



GreenvilleWater

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
COMMISSIONERS OF PUBLIC WORKS  
Field Operations Community Room  
517 W. Washington Street,  
Greenville, South Carolina  
September 7, 2021  
8:15 a.m.**

Commissioners of Public Works in attendance:

Chairman Phillip A. Kilgore, Vice-Chairman James W. Bannister, Debra M. Sofield, Wil Brasington, and Mayor Knox H. White. A quorum was present.

Greenville Water Senior Staff in attendance:

Chief Executive Officer David H. Bereskin, Chief Financial Officer Phil Robey, Chief Operations Officer Jeff Boss, Chief Administrative Officer Dr. Bob Schmidt, Director of Water Resources Jeff Phillips, Director of Strategic Initiatives Dr. Jane Arrington, Director of Engineering Mark Hattendorf, Director of Human Resources Richard Posey, Director of I.T. Billy Cooper, Controller Brian Bearfield, Manager of Field Operations Wayne Benson, Public Relations Manager Emerald Clark, Facility Maintenance Manager Allen White, and Attorney Adam Bach.

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The Regular Meeting of the Commissioners of Public Works was called to order at 8:15 a.m. by Chairman Kilgore.

**1. WELCOME**

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No comments were presented.

**3. CONSENT AGENDA**

Chairman Kilgore asked for questions pertaining to the consent agenda items. There being none, he called for approval of the items of the Consent Agenda which were the meeting minutes of the Regular Commission Meeting July 27, 2021, the Water Resources Report, the Finance Update, New Development, and New Annexations. Commissioner Brasington moved, seconded by Commissioner Sofield, to approve the items of the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

**4. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Chairman Kilgore welcomed Legislative Liaison Bob Knight to provide a legislative update. Mr. Knight mentioned that Greenville Water had been meeting with Legislators regarding potential requests for the American Rescue Plan Act funds, including Senator Ross Turner, and Representative Bruce Bannister. An attempt is being made to also meet with Senator Thomas Alexander. Mr. Knight complimented Chief Executive Officer David Bereskin in his work with water providers around the State to develop a proposal and find a consensus as to what the request would be of the General Assembly. However, the House and Senate are not going to return to session this fall.

The Low-Income Housing Water Assistance program money finally came through from the Federal Government and funds have been allocated to Sunbelt Human Advancement Resources, Inc. (SHARE) in Greenville for distribution in the Greenville/Pickens/Anderson area. Public Relations Manager Emerald Clark is in the process of setting up a meeting with SHARE to discuss the procedure for distribution. Money from the CARES Act is already in South Carolina that has not been spent. It is difficult to get customers in that have not paid their water bill to fill out the application for assistance and go through the process.

## **5. PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIC UPDATE**

Chairman Kilgore invited Public Relations Manager Emerald Clark to provide a public relations strategic update. Ms. Clark briefly reviewed community outreach, Greenville Water Cares volunteer initiatives, social media engagement, activities, coverage received for the initiatives, and upcoming events.

Chairman Kilgore expressed appreciation for all the hard work accomplished by Ms. Clark and others of the Greenville Water team. Commissioner Brasington thanked Ms. Clark for the presentation and showcasing the breadth of coverage provided for Greenville Water. Commissioner Sofield added as a talk show host on the Salem Network she hears nothing but good things about Greenville Water and working with Ms. Clark and shared a mention by Project Host, which was supported by Greenville Water Cares volunteers, where they thanked Greenville Water saying they had never had such good helpers before. Mayor White thanked Ms. Clark for the great job getting good news out about Greenville Water. Mayor White also thanked Chief Executive Officer David Bereskin for his leadership to bring about this dramatic change, and the Commission for seeking out this change in direction. Chairman Kilgore added Greenville Water has experienced a cultural shift where the organization has embraced an outward look and wants to be involved in the community.

