

Hart County Water and Sewer Authority

Board of Directors Meeting October 24, 2024

The Hart County Water and Sewer Authority met on October 24, 2024, 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 as well as Legal Counsel Kim Higginbotham, Director Pat Goran, Office Manager Karen Neal and several community residents.

Welcome

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Carlton made a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. York seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments

Mr. Carlton asked the community residents for public comment. Bobby Vickery stated that the current construction on Beacon Light Road stopped before reaching his home. Mr. Haley assured Mr. Vickery that the construction would circle back to his residence soon. A resident who did not share his name asked about the cost of installing a tap at his residence on Beacon Light Road. Mr. Goran stated that if the residents sign up for service before the construction reaches the remaining residences on Beacon Light Road, they will receive a \$200.00 discount. The resident was satisfied with the estimated timing until construction reaches his home and thanked the Board.

Approval of September 16, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

Ms. York made a motion to approve the minutes for September 16, 2024. Mr. Haley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Report

Mr. Goran discussed the updated financial report that included actual versus budgeted amounts for FY24. Mr. Goran shared that the Authority did much better than budgeted in FY24. Mr. Goran stated that nothing has changed with SPLOST 6 funds. Mr. Goran also shared that the available funds are up about \$60,000.00 from last month. Finally, Mr. Goran discussed master meter readings and a concern that a flushing meter on Cokesbury Highway has been tampered with recently. Discussion on how to protect the flushing meters ensued. Mr. Goran stated he would investigate solutions.

Old Business

Georgia Environmental Finance Authority Loan for Expansion into Reed Creek Area

Mr. Goran stated that EMI has begun their field work with respect to the Reed Creek Highway expansion project. Mr. Goran anticipates it will take an additional three to four months before drawings and a bid package are complete. He stated that the final loan paperwork must be returned to GEFA before the November 1 deadline.

Will Bailey Road – Morris Road – Beacon Light Road – Mount Olivet Road Project

Mr. Goran shared that Highland Ridge is about two-thirds complete. He stated the contractor would then move on to Mary's Lane followed by Morris Road. Mr. Goran said that the next stage would be Beacon Light Road heading south, then north to Mt. Olivet Road. Mr. Goran again suggested the Board may want to consider sending commitment letters to the residents on Holly Hills Road, Cleveland Mill Road, Oak Tree Lane and Pine Tree Lane.

Damaged Fire Hydrants Repair Discussion

Mr. said that he had yet to receive a list from John Boudway on which hydrants need repair. Mr. Carlton texted a partial list to Ms. Neal to print out for Mr. Goran. Ms. York asked if the hydrant near Chris Whitfield's home had been repaired. Mr. Goran said it had been reassembled but did not seem to be operating as easily as it should. Mr. Carlton inquired as to whether the hydrant at North Hart Elementary has been repaired. Mr. Goran shared that the parts for the repair have arrived, but our maintenance contractor has not yet completed the repairs.

New Business

Request for Water Service – 4011 Elberton Highway Poultry Operation

Local resident Franklin Nguyen spoke representing a couple that recently purchased the subject property and would like to have Authority water for their poultry operation and their home there. Mr. Nguyen stated that their current well does not provide sufficient water for the chickens or the couple's home. The estimate provided by Mr. Goran stated that 1,278,000 gallons per year would be required. Mr. Nguyen stated that if the poultry operation used less than the required amount in any given year, the customer would pay the balance due to meet the requirement. Mr. Goran stated the project would require a GDOT permit and cross a major natural gas line in the area, thus requiring the services of EMI up front. Mr. Goran also stated he was not comfortable with his estimate due to current market conditions. Ms. York made a motion to table this discussion to allow the Board time to review. Mr. Justice seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0 with Mr. Carlton voluntarily abstaining due to a conflict of interest.

