pipeline	\$1,528,215.00
Whitfield Contractors	\$1,828,035.00
Smith Pipeline, Inc.	\$1,893,500.00
Gordy Construction	\$1,975,605.00
McLeroy Equipment Company	\$2,029,425.00
Utility & Water Services	\$2,086,204.00***
Helix Group	\$3,280,842.02*
Takco Construction	No Bid
United Consolidated Group, Inc.	Non-Responsive**

* Indicates math error

** Indicates incorrect bid form

*** Utility & Water Services were not on the plan holders' list

- The engineer's estimate was \$2,436,600.00. The engineer has reviewed and tabulated the bids and recommends contract award to Crawford Grading and Pipeline as the low responsive, responsible bidder, at the bid price of \$1,528,215.00 (Funded via Fort Benning Contract Mod).
- Staff requests Board approval to award the Oscar Range Water Supply Project to Crawford Grading and Pipeline at the bid price of \$1,528,215.00.

Following discussion, motion was made by Becky Rumer and seconded by Rodney Close to award the contract to Crawford Grading and Pipeline in the amount of \$1,528,215.00 for the Oscar Range Water Supply Project. Motion carried.

John Peebles gave a brief update on the NCWRF Solids Dewatering Project to the Board.

Old Plate and Frame Presses

- First one installed in 1988; second in 1997
- End of useful life – constant maintenance required

- Replacement parts had long lead-time or were no longer available – rubberized plates (120 per machine)
- Energy intensive and very noisy (>80 dB)
- Labor intensive – constant monitoring and intervention required by operators

New Screw Presses

- Capital Cost ~ \$2.5M (\$2M less than Plate & Frame Presses)
- Sludge volume reduced ~ 50% and hauling costs decreased ~ \$30K due to no lime addition
- Chemical cost increased ~ \$10K due to polymer addition
- Electrical costs decreased ~ \$80K
- Work Orders decreased from 3-4 per week to only 2 over past months
- Noise decreased to <10 dB

The Board acknowledged Mr. Peebles' report.

President Davis advised the Board that he and Alex Hinton were invited to the Columbus Council meeting tomorrow, Tuesday, February 11th, to clarify our rate increase, since we have had some customers concerned about our base meter charge. Below is the PowerPoint we will be presenting to Council:

Reason for Rate Increase

To provide revenue stability to fund infrastructure renewal and replacement, as well as, Operations and Maintenance costs.

Is this years' rate increase different?

Yes, the 2020 rate increase includes adjustments to base meter charges to:

- Meet industry norms
- Be consistent with EPD water conservation guidance
- Reflect costs of providing higher flows on demand
- Impose less cost increase on low volume usage

Listed below are slides from the October – November 2019 Public Hearing:

2020 WATER BASE CHARGES

(Bills rendered as of January 1, 2020)

Meter Size	Current Charge	Proposed Charge
5/8"	\$ 7.50	\$ 8.31
3/4"	\$ 7.50	\$ 8.31
1"	\$ 8.88	\$ 14.52
1-1/2"	\$ 10.26	\$ 24.87
2"	\$ 14.06	\$ 37.29
3"	\$ 42.00	\$ 70.41
4"	\$ 52.35	\$ 107.67
6"	\$ 76.50	\$ 211.17
8"	\$ 104.10	\$ 335.37
10"	\$ 124.80	\$ 480.27

- Right-sizing water base charges for larger meter sizes
- Based on hydraulic capacity of each meter
- Consistent with industry guidelines and practice

2020 WATER BASE CHARGE COMPARISON

Meter Size	Proposed 2020 CWW	Macon, GA	Savannah, GA	Augusta, GA
5/8"	\$ 8.31	\$ 9.00	\$ 11.06	\$ 18.84
3/4"	\$ 8.31	\$ 9.00	\$ 11.06	\$ 18.84
1"	\$ 14.52	\$ 11.50	\$ 63.38	\$ 26.71
1-1/2"	\$ 24.87	\$ 26.05	\$ 84.35	\$ 44.22
2"	\$ 37.29	\$ 52.09	\$ 110.54	\$ 63.56
3"	\$ 70.41	\$ 78.14	\$ 157.70	\$ 106.31
4"	\$ 107.67	\$ 130.25	\$ 202.24	\$ 153.99
6"	\$ 211.17	\$ 217.05	\$ 296.56	\$ 259.72
8"	\$ 335.37	\$ 347.29	\$ 401.36	\$ 376.70
10"	\$ 480.27	\$ 434.11	\$ 506.16	\$ 503.12

RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER BILLS WATER, SEWER & CSO