## **6. WATERSHED CAREER LADDER**

Chairman Kilgore called on Chief Administrative Officer Bob Schmidt to talk about the Watershed/ROW career ladders. Dr. Schmidt began by listing reasons for a career ladder:

- Attraction and retention of key employees throughout the organization
- Employee Clarity: Opportunity for Growth
- Command and Control: reorganization of the group due to a need to shift throughout the year due to the seasonal nature of some of the tasks.
- Management Development

The recent reorganization of the Watersheds was driven by many things including old legacy systems, the need for more professional development of individuals within the department, system sustainability, and the need for new technical and management skills. Although there are only 21 employees total in the watersheds/ROW, there are 24 hypothetical positions. Some positions are being grouped together to better represent the potential career paths available to team members based upon their skills and education. Additionally, team members may change their roles throughout the season. Each of the watershed teams have three different compensation scales depending on the educational attainment of each team member. There are two Watershed Managers, one for each Watershed. The Watershed



Managers will no longer be required to be the Caretaker on site. The major changes include the reclassifications of certain positions to include a Scientist, Conservation Technician, and a Conservation Technician I. Dr. Schmidt reviewed acquired skills and technical certifications required for the new positions. These dimensions were added so individuals can move up based on their formal education and skills profile. Team members can now grow with a clear path forward. In summary, Dr. Schmidt added the new challenges and opportunities require a new organizational structure that is interdisciplinary, skilled, science-based and can meet today's, and tomorrow's needs.

Commissioner Bannister asked Dr. Schmidt to speak briefly to how the new technical career status is helping Greenville Water in terms of grant money and some of the tasks already accomplished. Dr. Schmidt explained the writing of grants had always been tasked to Director of Strategic Initiatives Dr. Jane Arrington and others. Now the Watersheds have staff that understand the botany, biology, dendrology, and forestry to help put grant applications together. A large part of the recently awarded 319 Grant was written by two new staff members in the Watersheds department under Management supervision. Future grants and projects will require people who understand and can speak about these studies to customers such as the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Wildlife Service, and the Forestry Commission.

## **7. METER TESTING AND REPLACEMENT PROGRAM**

Chairman Kilgore requested Dr. Arrington present the meter testing and replacement program. Dr. Arrington presented initial results from the 2021 launch of the meter testing and replacement program as a major initiative in water loss control. A map of water loss reporting states across the country was provided. The leaders are California, Indiana, and Georgia. South Carolina has made quite a bit of progress recently with the South Carolina American Water Works Association Water Loss Committee. Greenville Water has been a prominent member of the committee and nationally has been requested to be a Version 6 Audit Beta Tester.

As Greenville Water tries to maximize revenue water, non-revenue water is minimized. Over the past several years the Commission has heard about several ways staff tries to minimize non-revenue water. This presentation focused on customer metering inaccuracies to be corrected with meter testing and replacement. The program launched at the end of July 2021, with two different categories of testing. One category is the small meters with two Field Services Representatives (FSRs) focusing on this aspect of the program. The goal is to replace six meters per day per FSR. The other category is the large meters with two FSRs working on this part of the program. The goal is to field test 158 large meters annually in the field.

### **Small Meters:**

- 7066 5/8" meters 30 years and older to be replaced: 372 in the first quarter of the program
- Testing at least 10% of 5/8" meters replaced on the Ford testing bench in the meter testing shop
- 7 meters can be tested simultaneously in the meter shop

Large Meters:

- Sensus Portable Testing Unit is used
- Testing Top 100 Consumption and 13 Wholesale Customers Annually
- Testing remaining meters 15 years and older

A pilot test was done in 2019 to develop a strategy. The 30+ year meters had the largest failure rate, so the initial attack will be at these meters. These meter locations were plotted in GIS to allow our crew to be most efficient with time. There is a downtown cluster and a southern cluster of these 30+ year old meters. To date 305 meters have been replaced through the first of September. Of these 77% have been tested. A heavy emphasis is being put on testing at the front so that the meter testing and replacement program can be more efficiently strategized.