Request for Water Service – Fairway Lane

Evan Herring requested the Authority pay for extending a waterline to property he owns on Fairway Lane. Mr. Herring discussed his plans for his current home, which he intends to sell as well as the new home he wants to build. He stated he was purchasing additional lots on Fairway Lane soon. He said that a couple of other residents on Fairway Lane are also interested in Authority water service. Ms. York asked Mr. Herring if this was a development. Mr. Carlton asked if he was building homes to sell. Mr. Herring said that was not his intention. Mr. Justice inquired as to the number of taps Mr. Herring wants. Mr. Herring stated he could confirm four or five taps. Mr. Haley suggested it would make more sense to bore wells. Mr. Herring stated he really wanted Authority water service. After several minutes of discussion, Ms. York made a motion to

table the discussion to allow the Board time to review. Mr. Justice seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Proposed fiscal year 2025 Operating Budget

Mr. Goran asked the Board to review the proposed FY25 budget versus the approved FY24 budget. Mr. Goran stated that while the retail water sales for FY24 were better than budgeted, he wanted to err on the side of caution for revenue estimates for FY25. He stated that the water sales proposed in the FY25 budget is based on the current pricing structures of the agreements with Hartwell, Lavonia, and Royston so the Board should expect that to increase as Mr. Goran is working to secure new water agreements with each of these municipalities. Mr. Carlton stated that would mean our pricing would need to be increased as we cannot be expected to absorb the increases Mr. Goran expects. The other Board Members agreed. Mr. Carlton asked why the accounting and administration line item would decrease so dramatically from FY24 to FY25. Mr. Goran stated that item was for the services of the former Office Manager and that he expected that cost to be much lower this fiscal year. Mr. Haley made a motion to adopt the proposed budget. Mr. Harper seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Director's Comments

Mr. Goran mentioned the resident who hit a main line back in May by digging without calling 811. He stated that despite multiple conversations with the resident's wife and two mailed letters which were returned to the Authority unopened. Ms. Higginbotham requested permission from the Board to send a final demand letter giving the resident ten days to pay the fine and costs for the damage he caused. She made the point of stating that after the ten-day window expires, attorney's fees would attach to any future actions on this subject. She then stated that the next step would be to file in Magistrate Court requesting relief to include the initial fine and costs for the damage as well as attorney's fees and court costs. Ms. Higginbotham stated that the resident would be served by the Sheriff's office. Ms. York made a motion to allow Ms. Higginbotham to move forward with legal action. Mr. Justice seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Goran said that Electricom, Hart Telephone Company's fiber optic cable installer, recently damaged a 12" line near our Airline tank causing a significant loss of water and damaging the County road. Mr. Goran stated that he had emailed Electricom requesting financial assistance.

Mr. Goran reminded the Board that all three wholesale water purchase agreements expire December 31, 2024. He shared that he met with the Royston City Manager recently and that he would be meeting with the Lavonia City Manager next week. After discussion, Mr. Carlton asked Mr. Goran to bring all three proposed agreements to the Board at the same time and the Board would vote to approve or decline the water agreements then. Some discussion ensued, but no motions were made.

Mr. Goran shared that the Authority's initial required steps for the Lead Service Line Inventory have been completed. He also shared that the required letters have been sent to the few addresses that we cannot confirm the service line materials since the meters could not be found. He noted that these are long-inactive accounts and there are no longer residences there. We will wait to see if any responses are received. Mr. Goran stated that the GEFA grant paperwork needs to be signed so it could be submitted to GEFA before the November 1 deadline to get reimbursement for EMI's assistance with this project. Ms. York moved to sign the GEFA documents. Ms. Justice seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Goran stated that we may have to check some customers service lines at the Authority's expense in the future, but the government does have some money set aside to help complete this required task.

Members' Comments

Ms. York requested the November meeting be cancelled due to another commitment on November 18th and the upcoming holiday. Mr. Carlton stated he would be unavailable on November 18th as well. Ms. Higginbotham noted that the water purchase agreements would need to be discussed and voted on in November. After a quick discussion, the Board members agreed to move the next meeting to November 25th.

Upcoming Meetings –December 16th, January TBD

Adjournment

Ms. York made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Haley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Wade Carlton, Chairman

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