Sample Residential Customers



REGIONAL BILL COMPARISON

4 ccf residential bill – Proposed CWW Rates



IMPACT ON CWW RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS

Meter Size	Cost Increase	Customers
5/8" & 3/4"	\$0.81	54,585 (97.3%)
1"	\$5.64	1,039
1 1/2"	\$14.61	311
2"	\$23.33	172
Sprinkler		2,435

**IMPACT ON CWW RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS
SPRINKLER ONLY**

Meter size	Monthly Savings with cut off*
1 "	\$14.52
1 1/2"	\$24.87
2"	\$37.24

*\$30 cut on Fee

Recent Communication to Customers

- Letters to all residential customers with greater than 3/4" meter size
- Letters to owners of separate sprinkler meters
- Letters to 126 industrial and commercial customers with three or more large meters
- Letters provide direct line of Customer Advocacy Department to discuss their specific concerns

The Board acknowledge President Davis' report.

Gwen Ruff gave the Board an update on the customer comments on our recent rate increase. They are as follows:

Media Interviews:

- WTVM (January 27)
- WRBL (February 4)

Customer Communications:

- Social Media Platforms (FB/Blog/Website)
- Customer Letters
- CSRs/Lobby Monitors

Customer Assistance Options:

- Contact Customer Service to request temporary disconnection of irrigation meter
- Payment arrangements
- Low-Income Credit Program
- Option to downsize to a smaller meter, if feasible

Key Comments:

- Impact(s) to customers with meters larger than 5/8"
- Customers not having a full understanding of the rate increase prior to implementation
- Availability of Low-Income Credit Program

Customer Service Process Improvements

In response to customer concerns, we are reviewing our strategy to better manage our customer contacts (calls/walk-ins/referrals)

Customer Concerns:

- Wait time in queue
- Response time to return calls
- Point of contact for non-emergency calls
- Technical issues with telephone system

Wait time in queue:

- Callers are provided initial routing options
- Callers who need assistance from Customer Service are routed into a queue
- In addition to the CSRs logged into the system to answer calls, the queue will hold a maximum of eight callers
- Overflow calls are routed to VoiceLink Answering Services
- Implementation of voice messaging and call-back options
- Use of VoiceLink during business hours to route emergency calls
- Use of CIS CS team members to provide supplemental support during periods of high call volume
- Implementation of compressed lunch schedule for CSRs

Response Time to Return Calls:

- Realignment of available staff to respond to emails and calls within prescribed timeline of 24 hours
- Use of extended hours (overtime) to return customer calls

Point of Contact for non-emergency calls:

- Communication of process improvements to all CWW management team to assist in responding to customer concerns

- Use of social media platforms to provide customers with general operational information

Technical Issues with Telephone System:

- Unusual increase in call volume impacts the phone system (dropped calls, fast busy)
- Process improvements designed to reduce wait time in queue and offer other avenues for customers to contact us

Key Performance Indicators:

- Average Wait Time
- Average Speed of Answer
- Average Handle Time
- Average Abandonment Rate

Customer Satisfaction Survey:

- Measure and track customer experience
- Respond to customer concerns
- Solicit customer feedback

Challenges:

- Staffing
- Managing customers' expectations
- Ongoing and effective communication strategies
- Implementation of new CIS (August 17, 2020)

We will continue to monitor and manage our performance in these areas in order to meet our customers' expectations.

Following a lengthy discussion with Management, the Board was asked to forward all questions/concerns from customers to Gwen Ruff, Becky Butts and Sonja Bryant.

Adriann Deering gave a brief update to the Board on our Low-Income Credit Program.

Low-Income Credit Program

In an effort to promote the Low-Income Credit Program, Corporate Relations expanded on our normal promotional activities, which include the January Bill Insert, a blog and social media posts during the month of January. The additional promotional measures included a customer TV spot which aired the last week of January, we provided 2,500 fliers to Enrichment Services Program (ESP) to hand share with community members applying for assistance, and 150 fliers were provided United Way's Home for Good program. According to ESP, 1,600 fliers were handed out and customers were pleased to hear about the program. With the additional

promotion of the campaign we have seen a few new signups for the program; however, we hope to see additional numbers in the next few months.

Also, the Low-Income Credit Program has been advertised on TV, The Pipeline (Employee Newsletter), and LinkedIn.

The Board acknowledged Ms. Deering's report.

The following Departmental Reports were provided to the Board as information only:

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

There was no discussion.

There being no further business, motion was made by Rodney Close and seconded by Becky Rumer to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.



Alex D. Hinton, Secretary