Hart County Water and Sewer Authority
Board of Directors Meeting July 20, 2026

The Hart County Water and Sewer Authority met on July 20, 2026, in the Hart County Cooperative Extension Service Building. Chairman Wade Carlton called the meeting to order. Present were Board Members Larry Haley, Bennie Harper, Marvin Justice and Vice-Chair Patti York. Also present were Legal Counsel Kim Higginbotham, Interim Director Charles Cathon, The Hartwell Sun Editor Rose Scoggins, EMI CEO Jerry Hood, EMI Senior Engineer Russ Brink, Arrowood General Contracting President/Owner Tripp Arrowood, HCWSA employees Cory Bouquet and Holly Mathis, and several members of the public.

Welcome

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Haley motioned to approve the agenda. Mr. Harper seconded the motioned which passed 5 – 0.

Approval of May 18, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes and June 8, 2026, Called Meeting Minutes

Ms. York motioned to approve both the May 18th regular meeting minutes, and the June 8th called meeting minutes. Mr. Haley seconded the motion which passed 5 – 0.

Public Comments; Remarks by invited guests

Mr. Brink of EMI presented a brief explanation of the July 11, 2026, main line leak event. Mr. Brink stated that he will provide an After-Action Report (AAR) along with recommendations for improvements intended to strengthen preventative measures and reduce the likelihood of similar incidents.

12 county residents requested water service for the Reed Creek and the Flat Shoals areas.

Financial Report

Mr. Cawthon presented the financial report.

Old Business

Reed Creek Expansion Project update

Mr. Hood of EMI provided an update on the Reed Creek Expansion Project. He recommended that the Authority apply for a loan modification to obtain a two-year extension at no cost to the Authority. Mr. Hood also recommended applying for a GEFA Planning Grant for up to $50,000, which requires a local match of $5,000. The grant application is due August 30, 2026. If awarded, the grant would fund planning and modeling to identify side road extensions that would provide the greatest benefit to the overall water system, evaluate opportunities to improve system redundancy, and assess enhancements to the SCADA system. The results of the study would be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

Mr. Justice motioned to authorize EMI to complete the loan modification and 2-year extension application on the Authority's behalf. Mr. Haley seconded the motion which passed 5 – 0.

Mr. Carlton motioned to authorize EMI to apply for a $50,000 GEFA planning grant on the Authority's behalf. Ms. York seconded the motion which passed 5- 0.

New Business

FY25 Financial Audit Update and Formal Motion

Mr. Cawthon presented the FY2025 Audit. Ms. York made a motion to authorize Mr. Cawthon and Ms. Mathis to sign the Management Representation Letter, noting that neither was employed by the Authority during the audit period and therefore would not assume responsibility for the audit findings. Mr. Harper seconded the motion, which passed 5 – 0.

EMI Contract – Operations and Reed Creek Project Management

After a brief discussion, Ms. York motioned to accept the Operations contract with EMI. Mr. Carlton seconded the motion which passed 5 – 0.

Mr. Haley motioned to accept the Reed Creek Project Management contract with EMI. Ms. York seconded the motion which passed 5 – 0.

Director's Comments

Mr. Cawthon expressed his appreciation to Authority staff, local municipalities, Arrowood General Contracting and EMI staff for their hard work and collaboration during the mainline leak event.

Members' Comments

Ms. York expressed her thanks to Mr. Cawthon and Authority staff for all their hard work during this time of transition and main line leak event.

Mr. Harper echoed the sentiment.

Upcoming Meetings

Monday August 17, 2026, and Monday September 21, 2026

Executive Session – Personnel and Litigation

Mr. Justice made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel and litigation. Mr. Harper seconded the motion which passed 5 – 0.

All five Board Members were present in Executive Session. Additionally, Ms. Higginbotham and Mr. Cawthon were in attendance. Mr. Harper moved to exit Executive Session and reconvene the Regular Meeting. Mr. Justice seconded the motion which passed 5 - 0.

Regular Meeting

Ms. York made a motion to designate Ms. Mathis as Financial Administrator, with the job description to be modified at a later date. Mr. Justice seconded the motion, which carried 5 – 0.

Mr. Justice motioned to accept and amend Mr. Cawthon's contract to a 12-month term. Mr. Haley seconded the motion which passed 5 – 0.

Mr. Carlton motioned not to appeal the pending personnel unemployment claim. Mr. Justice seconded the motion which passed 4 -1 with Ms. York opposed.

Ms. York motioned to replace retirement funds not paid for Mr. Bouquet due to employee error. Mr. Justice seconded the motion which passed 5 – 0.

The Board agreed to allow Mr. Carlton and Ms. York to meet with EMI on the Board's behalf if necessary.

Adjournment

Ms. York made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Haley seconded the motion which passed 5 -0.

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Wade Carlton, Chairman