

REPRESENTATIVE POLICY BOARD
CONSUMER AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
JULY 17, 2023
MEETING TRANSCRIPTION

Stephen:

It's 5:30. We can call the July Consumer Affairs meeting to order. We'll begin with item one, the safety moment that Jennifer has prepared. I haven't had poison ivy since I was a kid, but I still remember it was pretty awful. So I think there's some good tips here if you think you're allergic at all. I remember some of my friends just touching it and actually chewing on it because they weren't allergic to it, but I don't think it's ever a good idea.

Item two is public comment. Do we have anyone from the public, Jennifer?

Jennifer:

No, I don't see anybody here.

Stephen:

Okay. Item three, approval of the minutes. I'll entertain a motion to approve the minutes? Who was that? Okay. Who moved it? Frank?

Jennifer:

Frank.

Stephen:

Frank. Okay. And second?

Naomi:

Second.

Stephen:

Thank you, Naomi. Are there any changes, any omissions, corrections, additions? Hearing none. All those in favor of the minutes?

Committee:

Aye.

Stephen:

Any opposed? Any abstentions? The minutes carry.

Today we have a cybersecurity update. So Prem, are you going to introduce this?

Prem:

Yes. Thank you Steve-

Representative Policy Board
Consumer Affairs Committee
July 17, 2023

Stephen:

Okay. I'll turn it over to you.

Prem:

Thank you. Appreciate it. Yeah. So I do have Kevin Schnaitmann, who's our Enterprise Cybersecurity Manager. Kevin, are you there? Just want to make sure.

Kevin:

I'm here Prem.

Prem:

Great. So Jennifer, if you could please help to pull up the slide update that we have for cyber.

Jennifer:

Is this going to be an executive session Prem?

Prem:

Oh yes, absolutely. Yes. It's going to be an executive session, yes.

Stephen:

Okay. I'll call for a motion to move it into executive session.

Tony:

So moved.

Stephen:

Thank you, Tony. Second?

Frank:

Second.

Stephen:

Frank seconded it. All those in favor? Aye.

Committee:

Aye.

Stephen:

Inviting committee members, senior management team, Ms. Sack and Atty. Donofrio.

[EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FROM 5:32 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M.]

Stephen:

Next is the report of the OCA. Jeff Donofrio.

Representative Policy Board
Consumer Affairs Committee
July 17, 2023

Jeff:

Hello, everybody.

Stephen:

Hi, Jeff.

Jeff:

Nice to see you all. So the OCA is working on a couple of applications. We've got an application: the RPB we have a hearing on next Thursday, which is the proposed acquisition of assets of target two. And the OCA is hoping to receive the authorities' responses to the OCA's interrogatories in the next couple of days, that the OCA write his memo to the RPC and get that out before the end of the week. We also have a couple of applications for proposed disposition of lands in North Brantford that the OCA has reviewed, and spoken to the chairman of the land use committee about the completeness of those applications. We don't have any current escalations or any consumer complaints that are pending right now. And that's my report.

Tony:

That's good.

Stephen:

Wow. Thank you Jeff. And no consumer complaints too for three months now. That's good. That's great.

Tony:

This is Tony, and because there's two of me, I'll just ask one question though. So I was out with some friends. They didn't know that I was on the committee. And they were complaining about their water bill. And they're from Branford. And they said, since they went to the monthly billing, their bill has skyrocketed, and they're paying as much monthly as they were quarterly. So I went through the normal, "Maybe you got a leak", "Have you checked your consumption?" Anyway, they called me back the next day. They said that they think the consumption was the same, but they thought the fees had increased. Any reason, any logic behind any of this?

Dana:

I mean, certainly the bill would not be as much monthly as it was quarterly, unless there was a consumption spike. Because the increases that we've had since we went to monthly billing, for a typical residential customer, depending upon the timing of it, would be anywhere from 6% to 13%. It wouldn't be the kind of numbers you're talking about.

And I appreciate the question and you poking at those very questions, Tony, because those are the very things that we try to look at as well. I'd be happy to take a look at the account if you have the customer information, or want to share it. One of the other fees that comes to my mind that might make the bill seem really escalated is perhaps that customer doesn't have a flex net device, and might be seeing manual meter reading fees. Again, I don't have the account in front of me, I'm not looking at it, but that is something that adds a very large amount of money relative to the water consumption that a customer might not understand perhaps what is actually on the bill. But I'd be happy to look at it.

Representative Policy Board
Consumer Affairs Committee
July 17, 2023

Tony:

I asked them if they wanted me to refer it to somebody and they said no.

Dana:

No? Okay.

Tony:

They read in the paper that same day in the New York Register, I believe, there was an article about how water prices were up in New England, and that we were lower.

Stephen:

So they felt better about it?

Tony:

Yes.

