

WATER COMMITTEE
JUNE 12, 2002
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chuck Watkins, Chairman
 Dr. George Patton, Vice Chairman
 Chris Cofty
 Tony Parrott
 Chris Venice

NON-VOTING MEMBERS: Jim Mallett

ABSENT: Bill McNally

STAFF PRESENT: Dennis Davenport

GUESTS: Bruce Genter and neighbors

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Chuck Watkins at 8:00 A.M.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MEETING ON MAY 22, 2002.

Tony Parrott made the motion and Vice Chairman Dr. George Patton seconded, to approve the minutes from the meeting on May 22, 2002. There was no opposition.

II. BRUCE GENTER TO DISCUSS LEASE IRRIGATION METER.

Mr. Genter thanked the committee for giving them the opportunity to come speak. He explained that the bill he received last month was double from the previous month. He went on to say he started talking with his neighbors about the bills. They found out the rate was doubled and some other things have been done. He pays his taxes and he is a citizen of this County and he wants to know why. He has a lot of questions. He asked if everyone on the committee reside in Fayette County? The committee responded that they do.

Mr. Genter asked if they have the same specifications that he and his neighbors do, even though they live in Peachtree City? Chairman Watkins responded yes. Mr. Genter commented that he hates to see somebody that works for a Board that is He asked if they are appointed or elected. Chairman Watkins responded appointed. Mr. Genter stated that if you are an appointed Board and you don't live in the County, he is concerned. Because you pass laws and you don't live there. We live here. That is the reason for that question.

Mr. Genter explained his neighbor, Tom, approached the Water System a couple of years ago about the possibility of putting an extra meter in. At that time it was \$700.00. He asked what the actual cost of the meter is. It can't be more than \$150.00 or \$250.00 for a meter. Chairman Watkins explained there is an availability fee that goes toward building water towers, infrastructure of lines, and tying onto the system. You become a member of the system. When you pay the meter charge you are paying more than just the meter and installation cost.

Mr. Parrott explained the Water System charges a \$400.00 tap fee. This is the installation fee for a residential meter, not an irrigation or business meter. The Water System installs residential meters for the \$400.00 fee. This fee for irrigation or business is allowing you to tie onto the System. We do not make the tap for either one.

Mr. Genter stated that the point of the discussion today and why they are here, is they are concerned about the bill, they are concerned about the fact that they reside in Peachtree City. They all try to maintain a very nice lawn, and a very nice home. They are proud of what they have and proud of the fact that we have water available to be able to keep their plants and their yard very nice. The bottom line is, he has been a resident of this county 25 to 30 years. Ten years ago the cost of his water was not 1/10th of what it is today. It is ridiculous what they are paying today compared to ten years ago.

Mr. Parrott commented that the water rate is the same now as it was ten years ago. The sewer has changed.

Mr. Robert Kennedy expressed his appreciation to the committee for letting them come talk to them. The issue this morning is at his house, a two person household. In February and March his water bill is \$48.00, water and sewage. In June it goes to \$298.00. It does not mean they have people that come to visit. It doesn't mean they do more laundry, or wash cars, anything like that. The simple fact is, it is one thing they do. They take care of their yard. As he understands it, half his water bill is water and the other half is sewage. Treatment of the sewage that goes into the wastewater system. We don't treat what goes into the stormwater system. It runs off into the lakes and so forth. He went on to say that is where the majority of his water goes. The excess that is from the \$48.00 to the \$298.00. That is water he is paying to be treated in the wastewater system, that never enters the wastewater system. It goes off into the stormwater system. In effect, he is paying for a service that he does not get. What they are trying to get to is, how can they work with the Water System to cut down their bills. Pay their fair share, but not pay more than they need to.

Vice Chairman Dr. Patton stated that the Water Committee has nothing to do with the

Peachtree City Sewer Authority. Mr. Kennedy stated that when he called the sewer company they referred him to the Water System. Mr. Cofty explained that we only bill for the sewer company.

