

WATER COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 10, 2014
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Pete Frisina, Chairman
James K “Chip” Conner, Vice Chairman
Steve Rapson
Commissioner Steve Brown

ABSENT:

Jimmy Preau
Lee Pope

NON-VOTING MEMBERS:

Dennis Davenport
Frank Destadio

STAFF PRESENT:

Matt Bergen

GUESTS: Stephen Hogan - WASA, Jimmy Hall FCFD, John Dunlop – PTCFD,
Dave Borkowski – PTC, Chuck Fulton, Ms. Mary Giles

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

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MEETING ON AUGUST 13, 2014.

Vice Chairman Chip Conner made the motion and Steve Rapson seconded, to approve the minutes from the meeting on August 13, 2014. There was no opposition.

II. LAKE PEACHTREE UPDATE.

Frank Destadio updated the committee on this item. He stated the bush hogging is finished. Rochester has completed its final survey; they are waiting for their report. All the survey work has been completed. They have taken all the soil samples that they need to take. It will take about two weeks to get it back from the labs. He said that he spoke to the contractor that hauled the stuff away last time. They did not take soil samples last time; but he did, so he would know if he would be able to get rid of it. It was clean and he was able to get use it for building a soccer field at his church. He was pleased to find out that we are taking samples because he felt that there was a couple of contractors that did not bid since they did not know what the soil was like, which is good.

Mr. Destadio went on to say that he spoke yesterday with the lady who handles all their permitting; the 404 permit is not back. She thinks it will probably be two more weeks to get the 33 permit (Nationwide permit); she doesn't seem to anticipate any problems. He again asked to please keep people from calling the Corp of Engineers if possible; so they are on track.

Mr. Rapson commented that calling them does not grease the wheel. Mr. Destadio said the 33 permit, the nationwide permit, has been in process for some time, just waiting for the results. He said they have completed some haul routes; according to the engineers request there are different ways to get out and he provided some information back to Mr. Rapson who has passed it on to the City. He said that we need to get that fairly soon, so that they can get on with the design. The next thing, once they get the results of the soil samples and get the survey package back from Rochester; they are on track and getting it done.

Mr. Rapson commented that he is being very gracious; if we do not hear back from Peachtree City in the next week or two, this project will have to be placed on hold. We can't move to the next phase, which is designing everything until we know what the haul routes are. He said that Steve Brown told the school board on another issue, we have to know where we are targeting the extract so that we can design how the things are coming out of the lake. Right now, he thinks Jim is aware of that. He said he told him in about two weeks the dredging project will start to slip, in regards to timelines and all that. There is nothing we can do.

Mr. Destadio stated there a couple of significant impacts in that one route, which would take some time to add that to the design. Mr. Rapson said that we are waiting to hear back from Peachtree City on the dredging. He went on to say that Mr. Borkowski maybe could expedite getting us a copy of whatever dam breach analysis, and the documents they have. He said he has requested that several times, but he has not gotten any of that information. He said that he would like the County to get that. Mr. Davenport stated he would get with Andy on this item and get something back to Mr. Rapson today.

Mr. Destadio stated that things are moving on schedule and doing good, he went on to say that the guy that hauled it out told them that the way he hauled it out was similar to what is being asked for now. That caused a lot of damage across the sides. If we do it that one way, we will have to get a State of Georgia Department of Transportation permit.

Mr. Rapson explained there are actually three access points we are asking for. There are actually two options on the first two, which is we would access the lake at Drake Field and we would come up; the preferred option is to go around the library, hit Willowbend and then be on State Route 54. The other option would be to come straight out on 54; if we did that we would have to breach the golf cart path there, close that off for a while and we would have to get a curb cut for 54, which means now you are going to GDOT, you are getting that extra permit, which is going to slow the project down. Further discussion was about the crepe myrtles, the stone swale, the drainage, and issues taking it to Highway 54.