The large meters take about half of a day to test. To date ten meters have been tested. Four 3" meters, one 4" meter and one 6" meter have been replaced. A more complete data set will be provided in 2022 as testing continues through the rest of 2021.

Commissioner Brasington asked if the failure percent rate matched up with expectations going into the program. Dr. Arrington stated the goal is for meters to read at 97% accuracy, so the 30+ year meters need to be replaced. As the data comes in and more meters are tested, a better statistical data set will be obtained, and the goal can be finetuned. Commissioner Sofield asked if the 30-year range was a certain brand of meter or just the life of the meter. Dr. Arrington explained it is just the age of the meter, where the mechanical parts start to wear, and the meter slows down. Chairman Kilgore asked if there is a return on investment by replacing meters to capture more water usage. Mr. Bereskin responded it has been a debate among staff. One view is that this will cause customers to pay for all the water they use. Another view is newer meters will help put everyone on the same page as the area experiences changing weather patterns that could cause a need for restrictions and a need to account for every bit of water usage. The program helps on a cost basis, but there is a big difference between cost of production versus sale of the water. All the other components of running a water system goes into the pricing structure. Chairman Kilgore assessed the program is not a direct monetary return on investment but there are a lot of other valuable benefits. Mr. Bereskin added the program is a good business process.

## **8. PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS MODEL VENDOR COMPARISON**

Chairman Kilgore asked to hear from Chief Operations Officer Jeff Boss to talk about Predictive Failure Analysis. Mr. Boss explained Greenville Water is looking at introducing Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology in 2022 for reducing water loss. Three vendors were reviewed: Rezatec, Voda and Fracta. Voda appeared to be the best choice of all three. A pilot quote to predict where leaks will be in the system came in at \$10,000. It is guaranteed to work, or it is free. One big difference between Voda and other companies, is Voda will predict service line leaks. Mr. Boss reviewed how the AI technology works, the benefits of predictive modeling, Voda customer successes and how the data will be utilized.



Commissioner Brasington asked why the service would be utilized in the form of an annual subscription versus a one-time periodic investment. Mr. Boss explained the technology continues to take new data updates so the model can be run several times a year. The predictability increases as more information is put into the model. Also, negotiations are continuing with Voda to determine the best partnership.

## **9. INSTALLATION AGREEMENT POLICY UPDATE**

Chairman Kilgore welcomed Director of Engineering Mark Hattendorf to talk about Greenville Water's Installation Agreement Policy. Mr. Hattendorf explained how Greenville Water expands the distribution system through two avenues: Extension Agreements and Installation Agreements. Extension Agreements are developer driven, the full cost is born by the developer and the lines are installed by the developer's contractors. An example is a new subdivision in a green field area. Installation Agreements are for existing structures or individual landowners. There is a cost sharing agreement with the individuals to assist with the level of cost and Greenville Water usually installs the lines. Both agreements are covered in Greenville Water's Rules and Regulations.

Mr. Hattendorf reviewed current guidance for Development Services staff, recommended proposed guidelines for staff, explained the need for the change, and provided a recent example that brought about the recommendation for the proposed change. Chairman Kilgore asked how long it would take to see a return on investment in the example provided by Mr. Hattendorf. Mr. Bereskin responded the investment would not be recovered. Chairman Kilgore asked if this was common. Mr. Hattendorf responded it is becoming more common. Commissioner Sofield commented that a potential loophole had been found and Greenville Water would suffer the cost. Chairman Kilgore stated he had been under the impression that the installation policy had embedded in it an overall return on investment concept so that if a project is not economically feasible and costs would never be recovered Greenville Water had the discretion to turn down the project. Mr. Bereskin stated that is correct. This update is to give Development Services staff the affirmation that they are following the policy/guidance correctly. Commissioner Sofield reiterated that Greenville Water's job is to assist homeowners with water quality issues, to show concern for homeowners running into issues versus those moving in causing the need. There is a place for new development but not at the cost of the system.