Mr. Kennedy went on to say they would like to propose an idea. He had talked to Tony about it, and he told him to come to the Board with it. They would like to propose that the Water System lease meters to residents in Fayette County, the people who are on sewer systems in Fayetteville, Peachtree City and Tyrone. Lease the meters on a figure that you come up with that is a marginal figure. They are thinking of \$10.00 per month for the time they live in that house. If someone buys the house, they take over the lease of the meter. The meter would be installed primarily for irrigation. They do not mind paying for the water they use. Our forefathers went to war because of the Boston Tea Party. This is nothing more than the Boston Tea Party. They are being charged for something they are not using.

Dennis Davenport explained that the County Water System is not charging them that fee. The fee is being charge to them by Peachtree City. They figure sewer treatment based upon water consumption. If you consume 1,000 gallons, they are going to assume they are treating 1,000 gallons. He went on to explain if 50% of your usage is put on your lawn you need to demonstrate to them that you are not putting that in the sewer and they should not bill for you for that. The easy equation is to bill based on water consumption. You need to provide them a basis to show they are treating less than the consumption that comes through the water meter.

Mr. Genter asked if Peachtree City are paying more for consumption than people that live in Fayetteville. Mr. Davenport stated that he did not say that. They pay the same for consumption. The sewer portion is different.

Mr. Parrott commented that having a second meter would not solve the basic problem. Peachtree City Water & Sewerage Authority budgets what they do based on a certain amount of money. If the water usage drops down, they will raise the rate again so they generate the same amount of money. If they gave you an average sewer bill in the summer time, winter rates would be raised. They still have to cover their debt service. He went on to say that Gwinnett County bills on an average for the sewer. He referenced a news article from this mornings' paper. After 20,000 gallons they add a surcharge on the water.

Mr. Cofty explained Fayette County has built reservoirs to have capacity, if we had a drought, residents of Fayette County would have water for a year. We are planning ahead to protect citizens of the County, so we have ample water. All of this goes into the infrastructure to provide that service.

Mr. Genter asked if they talk to the sewer treatment company in Peachtree City and they agree that the rate should be lower, should not be 100% equal; is there still a possibility they can get a separate meter at a reasonable rate, on a lease over a lifetime expectancy of living in that home. They can then pay separately for what they use that does not go through the sewer system. Is that feasible?

Chairman Watkins replied it would be possible for us to look at. He suggested first getting an appointment with Larry Turner in Peachtree City. Ask if they will help with a summer rate.

Mr. Parrott explained that the Atlanta Regional Commission and the North Georgia Metropolitan Water Planning District are looking at surcharges for summer usage. This is one thing they are pushing. It is one thing that they will end up requiring County governments within the ARC to adopt. Gwinnett County is now using 20,000 gallons.

Mr. Kennedy stated that is for usage of water. If he uses it, he should pay for it. However, the issue is paying for service they don't get. That is the treatment of the water that goes into the stormwater waste system.

Mr. Parrott commented the reason they think they are paying for something they don't get is due to the way the rates are established. If they give you an average winter bill for the summer bill, they would then have to increase their rate to cover their debt service anyway. They still have to generate the same amount of money.

Mr. Kennedy went on to say that he would be willing to wager the fact that, we no longer pay for sewer, they have to raise the millage rate or per thousand gallons...

Mr. Parrott stated they would raise the sewer rate.

Mr. Kennedy added it would not be proportional, or not equal to, what he spends for the whole treatment of the water that goes into the stormwater waste system. It would raise for everyone in the county and he would not be paying for treatment he is not getting. It would be raised across the board for people who do use the system. Right now he is subsidizing those people who do use the system.

Chairman Watkins suggested they talk with Peachtree City Water and Sewerage Authority to help them with the sewer issue. He went on to say that we would consider an irrigation meter.