Mr. Rapson said that we are optimistic that the City will agree to at least close off that section of the road that loops behind City Hall so it won't be as drastic. Mr. Destadio commented that their proposal is to take photographs and video of the

road, so that if there is any damage the contractor claims wasn't his, he would have to repair any damage that he does. The purpose of putting all that in the bid package is to save money; hopefully more contractors that bid, they know they can sell the soil and that can make it easier for them to get it out, and then they can keep the prices lower.

Mr. Rapson said we may be able to use the soil ourselves as a county for the shooting range and all that we are doing out at The Links; all that is kind of in the mix.

Mr. Destadio stated that they finished the depth analysis, with the area and the depth they are getting the volume and it is a lot more than they thought it was going to be. It is probably going to be between 50 and 80 thousand cubic yards of soil, compared to the 30 to 35 that they thought. He said he thinks last time they took out and paid for about 35; that is what the contractor told him.

III. TANK MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS UPDATE.

Mr. Rapson stated that the maintenance for the Peachtree City tank is ongoing; he thinks that is going well. It is on project as well as all the other repairs that have been indicated for the distribution system. He said that Mr. Pope told him everything is progressing just like we thought. We are going to do all the tanks, but we are doing them one at a time.

IV. WATER SYSTEM NOTES AND REQUIREMENTS REVISION.

Mr. Bergen stated that he has been asked by the Fire Marshal to table this item, since the Fire Chief has not had a chance to review it. Mr. Rapson stated these are the notes that go with the plans and the documents that they get. Basically they ride on top of the plans and say here's everything, if you are going to submit a plan for a waterline extension or something to that effect, here's all the criteria that you need to meet; which is what that was. What Mr. Bergen has done is taken something that was created, we are not quite sure where...

Mr. Bergen stated that this was in the book, and somebody actually cut off of a set of plans that was submitted and they stuck it in the book and said this is our water plans, which, unless everything we do is going to be on Westbridge Road and we are going to deal with gas, electric and all the other utilities, this really isn't relevant. He went on to say that basically they have compiled from the fire marshal's office, and other utilities; they put together a set of notes and requirements. He said that we can go over some of the differences now, or we can wait until after.

Mr. Rapson said that he is not sure there is a reason to go over the differences because he thinks the original was created when they built Starr's Mill, he thinks it just needs to stand alone and say these are all the different requirements we have if you are going to submit a plan. What it does is it helps the architects and the

engineers and those folks who submit those plans, someone gives them a formal check list to check off to make sure that they have all their ducks in a row so that when we get the plan itself, it has all the information that we need on it, so the fire marshal, the water department, and everybody can look at the plans and sanction them. He said we will provide an old copy and then provide a brand new copy. The reason we are doing it that way is because the old copy was handled differently. The new copy is actually sequential, so you have things that are in sequential order. Even though we could tell you what the differences are; they are going to be in such a different order that he thinks we would probably lose folks as opposed to helping. So they will provide the old copy and the new copy and the two can be compared.

Mr. Bergen stated that realistically the only one that affects the fire department is the hydrant placement, which is item number 16. It used to set at 600 plus or minus feet, now we want to change it to 400 to 800 based on density, one; and two, parcel size. When we get in these new subdivisions in Peachtree City, we need them closer, but when we get out to Brooks, we don't want to be setting it next to somebodies driveway. We like to keep to the property lines.

Jimmy Hall said there are two different ones in the county ordinance, 600 feet for residential and 400 for commercial. We would have to change that. Mr. Rapson commented that he thinks it would need to be consistent.

Mr. Destadio said when they are trying to design the extension, they don't want to put it on the edge of the driveway if they can help it; they want to get it to the edge of the property line.

Chairman Frisina asked who makes that determination in the cities. Mr. Dunlop stated that in Peachtree City they go by the International Fire Code; which is Annex D, which is based on Annex C and is based on fire flow requirements. This is a lot of times based on square footage. That will tell you where and how far the hydrants are supposed to be; for example, they are looking at in a new development in Peachtree City; 500 feet and no property can be more than 250 feet away from a hydrant. That is based on the fire flow requirements in the International Fire Code. The county basically uses the same rule to keep everything consistent.

