

# **Hart County Water and Sewer Authority**

## **Board of Directors Meeting March 18, 2024**

The Hart County Water and Sewer Authority met on February 19, 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, Director Pat Goran, Office Manager Karen Neal, Legal Counsel Kim Higginbotham, and several residents from the Reed Creek area.

### **Welcome**

### **Approval of Agenda**

Mrs. York motioned to approve the agenda. Mr. Harper seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### **Public Comments, remarks by invited guests**

Several Reed Creek area residents spoke in support of getting water service in the area. They explained that many of the lots were very small causing issues due to closeness of wells and septic tanks and drain fields. Concerns were also expressed about the impact on existing wells with more homes being built and wells being installed, and the difficulty of installing a new well or septic system if one fails due to the small lot sizes.

Mr. Goran explained that the Authority is in the process of applying for a nearly \$5,000,000 loan with 50% principal forgiveness from the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) and that the Authority has identified a large area of northern Hart County for GEFA's environmental review process. He further explained that the loan amount would only allow the Authority to provide water service to a small percentage of the homes in the area.

Questions were raised about how the Authority prioritizes where it will expand its system and how it will decide where to run water lines in the Reed Creek area. It was explained that often the Authority will send out commitment letters to residents in an area and make decisions based on how many people commit to pay for a new service and connect to its system versus the cost of installing the water lines, but that may not be practical in this case. Other options include looking at the percentage of residents that commit to connect in an area and looking at the density of homes in an area. Mr. Goran said there has been a tremendous increase in material and construction costs over the last few years, meaning the Authority's funds and SPLOST money that the Authority receives won't go nearly as far as it used to.

### **Approval of February 19, 2024 regular meeting minutes**

Mr. Haley motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Justice seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### **Financial report**

Mr. Goran presented the financial report. He indicated that more HCWSA funds had been set aside for the Will Bailey – Mount Olivet project since the contract amount is higher than the estimate from several months ago. He also said that as the weather warms we will likely need to flush more water to maintain adequate chlorine residual levels.

## **Old Business**

### **Will Bailey Road – Mount Olivet Road connector project**

Mr. Goran said that the low bidder is currently finishing up a project in Westminster, SC, and is hopeful they can start on this project around June 1.

### **Request for water service – Beacon Light Road**

Mr. Goran reminded the Board that they had previously voted to extend the Beacon Light Road line from Fred King Road to Eric Sanders' poultry operation and that the estimated cost, based on the Will Bailey – Mount Olivet low bid, is now about \$155,000. He also said that the estimated cost to extend the Beacon Light Road line from there to the Morris Road intersection is about \$340,000, although the Board has not voted to do so.

### **Request for water service – Bowman Highway poultry operations**

Mr. Goran told the Board that EMI is working on the GDOT permit for this project. Mr. Goran said that decisions will have to be made about which projects to do first, and volunteered to reach out to other contractors to check on their availability.

### **Approval to apply for five-year Georgia Environmental Finance Authority loan with 50% principal forgiveness**

Mr. Goran said that his understanding is that GEFA, in an effort to speed projects up, will be adding 2% to their stated interest rates while projects are under construction. There was discussion about splitting the Reed Creek expansion project into smaller projects when it is bid so construction could be completed sooner.

## **New Business**

### **City of Bowersville request for modification to water service delivery territory**

No action was taken since a Bowersville representative was not present.

### **Clarification of applicability of residential tap payment plan for ¾" meters**

Mr. Goran stated that the payment plan option had never been incorporated into our policy but it should be as we have offered it for many years. Mr. Carlton asked if we had people not honor the payment plan in the past and Mr. Goran replied that it has not happened very often. There was discussion about recording it on the deed. Mr. Carlton suggests raising the total cost of the payment plan to \$1900 or \$2000 from the current \$1850. Ms. York suggests that perhaps the down payment should be larger and comments we are not in the loan business. Mr. Haley said there are local companies that can make loans for this type of need.

Mr. Carlton motions to no longer offer the payment plan. Mrs. York seconds. After more discussion the motion passes 4 - 1 with Mr. Harper voting against. Mr. Harper states that there are a lot of people that would like to tap on but they do not have the money to pay the entire tap fee up front, and that he disagrees with no longer offering it. Mr. Carlton said the payment plan could be reinstated in the future if the Board chooses.

## **Election of Authority Officers**

After some discussion, Mr. Haley motions to re-appoint Mr. Carlton as Chairman. Mr. Justice seconds and the motion passes unanimously. Mr. Justice motions to appoint Mrs. York as Vice-Chairperson. Mr. Haley seconds and the motion passes unanimously.

## **Director's Comments**

Mr. Goran welcomed Mrs. Neal as our new Office Manager and explained that Holly Mathis was continuing to assist the Authority remotely.

Mr. Goran said that we had received an email from a person in the Bio Church Road / Woodland Way area requesting water service, and we had also been approached by a person on John Jordan Road south of Friendship Road wanting water service. Mr. Carlton informed the Board that he would abstain from voting on anything related to Friendship Road in the future due to a potential conflict of interest.

## **Members' Comments**

Mr. Haley asked if we have had any taste and odor complaints this year and Mr. Goran responded that we had not.

Mr. Justice wanted to clarify that his comments in earlier meetings about asking for financial contributions toward construction did not apply just to poultry operations, but to all for-profit entities.

Mr. Harper suggested we consider extending the Cokesbury Highway line to reach a trailer park and a poultry operation.

## **Upcoming Meetings – April 15<sup>th</sup>, May 20<sup>th</sup>**

## **Adjournment**

Mr. Haley motioned to adjourn, and Mrs. Haley seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

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Wade Carlton, Chairman