Dana:

They're feeling that it's as big as the quarterly is interesting. But yes, if there's anything I can do to help you or them-

Tony:

Thank you.

Dana:

If you'd like me to follow up just for your own knowledge, I'd be happy to do that as well.

Mark:

Sounds like a leaky toilet. Sounds like a leaky toilet.

Tony:

Yes. That's what I try to tell him.

Prem:

No, I think I also wanted to mentioned, right, that in terms of the other fees, Tony, when we did go from quarterly to monthly, we did take a very hard look at making sure the fees are bimonthly, right? So literally, if it's a dollar 50 cents, it's 50 cents per month. So those things were all properly taken care of. I think maybe it's something to do with our council. Anything like Dana said, we can help, we can help. So we can take a look at it.

Tony:

I appreciate that. Thank you.

Stephen:

Hey, Prem, is there anything that would hit a monthly bill that wouldn't be sort of blended out through the year? I mean, a one-time fee for anything?

Prem:

No, I think there's really not other fees. There's no hidden fees, as you all know. So it's all part of our rules. And the one thing was the one that Dana mentioned in terms of the manual meter reading fee, because we are almost there. We are 99.4% or so. So we still have a handful of customers who have manual meter reads, and you all know the reasons why, because you had to roll the truck and read the meters, et cetera. So there is no other hidden fees per se. Overall.

No hidden fees, of course. I think the only other thing that I could think might hit differently than your monthly consumption water bill would be if they are a Pipes Safe customer, and chose annual billing or something like that, that would just hit once and not be blended as you're suggesting, Mark, through the rest of the year. But those are the two that come to my mind, are those sort of fees that we would have there for those types of charges.

So I think, again, Pipes Safe is another one where the customer has the choice. So they could either go monthly or they could prefer to go keep it annual. So if they keep it annual, they see one charge per year, versus they can go ahead and bank a monthly of it. So this way they get a piece of every month. But again, that's not a fee though, but that's a protection program. It's a service offload, and they pay for it. So it's slightly different.

Tony:

Thank you for that. Yes, absolutely. Thank you guys.

Dana:

I suspect if we look at these accounts, that it's not going to be the case that it's doubled. There's some explanation for it.

Tony:

Yes.

Dana:

When we first went to monthly billing, I had a couple of people call me about that, and we looked into it and we were able to account for the numbers.

Prem:

That's right, yeah.

Tony:

Glad to hear that.

Stephen:

Although the bill is going up. All right. Jeff gave his report. Item six on the agenda is the approval of his invoice for June for \$4,575 dollars. Do I have a motion on that?

Representative Policy Board
Consumer Affairs Committee
July 17, 2023

Frank:

I made a motion approve that [inaudible 00:07:45].

Stephen:

Thanks, Frank. Second?

Naomi:

Second.

Stephen:

Thanks Naomi. Any questions for Jeff on the invoice for June? Okay. All those in favor?

Committee:

Aye.

Stephen:

Any opposed? And any abstaining? That motion carries unanimously.

Stephen:

Item seven is our volunteers to attend the meetings when everybody's assigned. I assume that Tony, you're still good for September?

Tony:

I am.

Stephen:

Okay. And Mark the 27th of July?

Mark:

Yes.

Stephen:

Okay. Item eight on the agenda is elect a new committee chair. Since I have reached the limit of our term limits now, and last meeting, I asked if anyone was interested. The only one who contacted me was Mark Levine, and I have no hesitation in putting Mark's name forward, nominating him for the Consumer Affairs Chairman moving forward. However, having done that, I'll also ask if there are any other nominations.

Mark:

Three times.

Stephen:

Are there any other nominations?

Representative Policy Board
Consumer Affairs Committee
July 17, 2023

Rich:

I'll second Mark's nomination.

Stephen:

Thank you. Okay, and there are no other nominations. Okay. We'll close the nomination. All those in favor of electing Mark as chairman for meetings.

Committee:

Aye.

Stephen:

Well, congratulations Mark.

Mark:

Thank you very much. I'll do the best I can.

Stephen:

You're the new chair moving forward, so do a good job. I'd like to just thank everybody for their support in the past. And I enjoyed doing this.

Item nine is new business. Do we have any new business?

Mark:

I just want to make one point, that Steve's going to be Vice Chairman of the RPB. That's a good move for Steve, too.

Rich:

Steve, thank you for your hard work as chair. You've done a great job.

Mark:

Absolutely. Absolutely. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Good job, Steve.

Stephen:

Thank you. Our next regular meeting is on August 21st at 5:30. And I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

Rich:

Motion to adjourn.

Frank:

[inaudible 00:10:33] adjourned.

Stephen:

Rich and Frank, seconded. All those in favor?

Representative Policy Board
Consumer Affairs Committee
July 17, 2023

Committee:

Aye.

Stephen:

Thanks everybody and thanks again for having [inaudible 00:10:41].