Commissioner Steve Brown made a motion to table this item until the meeting on September 24, Vice Chairman Conner seconded and there was no opposition.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT.

Mr. Chuck Fulton addressed the committee about the new insurance, \$3.00 fee on the water bills. He asked if this could be made a little more transparent to the public. Why \$3.00, maybe \$1.00 would cover it, if not, why not. What were the numbers that you based on this plan and let the people know. Just from casual conversation around the neighborhood, people are a bit incensed about this; they view it as a tax. Some of the older people who are on fixed incomes; they are pretty

tight on their bank accounts. He said \$3.00 is not a lot of money, I grant you and I want you to be able to cover your losses. But, he does not want this to be a plan that enables the Water System to make a profit. The other issue is the minimum charge, it would seem like it would be beneficial for the overall usage of water, especially since we have been in such a drought condition for so long, to make it, conservation, a popular thing. Charge us less if we don't use more than the minimum, which he frequently does not use the minimum, but he still gets charged for it. He just wondered if you might consider, or explain to him so he can explain to his neighbors what is going on with this \$3.00 insurance program.

Mr. Rapson explained that \$3.00 was just the amount that typically folks that put this policy in place do. There are about four or five jurisdictions, counties, and cities that have done this. The ones we looked at, the lowest was \$3.00. Most of them were \$4.00 or \$5.00. We picked \$3.00 because we wanted to do something that was towards the low end of the scale versus the high end of the scale. He said that he tells folks; he has talked to probably twenty folks, all of them were pretty incensed to start with; eighteen of them decided to go with the program when we explained it. In his mind this is nothing more than an insurance policy for a water leak. In the past, the system absorbed the majority of the cost associated with those leaks. The sewer system was very gracious in allowing us to do like 50% credit, but it is all based on volume as well, ultimately those customers would either pay it over six months or the system would end up absorbing those charges. This is just a way of giving a customer the opportunity to get a thousand dollar insurance policy for those type of leaks. Two ladies that he talked to in particular, oddly enough, they were both retired school teachers, both were concerned about a \$3.00 increase, both of them had significant leaks in the six or eight hundred dollar ranges within the last year. When he explained to them that if their average use is something like \$50.00 which is what theirs were, that they don't have to pay the \$50.00 and they would have saved the \$650.00, or they would have saved the \$600.00 depending upon what the circumstances would be. And, it is an opt out program, if you don't want to be in the program you can call us, you can text us, you can write it on your check. You can do whatever you want to opt out. That is the whole purpose of having the program, to try to put in some type of insurance type program for the water component. There has always been a similar program, oddly enough, for the sewer system, which takes care of your line from the road to your house. We don't have a sewer system so it is really not anything that we do, but he knows that cities have often paid for that sewer line connection, so that if you have a problem with your sewer line. It is the same type of philosophy, but it is for the water department.

Mr. Rapson addressed the second question from Mr. Fulton, conservation and minimum charge. He said that we have talked about that; but a lot of the bonds that we have for the Water System were based on the premise of the policies that we had in place then. You are looking at twenty year bonds that are all premised on a base charge. A base charge is very atypical for a water system; for us to unbundle that we would have to unbundle our bond structure to be able to do that. More than likely that is not going to happen. If you talk about changing how the base fees

are structured, those type of things go back to bond covenants for the bonds that were originally issued by the bond holders. That is a very difficult thing to do. He said that we have talked about conservation, some cities, primarily cities, not counties, have initiated, he thinks Peachtree City does, that you can get a separate water meter for your lawn system and those types of things. Especially since the volume activity is tied to what is essence your sewer bill is, a lot of folks try to do that. As a system, we don't necessarily push that issue, but we don't necessarily discourage that issue either. He said that he thinks, from a conservation perspective, if you use less water, you get less charge, if you are not using enough water to hit the minimum charge, he is not really sure how we combat that. But, that is certainly something we can look at.

