

REPRESENTATIVE POLICY BOARD
CONSUMER AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
JANUARY 27, 2025
MEETING TRANSCRIPTION

Naomi:

Good evening. Good evening, everyone. We're going to go over our safety moment. Jennifer, before we do that, are any members of the public on?

Jennifer:

No.

Naomi:

Okay. Our safety moment, which we did review the other night, it's just for January. There were some extremely cold conditions last week, but make sure your home is insulated. Check your batteries. Keep emergency heating equipment available. Stay indoors if you have to or if you can. Make sure your pets are inside. Wear loose clothing and always check your heat supply. May I get a motion to have the minutes approved for December's meeting?

Mark:

I make a motion to approve the minutes.

Stephen:

I'll second it.

Naomi:

It has been moved by Mark and second by Steve, the minutes for December to be approved. Everybody ready for the question? All those that are in favor, let it be known by aye.

Committee members:

Aye.

Naomi:

Next, is Prem, where Prem comes in? To review and the recommendations for the RPB regarding proposed changes to the Regional Water Authority Rules and Regs.

Prem:

Thank you, Naomi, and thank you, everyone, for taking the opportunity to discuss the amendments. As you all know, a little bit of background history. As we put our rates in effect, as we usually do, and we also look at the Rules and Regs to make sure that we are making any amendments, and during the process, we go through looking at our entire Rules and Regs, and making sure that we are also accommodating any minor changes that we have encompassed from the last time we did, so just as a history, the last time we made an amendment, it was in 2022, if you remember. I mean, at this time,

when I look at the Rules and Regs, there are not many changes compared to the last time, but I would like to go through a little bit of detail for a few things that we are looking to amend, as per the Rules and Regs.

So, again, please do ask questions. If you have any questions as I go through the details, please stop and we could discuss it. It's really a discussion. On page 11, there is a section called Owner's Responsibilities of the Rules and Regs. What we did there was we had added an extra request on making sure that if there are customers who are requesting to change the seasonal billing to an actual year-long service, there is a process for them to submit that, and then we go through a process of approving that. It's a minor change that we have done. That's been a part of a process anyways, so it all made sense. This is item six on the Rules and Regs. As a matter of fact, the whole changed version of the Rules and Regs was also submitted along with this memo, so if you want to take a look, you could always go there, but I'm going to cover the level of detail, so you can ask me any questions you have.

The next minor amendment we had was on page 17 of the Rules and Regs. This was related to the backflow device, so if you remember, we had a request to actually have a backflow device installed five meters out of where the actual, the line enters into the building, so between the mirror vault and where the building enters, so we have reworded that a little bit. It has always been there, but wanted to make sure that it's five feet away from the house when it enters house or entering the building. That's on page 17. On page 19, we actually have reworded interest alignment. If you remember, we actually had submitted House Bill 05277 as part of our amendment to the interest. This is actually benefiting the customer. We have made the change from 30 days to 28 days interest calculation, so that was part of the bill that was passed in the last session, so we have made that amendment to the Rules and Regs as part of that. If you want to refer to the actual bill, it's also available for us. You could take a look at that, but we just incorporated that minor change in here.

On page 23, there's a section for meters and meters testing. We have incorporated the reading device. It actually listed the meter and the meter location. Now we also have included the reading device, which is pretty much our FlexNet, which is part of our deployment that we have, so we made that small addition there. On page 24, the meter location compliance, this is basically, we have emphasized the fact that, as you could imagine, we have seen in the past examples of meters located in the garage. Sometimes it's in the basement somewhere. It actually is hard for our people when they actually have to go and service the meter. We have added the meter compliance, so if, for whatever reasons, an example could be somebody might have finished their basement after the meter was originally installed.

If it's not accessible, we are asking the customers to really talk to us and actually have the meters located to our meter vault, right? Because that's part of our compliance. This, also, is a safety thing for employees, so we have reordered that as a compliance issue for meter location. That's on page 24. Page 27, meters and meter testing item, as part of our process, we had scenarios in the past where the customers would call us and tell us, "Hey, this is my meter reading, but we accept the meter readings, but we don't accept the meter readings for billing purposes because we would like to see and hear from the meter directly," so either we deploy someone to go and get our meter readings from a billing purpose if it's an AMR meter, which is mostly not the case, or we actually get the meter readings directly from our AMI meters, so that's a small change there.

Any questions on that specific one? The next one we had was a minor change on page 31, as part of the technical standards. We are allowing for the use of polyethylene tubing with the approval from RWA. This is basically from the curb valve to the home or the building, I would say. We have reordered that for a 50 feet distance. We are allowing the polyethylene tubing, but we required approval, and we work with the customer on that. On the page 32, actually, specifies a little bit on the plastic pipe specification.

