

**CHARLOTTE WATER
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CWAC)
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 15, 2024**

Held at 4100 W Tyvola Rd, Charlotte, on Thursday, February 15, 2024, at 2:30 p.m.

Members Present: William Cornett (Chair), Barbara Bleiweis, Gordon Miller, Dan Melvin

Members Absent: Grayson Rountree

Staff Present:	Angela Charles	Director
	Ronald Hargrove	Deputy Director
	Jackie Jarrell	Deputy Director
	Shawn Coffman	Deputy Director
	David Czerr	Deputy Director
	Thomas Powers	Assistant City Attorney Sr
	Karen Weatherly	Assistant City Attorney Sr
	Melissa Westfall	Utilities Business Manager
	Keri Cantrell	Chief Utilities Engineer
	Carl Wilson	Chief Utilities Engineer
	Carolyn Ross	Administrative Services Manager
	Marion Sanders	Utilities Manager
	Colin Stifler	Administrative Officer Manager
	Erin McNeely	Public Information Specialist Senior

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by William Cornett and seconded by Barbara Bleiweis to approve the January minutes. Motion was approved.

Operation and Capital Update

Ron Hargrove provided the Water Operations Update highlighting the following:

He began by discussing the changes in water supply demand since the beginning of the year, attributing them to substantial rainfall. He noted that as of January, the demand for water has been lower than usual, sitting at around 101.6 million gallons per day. This contrasted with the peak day demand of 145 million gallons in 2023, with an average day demand of 116 million gallons and a five-year average trend of 112.9 million gallons.

Ron mentioned the Catawba-Wateree Drought Management Advisory group notice dated February 1st, indicating that all but one trigger for moving to the next drought stage were in the normal range. He emphasized that meeting all three triggers was necessary to transition between drought stages. With the current rainfall trends, he anticipated reaching a normal status by next month based on the three-month drought monitor.

During a recent discussion, insights from Duke were shared regarding rainfall measurements across the basin. While the government center measured 7.5 inches of rainfall, Duke's data indicated around 14 inches of rainfall over the same period.

In a response with regards to tracking individual rain events and their magnitudes, Ron explained that while they didn't directly track these events, stormwater departments typically managed such data, given its relevance to infrastructure management. He mentioned that Duke's environmental focus experts highlighted the volatile nature of weather patterns, with intense short-duration storms punctuating periods of lower rainfall. This 'flash drought' phenomenon underscored the need for adaptive strategies in water resource management.

Distribution System Update.

Ron continued with updates on the Distribution System, providing an overview of its current status.

He noted that the team has achieved an 81% success rate in responding to leaks and highlighted the system's average age, which stands at 27 days.

Progress has been made in reducing the backlog for work orders in service requests. However, Ron also mentioned a concerning trend: an increase in main breaks per hundred miles, likely attributable to fluctuating weather conditions, including recent cold spells followed by warm weather.

Additionally, he discussed the challenges posed by high wastewater flow, exceeding 100 million gallons per day due to wet weather conditions. Measures had to be taken to avoid violating flow capacity permit parameters, including holding flow in EQ storage following a recent rain event.

Ron concluded his update, providing insights into both successes and challenges faced by the Distribution System, particularly in response to environmental factors.

Little Hope Creek Wastewater Improvement Construction Project

Carl Wilson updated The Committee on the status of the Little Hope Construction Project. A project that had been previously discussed approximately two years ago, and these were his highlights:

- He mentioned that this project was currently active in construction and indicated that the project's location could be identified on the map
- The project was divided into phases, with construction underway for phases one through three. The total cost for these phases amounted to about \$41 million.
- Construction began in 2020, with an expected completion date set for this summer. Carl emphasized that this budget specifically covered the Little Hope Construction Project and did not include any other wastewater pipeline projects.
- **Construction phases:** Carl further updated on the construction phases and mentioned that the project entailed roughly 20,000 linear feet of pipe, varying in diameter from 12 to 36 inches. Notably, the project traversed nearly 200 parcels, which posed some challenges, particularly concerning contention among residents due to the construction passing through their backyards.
- **Status:** Regarding the project's status, Carl reported that they were in the process of continuing easement acquisitions. He noted that they were nearing completion, with only a few remaining parcels, and that they are working through and ongoing rehabilitation efforts.
- **Upcoming work:** He provided insights into the upcoming work by mentioned that upcoming work would involve continuing blasting, which aimed at rock removal, laying additional sewer lines, and restoration efforts.

