

WATER COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 13, 2013
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Pete Frisina, Chairman
James K “Chip” Conner, Vice Chairman
Steve Rapson
Tony Parrott
Brian Cardoza
David Jaeger

ABSENT:

NON-VOTING MEMBERS:
GUESTS:

Dennis Davenport
Stephen Hogan, WASA
Peachtree City Rotary Club Members
Russell Ray

STAFF PRESENT:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Pete Frisina at 8:00 A.M.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MEETING ON JANUARY 23, 2013.

Vice Chairman Chip Conner made the motion and Tony Parrott seconded, to approve the minutes from the meeting on January 23, 2013. There was no opposition.

II. LAKE MCINTOSH UPDATE.

Mr. Parrott reported that Lake McIntosh is full. He showed photos of the lake. He was able to be there to catch a photo of the lake as the water started flowing over the spillway. The water was flowing over at 192 cubic feet per second. He then showed a photo from downstream looking back up at the spillway. He said that we have continued to do the monitoring, but now, since the lake is full, there is less monitoring to do. We are doing the monitoring to satisfy the Safe Dams Program.

Mr. Parrott explained that the startup for the raw water pump station is scheduled for next week, tentatively for Monday. He said that the turbidity in the water has now settled down to less than 25 NTUs.

Mr. Parrott stated that the park is nearly complete. The walking trails are complete; the restrooms are 99% complete as well as the pavilion and the gazebo. The main gate has been installed. The restroom was built to the same standard that has been used at Lake Horton and Kenwood Park.

Steve Rapson asked about a park grand opening. Mr. Parrott said that we need to complete the landscaping, so we are probably two months away from having one.

He said that the docks at Lake McIntosh are different from those at Lake Kedron because of ADA requirements. The Road Department will do the paving project from the gate back up in front of the water plant. City of Peachtree agreed to allow us to use the county standard for the paving, and Public Works will do this project as soon as all the dump truck traffic is complete. Some rip rap still has to be hauled in.

III. MIEX UPDATE.

Mr. Parrott reported that the bid opening is later this month. We are finishing up with sewer line approvals with DNR for connecting to the sewer system in Peachtree City. This is one of the requirements on the water side approval. We had to get their approval on the sewer lines. That design is almost ready. There were 11 contractors pre-qualified.

IV. DRAGON BOAT RACES AT LAKE MCINTOSH.

George Martin introduced himself and the other Rotary Club members present; Jim Dalton, Joel Norris and Ed Miller. He gave some background on the Rotary Club; they put out the telephone directory starting about 40 years ago. He said that some of their predecessors were smart enough to know that telephone directories for those people that are under 40 are rapidly becoming a dinosaur. That has been their big fundraiser for the last 4 decades. He said they were looking about 5 years ago for a replacement fund raiser, big project, community project and landed on having what none of them knew anything about at the time; that was Dragon Boat Racing. For the last 5 years the race has been in Lake Peachtree. It has been a good fund raiser, and is gradually growing, getting larger every year. He said they have incorporated into the race itself an International Festival because of the labor of the venue. Nancy Price with the City of Peachtree City helps with the International side. The Rotary Club does the Dragon Boat Races. Last year they estimated about 4,000 people were there. They had somewhere in the neighborhood of 40 teams, a lot of spectators and a lot of community involvement. He said they know that Lake Peachtree will likely have to be dredged sometime in the next couple of years. They are trying to think ahead, there are some people in the club that would like ultimately to see the entire venue moved to Lake McIntosh because of the size of the lake, the ability to have larger races, more competitive races. Like everything else, there is almost a pro circuit to these things now. Dragon Boat Racing is a very rapidly growing sport. He said there are some people that would like to see a permanent move, there are others that like the central location of Lake Peachtree and the ability to pack in 1,000 vehicles, which they have concerns about at Lake McIntosh Park. That part has not been established yet, but, at the very least, they want to get a better understanding of the dredging of Lake Peachtree, and the capabilities of Lake McIntosh and the park to be able to handle something.

Mr. Martin stated this is very informal, but they wanted to at least take the initial steps to have discussion. He said that they know, ultimately the Board of Commissioners would have to grant approval to have the event at the Lake. He said they have permission, at this point, to have a course out there. He said, by the way, they were going to have a surveyor go out and do this very nice and fancy, and the lake filled up before they could get to it. He said there are other ways around that, it is not a big issue. The bottom line is that they are here to get a little bit of information and get a better understanding of the dredging of Lake Peachtree and also the capabilities of Lake McIntosh, with the recognition that there are several different political entities involved in that process.