Mr. Evans commented that during this time we are concerned about conservation, concerned about where we are getting the water, and how much water we are using. He asked if it would

not be better to know through a metering system, how much people are irrigating. At some point we are going to have to start micro managing the water. If we are going to do that, he thinks that knowing how much is going to the house and knowing how much is going to the yard might be important to know some day.

Chairman Watkins responded that there are two thoughts on that from what he can see from the State. Some people do not think you ought to irrigate at all. You should not have lawns, you should have some type of desert plants. If you water properly, every other day when you need it. We should use the water wisely.

Mr. Evans went on to say it was not only for people who water their lawns, but those who use outdoor water period. Such as washing the car, filling the kiddie pool, watering the plants, or whatever. If your outdoor watering through an irrigation system can be metered, he thinks it helps you establish how much water is being used. When you get down to watering the lawn, whether that is a wise thing to do or a practical thing to do, watering and irrigation enhances the quality of life in our community. It keeps our property values high and it gives us the community that we moved here for. That enhances our quality of life. If we want to go another route, we ought to do that, but he thinks at this time we are not there yet.

Mr. Kennedy commented that is a good point for planning purposes. To know how many wastewater treatment plants you need to have. How many wastewater transmission lines and so forth that you need to have. That would be a way to say for planning in the future that we don't need "X" million gallons because that is landscaping. He asked about the governance of the sewer system. Is it by ordinance?

Mr. Parrott responded they are a Water and Sewer Authority. Vice Chairman Dr. Patton commented that the Board members are appointed by the City Council.

Mr. Evans asked how they could monitor the decision process in looking at the irrigation meters. Dennis Davenport explained that they should first talk to the Water and Sewer Authority. If they prefer a different method, they will come up with their own conclusions. Those conclusions will determine how they will bill customers. He recommended finding out what they are looking for first.

Mr. Parrott stated they do not charge sewer on an irrigation meter at this time.

III. LAKE PEACHTREE DREDGING.

Jim Mallett reported they met with DOT about the driveway permit. The man in

Thomaston said it was a temporary permit, so he sent it to Griffin. The man in Griffin stated it was too complicated for him to do, so they have sent it back to Thomaston.

Mr. Parrott explained that we need this information on the plans before we bid the job. It makes a difference to the haulers.

Chairman Watkins referenced a news article about a particular company that does dredging. Mr. Mallett stated this person is included on the bid list.

Further discussion pertained to the various uses of the dredge material.

IV. BID OPENING - SALVAGE WATER METERS.

Mr. Parrott reported there was only one bidder, Badger. They will give us credit on future purchase for the salvage water meters they pick up. They will give us \$4.00 each on the Model 25. On 6800 Model 25's we get a credit of \$27,200.00.

Tony Parrott made a motion to recommend to the Board of Commissioners to accept the low bid of Badger Meter. Also, to sell the cast iron meter lids and other meters to a recycling center. Vice Chairman Dr. Patton seconded and there was no opposition.

V. BID OPENING - ANNUAL CONTRACT FOR WATERLINE EXTENSIONS.

Jim Mallett reported bids were opened on May 21 for the 2002 - 2003 Waterline Extensions Contract. There were three bidders. The apparent low bidder at the bid opening was Brent Scarborough. They made a \$10,000.00 math error in item #70. After the correction was made, Shockley Plumbing became low bidder by \$200.00. It was a very close bid, \$929,550.00 versus \$929,961.00. Shockley Plumbing did the job for the current year and has done a satisfactory job. He recommended giving the bid to the low bidder Shockley Plumbing.

Tony Parrott made a motion to recommend to the Board of Commissioners to recommend the low bidder, Shockley Plumbing. Chris Venice seconded and there was no opposition.

There being no further business, Chairman Chuck Watkins adjourned the meeting at 8:45 A.M.

Chuck Watkins

The foregoing minutes were approved at the regular Water Committee meeting on the 10th day of July, 2002.

Lisa Gillis