What that basically is, from the meter wall to the entry of the building, we typically have copper tubing done, and if there's a plastic pipe that has been used by the customer, that would transition into a copper tubing before it enters into the building. This actually prevents customers from having other problems, distribution issues or pipe leaks, etc., so it really helps us on that. It's actually helping the customer, and many times, our crews take care of that, of the customer as well.

Stephen:

Hey, Prem?

Prem:

Yes.

Stephen:

Can I ask you a question about that?

Prem:

Sure.

Stephen:

You said it helped the customers. Was that the reason for the change?

Prem:

No. I think what used to happen, Steve, is that many a times when you get a call from the customer, we typically take care of the copper tubing anyways, because that's kind of the standard, what we see. So when I say helping the customer, we always have done that in the past, but it was not in the Rules and Regs, the way it was written, so we are just making that amendment. That's all it is.

Stephen:

Okay.

Prem:

And then, the next section was about the water mains. This time around, we don't really have a lot of changes from the last version that we did, so it's the same. Since there is no change, we are not really amending anything in that section, so there are no changes as part of that. Again, as a reminder, with full transparency, there is not a requirement for us to actually review all of these changes and approval, but we have always done this with full transparency in the past, so we are just asking that it helps us from a future perspective, where there any changes or issues that we might have from a perspective of customer, we want to be fully transparent.

So that's why we are kind of running through this and our request is to really take this forward, and be able to make those minor amendments. As you know, what we do after, as next steps on this, is after the approval, we do actually post the Rules and Regs on our website so the customers have access to it, and if they have any questions or anything, we usually take care of that, so that when calls comes into the contact center, we usually talk to the customer if they have any questions. This is actually in effect,

along with the rate that went in effect on the January 3rd, so those were the changes for the Rules and Regs. Any questions?

Naomi:

Yesh. I have a question. For the first one on page 11? Does the customer get one bill? Because where I live, in a condo, we switch. We have an underground water system we had put in for the grass. Now, would it show anything different on the bill if it was seasonal? Because ours is seasonal, but I'm not sure whether it's set up, but I'm getting ready to go on the board, so this is a great question for me to know before I say anything, so does the bill show somehow?

Prem:

Yes. It does show on the bill. It does show on the bill that it's a seasonal bill, so you would see that, but this is very specific to somebody who wants to change a seasonal bill to a kind of a year-long bill, right? Year-long service kind of a thing. There's a requirement that you can't have the lines go in. It has to be at least four and a half feet below the ground level if you're going for a core service, right? And you can't have it, because if you don't have it, for seasonal it's okay, but for the core, there's this compliance thing, so this is really specific for that, but to answer your question, for seasonal bills, yes, it does show up on the bill as seasonal bill.

Naomi:

Okay, thank you.

Stephen:

Hey, Prem. I'm not sure. Is that a seasonal account? It's not a seasonal account. It's not boarded just in the summer. You're just adding more use.

Naomi:

Well, is that what it is?

Prem:

Yes.

Stephen:

Yes. [inaudible 00:12:50] the cap.

Naomi:

So, that's not seasonal?

Stephen:

No.

Naomi:

Okay. That's all. That's what's what I meant, right. We only use it during the summer. Okay.

Stephen:

Like, somebody uses their pool in the summer, but it's still a year-round cap.

Prem:

Yes.

Charles:

Prem?

Prem:

Yes.

Charles:

This is Charles. We hear so much about PFAS now. How does that relate to the plastic pipe? Is this the type of plastic that is not problematic?

Prem:

No. I think for the PFAS, mostly what we hear, Charles, is really along the lines of the furrow chemicals we use, right? It is not very specific just for pipe. A lot of stuff that we hear from other towns like Guilford and other places is mostly based on the soil, right? There's contaminants in the soil, right? When it comes to pipe, we do have a scenario where, not from a perspective of PFAS, but we have been seeing a little bit of challenges from our piping when it comes to certain towns like North Branford and Cheshire, but that's really not related to PFAS though.

So, these pipes are kind of older than 40 years or so, so it's basically we are taking care of the situation where we see a lot more breaks as part of our programs that we have in place, but there is not a PFAS issue that we have seen from our distribution line perspective, from a piping perspective, right? I know that there are challenges in other companies I've heard, especially in New Jersey, et cetera, but it's not the case. What I've seen I've seen here, mostly in the state of Connecticut, is in the levels of the soil contamination.

Rich:

Prem, just a quick question. Maybe I should know the answer. What is the process around this? How do you compile the list of proposed changes? What are the sources for recommended changes? Do they all come from a single source? Is it an open process that people contribute to?

Prem:

Yes. It's a great question, Rich, right? So, basically, the process, let's take the example of today, right? So, from now, let's say we put these amendments in place, the team works through the entire next 18 months, as we go through collecting inputs from the customers, collecting inputs from the field, customer care, what we hear from RPB members, et cetera, so we keep collecting all of those, because we make amendments one time, similar to what we do on our rate increase and when the rate goes in effect.