Mr. Parrott explained that the dredging of Lake Peachtree is by contract with the City. He said that we have come to the point that we will dredge it, because they have agreed that it needs to be dredged. The process is different now than it was the first time we did it in 1985. In 1985 we drained the lake, removed the silt, built an island, we filled it back up and went on. When we did it the next time, we dredged, put the spoils out at Drake Field, dried them out and then trucked it out. Both times was fairly easy. Now, we have to do environmental stuff and we have to involve the Corp of Engineers. We have a consultant working on what it will take with the Corp and they are still working on whether we can get by with what is called a nationwide permit as compared to having a site specific permit. They are working on that, but we still don't know the answer yet.

Mr. Parrott went on to say that disposal won't be a problem as compared to just getting permission. The congressional standard that the Corp has is any dredging and filling has to go through this process. The Water System pays for the project, the estimated cost is 1 ½ million dollars.

Mr. Martin said that he was at a City Council meeting where they talked about attempting to mitigate or reduce the expense by taking the fill and spreading it on Drake Field as opposed to hauling it away. Mr. Parrott said that we looked at different options and there did not appear to be full support. Vice Chairman Conner said that we are probably talking about double what we dredged in the past. Mr. Parrott commented that it was 60,000 cubic yards. Mr. Martin said that he understood moving that away while still wet was significantly more money than just spreading it, either building an island, which was not favorable, or spreading it on some property.

Mr. Martin said that a question more significant to them would be a guesstimate of timeline. Both the duration of the project and also are we talking about 2014, 2015, how long will it take to go through the permitting.

Mr. Parrott said that he thinks it will be 2014, he does not believe there is a way, even getting the permitting done and then going through a bid process, in nine months that the project could be put together and accomplish it. We have to have a place to mobilize, which is City property, and by the time you go through an

agreement between the City and County and all the meetings, he believes the best we will be able to do is 2014.

Mr. Martin said from what he remembered the timing of the project is long and expensive. He said that he is here representing the Rotary Club; their event is the end of September every year. He said that he knows there are some other significant events; one being the Peachtree City Triathlon which is held in May every year. He said he does not know if that is the duration of a project. Mr. Parrott commented that last time we gave the contractor 6 months.

Further discussion pertained to the restrictions on the lakes such as no swimming which is allowed on Lake Peachtree, and is not allowed on Lake Horton, Lake Kedron and Lake McIntosh because of the drinking water rules. Lake Peachtree was grandfathered. The question came up about emergency vehicles in case something happens. Mr. Parrott said that is an exception that the state allows. It is the same with Fish & Game; they have a gas powered boat. Another question came up about placing the markers for the lanes and putting in the buoys; what would they be allowed to use. Mr. Martin stated that the county would want to see something in writing on that. He said originally they were going to bury some cables and line, but in Lake Peachtree they set out some barrels with concrete anchors at the bottom. They were temporary in Lake Peachtree. He said they would provide some specifications if they needed to.

Mr. Martin commented that they would need some guidance as to where the races could be held, with an emphasis on having the largest spectator capacity possible. Mr. Parrott said he could get them a copy of the Lake McIntosh map so they could submit their proposal. He said that Lake Peachtree is good for the coming season, 2014 is a question. Mr. Parrott commented that they could work on the proposal, bring it back to Water Committee and then Water Committee would make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Parrott explained that the dredging of Lake Peachtree is a contract between the County and Peachtree City over the use of Lake Peachtree. That is one of the conditions of the contract. The City has done their review and said that it needs dredging; at that point the County has to get it dredged. He said that the project would have already started if it had not been for the amount of paper it takes now as compared to previously.

The question came up about the park being able to hold 4,000 people with vendors. Mr. Parrott said he does not know the answer; there are 80 parking spaces. Mr. Martin said they would have to shuttle people, which is what they did with Lake Peachtree. Including all the churches and surrounding parking lots in the walking vicinity there were about 900 parking spaces. Even there, they had shuttle services from the Wyndam, from Booth and McIntosh. They recognize that they will have to do that. That is one of the draw backs of Lake McIntosh, the limited parking and the size; although it is a nice size park; to bring that many people in at one time,

there are some logistical issues. Mr. Parrott commented that the park itself is less than 10 acres.

Further discussion pertained to timing of the project, how long it would take and the best time of the year to do this type of project. Mr. Parrott explained that if we are going to dry the material at Drake Field as we have done in the past, summer works out better; begin the project in the spring. Weather is a consideration, also. Vice Chairman Conner mentioned that in September Lake McIntosh, depending on the weather conditions, if we are in another drought situation, we could have to pull Lake McIntosh down somewhat. If we are 2 years away and still able to use Lake Peachtree we will have a little history and we will know how Lake McIntosh is going to respond to drought.