He informed The Committee that it will likely hear more talks about these projects in the coming years, and emphasized that it's going to be a significant undertaking. He also informed the Members that portions of it are already being built in downtown, setting the stage for that future extension.

Financial Update

Deputy Director Shawn Coffman provided the financial updates with the following highlights:

Revenues: He began by presenting the latest revenue figures, stating that revenues in January amounted to approximately \$41.9 million, exceeding the expected budget of \$38.7 million by 3.2 million. The overall total revenues to date were around \$9.8 million, which closely aligned with previous trends discussed. He noted that efforts at the divisional level to trim budgets had resulted in a minimal variance between actual and projected revenues.

Budget: Regarding the budget message delivered to the city manager, He reported that the meeting had gone well, with several questions raised about anticipated rate increases. He concluded by announcing an upcoming trip to Manhattan in March for a JP Morgan Chase conference, where they would be presenting and meeting with individual investors to prepare for the issuance of approximately \$600 million in bank allocation notes and revenue bonds between April and June.

He expressed satisfaction with the overall fiscal health of the organization and praised the efforts of divisional staff in managing expenses.

311 Call Center Outage

Deputy Director Shawn Coffman provided a report on the Call Center Hack Incident. He reported that approximately three Fridays ago at around morning, the call center provider, NWN, was hacked. This cyberattack resulted in the complete shutdown of the entire 311 call center, as well as some ancillary call centers. While 911 remained unaffected, it was later discovered that not only were NWN's primary servers compromised, but also two levels of backup servers. He had the following highlights:

- In response, a team led by Charlotte Water, with support from City Finance and City Innovation and Technology, swiftly established a new call center within 72 hours. They collaborated with Telaware, a local company and city vendor, to deploy a solution that covered over 90% of the call center's functions. This new call center is still operational as NWN anticipates that it will take three to five weeks to restore their backups.
- Throughout the incident, teams worked tirelessly, including those in customer service, field operations, and technology, to ensure customer needs were met. Measures such as offering automatic payment plans for affected customers were implemented to mitigate disruptions. He commended the emergency response of the teams involved, noting it as unprecedented in his experience at Charlotte Water.
- Responding to a Member's query about communication with customers regarding payment options, he explained that they utilized various channels, including in-person staffing, a new email/web channel, social media announcements, and website banners, to inform customers about the disruption and available resources.

Charlotte Renew Brew

Erin McNeely provided updates on the Renew Brew Project and explained that Renew Brew is made using QC water, which is recycled water derived from the wastewater effluent of the McDowell Wastewater Treatment Plant. This water undergoes rigorous testing for over 150 possible contaminants, including PFAS, and meets all Safe Water Drinking Act standards. Erin shared some exciting highlights about the project:

- The beer, a limited-edition pale ale, is the first of its kind in the Carolinas, with similar projects having been done in Oregon and Arizona.
- Erin highlighted the partnerships involved in the project, including Town Brewing, which brewed the beer using carbon-negative malt, and Xylem, a water technology company that provided equipment for additional water treatment. The city of Charlotte and Yellow Duck Marketing also supported the initiative.
- She revealed that Renew Brew made its debut at a recent festival held at the Innovation Barn and won the "best in show" award, which involved a blind taste testing competition, surpassing entries

from about 40 other brewers. Erin expressed the team's excitement about Renew Brew's newfound recognition.

- The next tasting event is scheduled for March 7 at Town Brewing, where VIPs, media, and meeting attendees will have the opportunity to sample the award-winning beer. Erin mentioned that the venue can accommodate up to 150 people, with hopes for good weather to enable outdoor activities.
- She emphasized that Renew Brew is currently a demonstration project and is not available for sale, being exclusively offered at these tasting events. The third event is planned for April 20, coinciding with Earth Day, and will be open to the public.

Other Business

Deputy Director Ron Hargrove shared information about an upcoming Department of Defense exercise scheduled from the 20th to the 26th, simulating the deployment of heavy weaponry in downtown Charlotte. Charlotte Water will participate alongside the North Carolina Emergency Operations Center and the Charlotte Mecklenburg Emergency Management Operations Group (CMEMO). The exercise will primarily focus on medical responses, considering the potential impact on hospitals like Atrium and Novant Main.

Thomas Powers reminded board Members to complete their statement of economic interest, providing assurance that the form would be emailed by Charlotte Water Advisory Committee Staff Advisor if not already received. This reminder aimed to prevent issues encountered in the previous year.

Meeting Adjourned

The meeting adjourned at 4 pm.

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