Chairman Kilgore asked for a motion to approve the proposed changes as follows:

- No more than 2 existing homes can participate in a single agreement
- Non-commercial use only
- \$30 per foot minimum to be invested by customer
- \$45 per foot max investment by GW
- Preference given to existing structures w/ water issues (dry/contaminated well)
- Large lots not eligible (Zoning will designate "Large", < 10 potential homes)

Vice-Chairman Bannister moved, seconded by Commissioner Sofield, to approve the Installation Agreement guidelines as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **10. BLUE RIBBON PANEL WATER RESILIENCY & RELIABILITY PRESENTATION**

Chairman Kilgore invited Mr. Bereskin to present information on the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Funding for water utilities. Mr. Bereskin provided an update on the status of the funding. The State is looking for a plan on how to spend the \$2.1 billion in funding. There are three approaches to determining a plan. The Governor has the AccelerateSC, the House of Representatives has their own committee and sub-committee which is Chaired by Representative Bruce Bannister, and the Senate has a committee which is Chaired by Senator Thomas Alexander. Senator Ross Turner is on the Senate committee as well.

Mr. Bereskin explained Representative Bannister asked for his assistance in creating a Blue-Ribbon Panel with some sort of consensus approach for the State of South Carolina water utilities. The key to the Blue-Ribbon Panel was to get consensus between the large urban utilities and the small rural utilities throughout the state to develop some sort of basis of allocation. Also, to determine leveraging the dollars given by the state and transformational projects based on water quality, water availability and growing service areas. The panel consisted of representatives from Greenville Water, South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (SCRIA), South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC), Columbia Water, Beaufort Jasper Water and Sewer Authority, Grand Strand Water and Sewer Authority, City of Sumter, Water Environment Association of South Carolina (WEASC), South Carolina Rural Water Association (SCRWA), Chesterfield County Rural Water Co., Inc.

Panel members had hoped to take the Federal Funding of the States as an example to follow. The Federal Funding was based on population, project completion by 2026, keeping state moneys separate and distinct from the county and city allocations, and have very minimal restrictions. More funding will be coming through the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act which will provide for: transportation, broadband, power, water, wastewater, and EPA. Mr. Bereskin reviewed a copy of the methodology agreed upon by the panel.

A large utility meeting was held in Columbia on September 1, 2021, where the importance of a consensus was stressed. The funding is being considered for water only currently. There needs to be a balanced approach, and the methodology is geographically equitable. A competing plan has been adopted by AccelerateSC which is proposed to be run through SCRIA.

Chairman Kilgore expressed deep appreciation for the efforts to try to not only represent Greenville Water but also to develop a sensible methodology that is fair and balanced for all parties concerned.

#### **11. CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT**

Mr. Bereskin invited Commissioners to the Upstate Forever Board of Directors Hawk Watch honoring members of the Wyche Society on Friday, September 24<sup>th</sup> and WEFTEC 2021, and the Water Environment Federation's annual conference in Chicago October 16-20, 2021.

Mr. Bereskin updated Commissioners on the Roper Mountain Road Ext. project where South Carolina Department of Transportation is widening the road. Greenville Water has



completed its portion except connecting the pipe at the stream crossing. Commissioner Sofield stated the project area is a big mess, not Greenville Water, but the rest of the project.

Vice-Chairman Bannister moved, seconded by Commissioner Brasington, to enter Executive Session for the purpose of considering legal matters regarding condemnation and proposed location of services. The motion passed unanimously.

(Executive Session)

Vice-Chairman Bannister moved, seconded by Commissioner Brasington, to go out of Executive Session. The motion carried unanimously. No action was taken.

## **12. COMMISSION COMMENTS**

No comments presented at this time.

## **13. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned 9:50 a.m.

  
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Phillip A. Kilgore, Chairman  
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Kimberly Haulter, Executive Assistant