Hart County Water and Sewer Authority
Board of Directors Meeting March 20, 2023

The Hart County Water and Sewer Authority met on March 20th, 2023, in the Hart County Cooperative Extension Service Building. Chairman Wade Carlton called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Present were Board Members Larry Haley, Bennie Harper, Marvin Justice, and Patti York; Director Pat Goran; Attorney Kim Higginbotham; Board Secretary/Treasurer Holly McBrayer; Engineering Management, Inc. CEO Jerry Hood; Hart County residents Justin Barrow, Jeremy Chitwood, John Cook, Justin Corbett, Courtney Cross, Zac Crane, James Fleming, Michael Hill, Jason Seawright, and Andrew Whitworth.

Welcome

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Carlton suggested amending the agenda so that item 7C would be discussed first and item 8C be discussed second due to the number residents in attendance. Mr. Haley motioned to approve the amended agenda. Mr. Justice seconded the motion which passed 5 – 0.

Suggested capital projects for Board consideration

Mr. Chitwood requested water service for Highland Ridge Drive, Highland Shoals Court and Mary's Lane on behalf of the residents in the area. Mr. Chitwood stated that this was the third time since 2017 that he has requested water service to this neighborhood. Mr. Chitwood cited poor water quality, low well water levels, multiple wells on one parcel, the costs of filtration systems and repeated well maintenance issues as some of the reasons public water service was needed. He added that these issues were affecting multiple individuals within the neighborhood. Mr. Chitwood said that the proximity to HCWSA's existing system and population density added were additional reasons for doing the project. Mr. Chitwood also provided a water sample that he had collected when his filter was not in use. The sample was discolored and held sediment. Mr. Chitwood stated that his family were currently going to relatives' homes to bathe out of necessity.

Other residents spoke about on-going issues with reliability and sharing water with neighbors whose wells had gone dry or were not working.

Mr. Goran suggested revising the cost estimate to include Will Bailey Road only to Highland Ridge, Mary's Lane, Highland Ridge Drive and Highland Shoals for the Board to review.

The Board agreed to revisit this request at the next meeting.

Request for water service – Risner Road

Mr. Goran provided three cost estimates to reach the requestors' properties. After some discussion, no action was taken.

Public Comments: remarks by invited guests

None

Approval of February 20ᵗʰ regular meeting minutes

Ms. York motioned to approve the February 20ᵗʰ regular meeting minutes. Mr. Harper seconded the motion which passed 5 – 0.

Financial report

Mr. Goran presented the financial report.

Old Business

Consideration of investigating groundwater sources for Authority future water supply

Mr. Hood discussed the benefits of researching ground water resources. He provided a rough cost estimate of $12,000,000 for building a 2,000,000 gallon per day surface water treatment plant, compared to the much lower cost of researching groundwater resources.

Mr. Goran again recommended proceeding with the first step in researching groundwater resources due to the fact that wholesale water rates have increased, the current water purchase agreements were expiring in less than two years, and the fact that it would be a wise investment in the Authority's future water supply needs. Mr. Goran also reminded the Board that he had reached out to both the City of Lavonia and the City of Royston about sharing in the costs of their potential water treatment plant upgrades in exchange for lower rates and/or longer-term agreements.

The Board discussed alternative options, but no action was taken.

Discussion of water and sewer service delivery territories

Mr. Goran stated that both Ms. York and he attended the meeting between representatives of Hart County and the City of Hartwell at which time an agreement was reached.

Suggested capital projects for Board consideration

Mr. Goran provided three cost estimates to reach Cedar Creek Circle from different directions. After some discussion, the Board requested a cost estimate from Nancy Hart School Road only via Elberton Highway to reach Cedar Creek Circle and revisit this topic at the next meeting.

There was some discussion about HCWSA's $10,000 per committed customer guideline and that it is very difficult to achieve due to the low home density in most of the county where we don't currently have lines, other than perhaps the densely-populated areas of Reed Creek near the lake.

Discussion of potential customer retail rate increase

Due to rising operating costs, Mr. Goran recommended a 10% increase to all water overage rates, including conservation rates for residential customers and reduced rates for large non-residential users. After some discussion, Mr. Justice motioned to increase the overage rates by 10% effective with customer usage beginning April 24ᵗʰ, 2023. Mr. Harper seconded the motion which passed 5 – 0.

New Business

Milford Road

After some discussion, Mr. Justice motioned to allocate $125,000 of HCWSA funds for the Milford Road project. Mr. Harper seconded the motion which passed 5 – 0.

Requirements for developer funded projects

Mr. Carlton suggested developing a process for HCWSA's specifications and standard drawings to be made readily available to developers in an effort to promote transparency.

After some discussion, Mr. Goran said that he would reach out to EMI and Burch, Crooms & Company to develop a process and ensure compliance with both EPD and the Government Auditing Standards Board.

The Board agreed to revisit this topic at the next meeting.

Director's Comments

None

Members' Comments

None

Upcoming Meetings – April 17th and May 15th

The next Board meetings will be held on Monday, April 17th, 2023 and Monday, May 15th, 2023.

Adjournment

Mr. Justice motioned to adjourn, and Ms. York seconded it. The motion passed 5 - 0.

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Wade Carlton, Chairman   Holly McBrayer, Secretary