So, we don't end up doing it multiple times, right? So, once we have all of this in place, then what we do is we go through the process of understanding which ones are benefiting the customers versus which are compliance related. A good example on this one is the whole house bill that we had, which actually came into effect, so we want to make sure that is in reflection on the Rules and Regs, so we collect everything as part of the process, as we go through a rate increase, rate going in effect, so we also do this in conjunction to that, so that's the background.

Rich:

Thank you.

Prem:

Hope that answers your question.

Stephen:

Prem, related to that question, I want to ask about two areas, if they were considered in the changes. One is customer issues that came up within the last couple of years, and the other is all the changes that we made to the legislation this summer, where they reviewed in terms of changes that might be needed.

Prem:

Yes, absolutely. That's exactly what we do, Steve. And also remember, we also get customer discussions. Sometimes there are some escalations, so we take into account everything that comes from the customer. As a matter of fact, if you look at an example, which one is that? I'm looking for the billing one, which is number three, the billing. No, that was the interest one. I'm looking for the one with the customer providing the leads. Number six, right? So, basically, this was a thing where customers sometimes call, and they say, "Hey, this is our read. Can you actually bill us based on this read?" But interesting enough, what we want to make sure is that the billing reads that are coming in are accurate billing reads. We could use some of the reads that are prior by the customer for, let's say, a meter ratio of some sort.

A team is out there, but for billing purposes, we want to really know the reads are coming from meter. Again, not doubting the customer, but wanting to make sure that we do the right thing. That's all. So that's an input from the customer directly. So, things like that, we collect everything in put it in perspective, making sure that we are doing, and remember, Rules and Regs are across the board, making sure that we are treating all customers the same way, so we want to make sure that it's consistent across the board for all customers, does this makes sense, Steve?

Stephen:

Thank you. Should we be doing this every year?

Prem:

I would say every 18 months. When we put the rates in effect, this happens every 18 months, and again, the process is really to streamline the whole thing so we don't end up doing it more frequently, because it does require a lot of effort and time from everybody involved, so this, once it goes in effect, it actually stays until the next rate that we discuss, which is actually every 18 months, as you all know.

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Stephen:

And these are listed online. Do you also print these up for customers?

Prem:

Yes. I think, as a matter of fact, that's a good question. At times certain customers may call in and say, "Hey, I don't have a copy," or whatever, and we do actually send a copy, but our first stop is that we tell the customers that it's available for them, and they can go and look online. If you go to our website, you'll see one of those prior versions, right? So, once this is in effect, this will go on the website, but we do provide them with that copy. From time to time, we do hear from customers that they would like to see it sent to them, so we do that. Right, Dana?

Dana:

Yes, we do, if they ask for them. I also know that, in engineering and new services, when contractors come in, they're giving them engineering specifications and things like that. They'll also give them a copy of the Rules and Regs with those documents.

Prem:

Yes.

Stephen:

So, I appreciate you have to reprint them every time you make the changes.

Dana:

We do smaller print runs than we used to. Most people are comfortable online, but we do like to have the paper versions available for those that prefer it.

Prem:

There are two documents that's always in the bag. One is the union contract, the other one is Rules and Regs, so anything anybody wants, it's there.

Naomi:

Okay. Any more questions for Prem?

Mark:

I have a question. It's not to deal with this, but recently we got an email with the news release today, saying how Guilford joined us in the WellSafe, I guess.

Prem:

Yes.

Mark:

But on the whole article, it didn't say what the costs would be to the homeowner of that. What are the costs?

Prem:

Basically, remember, Mark, that's a good question, and thank you, and I like to make sure that our supporters of RPB could spread the word, right? We actually got three customers already enrolled for the WellSafe program today, as soon as the news went out, so just to give a little bit of a background on that, so the WellSafe complete plan is \$599, is the actual plan, and then it covers-

Mark:

A year?

Prem:

Yes. Per year. Yes. And then, what it covers is an optional plan for customers who are willing to sign. It's not anything mandatory, right? It's an optional plan. It's up to the customers who are interested to sign up. Basically, it covers a lot more than what it used to be, Mark. I can send you another browser, if you will. It does cover not only the yearly check, but now we are also doing an EPA certified water test for the wells for the quality and bacteria testing, et cetera, which is actually, if you look at in terms of value, it's much more value than what it used to be. Again, this is an EPA certified test.

Mark:

So, the \$599 covers everything? Just to give you an example. Guy's well doesn't work. He has to have his pump pulled. He has to have the motor pulled. He has to have new hose put down. He has to have a reconnected, rewired, and [inaudible 00:21:34].