Mr. Parrott commented that the Water System is in the passive recreation side, the event side of it does not happen often.

STORMWATER

Steve Rapson asked how much has been collected from the Stormwater billing. Mrs. Speegle said out of a billing of \$600,000.00, Friday afternoon we had collected \$418,000.00. Mr. Rapson stated that changing the methodology associated with Stormwater billing is being discussed. He said that he tried to explain to Mr. Chase and Mr. Brown that if we choose to do that differently, then the question is, what about the 70% of people who just paid. Do we give their money back somehow, how does that work. Maybe we will do it different the next time. He said that we need to keep in mind that we are dealing with the 25% who have not paid, as opposed to 75% who have paid. Not to mention, we think the liability is somewhere between \$12 and \$15 million. We could take the \$600,000.00 revenue stream and do a revenue bond for \$6 million. The reason it is \$6 million versus \$15 is because it was really supposed to be \$12 million versus \$15 million. The previous administration chose to arbitrarily cut it in half. The way to really fix it is to get the rate where it should have been and that may not be a good solution at this point. He said that the other question that was asked was can we use SPLOST money that we currently have. He said that he explained to them that there are 16 projects and 66 projects on 70%, you might be able to make a case with 4 of those projects in that 69 project with the 70%. There was at least enough interpretation that maybe there are some Stormwater fixes, but for the most part, you can't attach any of the special purpose local option sales tax to any Stormwater project. Then they asked about doing another special purpose local option sales tax. He said he told them he does not think that has a chance of passing. The last rebuttal was to do a property tax increase. As much as they hate the credits and all that kind of stuff there are no offsets if you do a property tax increase. Then, what you have done is you have insured the people that should have some type of credit don't get a credit. Then you are looking at about a 7.44% property tax increase for all the unincorporated folks. Again, now they are paying, instead of based on impervious surface and tied to Stormwater, they are paying based on what their house is worth. He said that he is

sure we will hear all those different scenarios tonight. Then he will systematically walk through why this is probably the best way to do it. We can tweak the actual utility itself.

Mr. Rapson stated that tonight's meeting would start out with an apology for not communicating very well on the front end. He said that oddly enough Union City implemented their Stormwater Utility two months before we did. No one heard about it because they did all the things that we are getting ready to jump through the hoops here and do. He said that he does not think there is anything wrong with the premise of how it was developed, how it came about, it is just a matter of educating the general masses. He said that he has told every Board member he has talked to and every Commissioner that he has talked to, and every resident that he has convinced one at a time, it is a matter of understanding what you are talking about. The best argument he has heard is "I am in the watershed and I own 10 acres, and all my acreage flows into the middle of my tract, and there is a pond. Therefore, none of my stormwater impacts anything; I should not have to pay anything." He said that he told the gentleman that is absolutely correct as long as you never leave your 10 acres, but if you are driving on this road up here, that has this stormwater problem, then the question is whether you let me fix that head wall at \$200,000.00, or whether that road eventually washes out and you pay for it on your property tax at \$1 ½ million to fix it. He went on to say that we are talking about fixing things that are stormwater related throughout our entire road system. He said that he thinks, once people understand it, they still don't like it, but at least they understand it.

Mr. Rapson commented that there is a bill now saying you can't put it on the property tax bill, but Willard dropped that. He went on to say that putting the stormwater bill on the property tax bill would be a 7% increase. Our millage rate is extremely low for a county, so we are only talking about having to raise our millage .42, and that is just the unincorporated residential component.

Mr. Parrott commented that Peachtree City is about to have an increase, 137%. Mr. Rapson said, in reality that is probably what we should be doing. The rate we charge everybody is half of what it should have been. Mr. Parrott commented that is what the Board decided to do that night, without discussion. He said what bothered staff the most was the fact that they cut the educational component out of the project. Mr. Rapson stated that insured the crippling we currently have.

He said that he thinks that tonight when he starts the meeting, his first five minutes will be an apology to the residents for that happening. Staff had a good plan, but for budgetary reasons the previous administration took it out, and this is what we are left with. He said that he thinks the county staff has gotten a bad rap in regards to a lot of this, but it was not the county staff that did this. He said that he thinks the plan we had put together was a very systematical and logical plan all the way up until implementation and then it got crippled by the previous Board for whatever reason.

There being no further business, Chairman Pete Frisina adjourned the meeting at 8:35 A.M.

Peter A. Frisina

The foregoing minutes were approved at the regular Water Committee meeting on the 13th day of March, 2013.

Lisa Speegle