Mr. Fulton commented that it sounds like on the \$3.00 fee, you just threw darts. Mr. Rapson said, no, it wasn't darts, we ran numbers in regards to what our exposure could be as a county and we felt the \$3.00 was the appropriate charge to charge.

Mr. Davenport interjected that they are looking at this from two different perspectives. This is not the county's losses, this is individual customer losses, and the county is not losing the water. The county is billing the customer that lost the water and the customer has to pay that. With this \$3.00 fee, they don't have to pay that, up to a maximum of \$1,000.00 depending on what their billing cycle is on an average basis for the last twelve months. The county basically is going to get their money one way or the other. This is just a way to afford the customers an opportunity to not be hit so hard for a water leak on their property.

Mr. Rapson commented that he thinks Mr. Fulton's argument would be if \$3.00 is this, and you are making \$400,000.00, then maybe you need to lower your \$3.00. He said to ask him a year from now and he will have a different opinion on that perhaps. Without knowing what the exposure is from the leaks perspective he thinks we put \$3.00 in place to be conservative because we typically are very conservative when we do our budgets.

Mr. Fulton asked about records of the peoples losses. Mr. Rapson said that we have had so many different ways, the policies and losses have been incorporated that we are probably tracking them to the best this year than we ever have. Now that it is tied to a particular program, those things are looked at much more strenuously.

Mr. Fulton commented that maybe you could change it in the future. That could be something that we could address in the budget next year.

Commissioner Brown commented that with the conservation stuff we are between two eras in how we do Municipal business. They don't mix well. You bill these large water plants, but then all of a sudden you come up with water saving features and people then all of a sudden become more conservation conscious and they start reducing their water consumption, either through mechanical means or by choice.

You still have the big water plant that you have to operate, and you have to meet minimum cost. We are having the same thing in transportation, too. We are pushing the miles per gallon in an automobile up to 60 miles per gallon. That is the goal that the federal government has, to get us up to 60 miles per gallon, by 2030. The problem with that is, for each mile traveled you are now making less in the gas tax, which maintains your transportation infrastructure. We have less and less and less money, and now the State of Georgia is in a model where we can only repave every 50 years. That is not a sustainable model. We are in a process where the system, when everything was great and everybody was consuming like crazy, the money was there and we fixed the infrastructure accordingly. We are in a new scenario now where we are going to end up having to figure out new ways to do things, maybe even trying to reduce travel miles by whatever means; telecommuting through computer systems, whatever, doing something. We can't sustain the infrastructure. It is like the sewer plants, you build the sewer plant to a certain capacity. It doesn't matter if you are using half the capacity, you are still operating that to the full capacity, and you have to. That is the inherent problem that we have right now. Less consumption is actually a good thing for the community; it just kills us at the plant level.

Mr. Fulton stated that he knew there would be more facts that he wasn't aware of and that is why he came so he would understand. Mr. Rapson thanked Mr. Fulton for being here. He said that our water revenues this past year have decreased because of changes of the behavior of the general public over the last two years because of conservation.

Commissioner Brown commented that eventually it reaches equilibrium where you will design plants to the new consumption levels and technology will enhance so that you don't have to have the same size facility at the same operating cost. It just takes a generation or two to make that happen. He is at the point where he has touch screens on his phone and on his tablet, but he doesn't on his computer. He is constantly touching his computer screen trying to get it to do something. Eventually you reach equilibrium and then it all balances out. When you build the new plant, the new plant meets the new demand levels.

Ms. Mary Giles asked if the \$3.00 fee is going to an insurance company or directly to the Water System. Mr. Rapson responded no, we are actually, in some instance, acting like our own insurance company for that. All those monies stay in the Water System. They don't go back to the general fund, they are not trickled somewhere else, it all stays in the Water System.

Ms. Giles asked if they are set aside strictly for the insurance program. Mr. Rapson said absolutely.

There being no further business, Chairman Pete Frisina adjourned the meeting at 8:25 A.M.

Peter A. Frisina

The foregoing minutes were approved at the regular Water Committee meeting on the 24th day of September, 2014.

Lisa Speegle