Prem:

No, there is a limit. Remember, a typical well's life, as you all know, it's 15 to 25 years, depending on where it is, right? It is a protection program. It is not to replace the whole well, right? Because the coverage is \$5,000 on this plan, so it will protect them in terms of minor repairs and things of the sort. The whole specification is put together as part of the terms and condition for the customer. But I want to be careful to say that this is not a well replacement program, right? This is a protection program for peace of mind.

Mark:

So, the foot valve would not be replaced. That's what you're saying?

Prem:

Yes, exactly. The [inaudible 00:22:11] is not enough to replace.

Mark:

The foot valve would not be replaced. The motor would be replaced, the wall pump would be replaced? The motor and wall pump would be replaced?

Prem:

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It will be repaired. I don't have the exact details in front of me right now, but what I can tell you is that it'll cover the repairs, but it is not to replace. Remember this is, again, a protection program, right? We are just launching the program.

Mark:

What protection do you get? Well, what's the protection? I don't understand.

Prem:

So, basically-

Mark:

Talk to me like I'm a six-year-old. Explain to me why I would buy this program. At \$595, you haven't convinced me to buy this program yet.

Prem:

Okay, so let me put it this way, right? So, you're going to have somebody come in and take a sample off the water for an EPA certified test, right? And that is around, that's retail, \$180, right? So you're going to have that as a value, and for someone to come in and test all the repair, like once in year, you're going to have someone come in and test and let's say there's a well cap that needs to be replaced or some mechanicals, right? Think about this as a six-year-old, like you said, right? Any mechanical issues will be taken care as part of the repair, but it does not include things, like there's no water 300 feet down. Now we need to drill another well,

Mark:

No, no. I'm not saying that. We'll replace the pump, the foot valve, and the hose going down to the foot valve. We'll replace.

Prem:

That's right, yes. If it's inoperable, yes, and I think as far as it's under the \$5,000 coverage, absolutely.

Mark:

Yeah. Well, it's less than \$5,000. There's no doubt about it. Well, it depends on what it is. All right. Just want to [inaudible 00:24:03].

Prem:

Again, thank you for asking the question and thank you for being a proponent to spread the word, so I will give the team here a copy of the brochure, and I think-

Mark:

Send a brochure so I can bang out and ring up the bells on what a great program it is.

Prem:

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Thank you. Appreciate that, right? As a matter of fact, Guilford signed the contract a few weeks ago. We are actually working with Madison. I met with Peggy, I think it was last week. Then, she's also the chair for the SCWA.

Mark:

What does Guilford get out of this?

Prem:

They're getting a 10% revenue share. That's the deal.

Mark:

Out of the \$595, they're getting \$60 a year.

Prem:

Yes, yes.

Mark:

Wow. Charles, I think you should be happy with that. That's a super deal, Charles.

Charles:

We met a couple of weeks ago.

Mark:

These people try to use the system. All right, thank you. I appreciate it.

Prem:

[inaudible 00:25:05], and please reach out if you have any other questions, right? Always looking to answer anything you guys have. If there's no other questions-

Charles:

I just want to say, Prem, when we met with the First Selectman, and decided to go ahead and offer it to the citizens of Guilford, it really, like you said, the \$5,000 insurance policy, which Connecticut, Guilford is served by Connecticut water. So, for us to get our foot in there, I think, is valuable. We have some land in town, but we didn't have water service, but periodically when Connecticut water struggles, we do have an interconnect over on route one.

Prem:

Yes.

Charles:

Yes, Mark, I think it is a good idea for towns, especially people with wells, obviously.

Mark:

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Okay, Charles. You got a well?

Charles:

Yes. [inaudible 00:26:02] 30 years.

Mark:

When was the last time you had somebody to repair it?

Charles:

Let me put it this way, Mark. I have one point drilled a \$15,000, 800-foot dry hole. Does that put it in perspective for you?

Mark:

No, not yet. How long ago was that?

Charles:

Well, that particular one was probably 20 years ago. My well, at this point, is about 10 years old.

Mark:

Okay. Just checking.

Charles:

Give him time. I mean, anything, a well tech-

Mark:

I'm due. I shouldn't be talking, because I'm due. Any day now my well's going to give me a problem. I know it. All right, thank you. Thank you very much.

Prem:

Okay. Thank you. Thank you, everyone.

Naomi:

Jeff, would you like to present your budget for 2026 at this point?

Jeff:

The OCA budget, when I became OCA in 2008, was \$50,000 a year, and we've continued with that budget. We added \$10,000 for a consultant a few years ago. Really haven't used that, so the budget is \$60,000. Through January, we'll be at \$44,000, so we're on track to be within budget for the current fiscal year, depending on the amount of activity relative to Blue Drop over the next four months. So I'm proposing there is no change to the budget for fiscal year '26. I'm not certain how much activity there'll be on the RWA side relative to Blue Drop in fiscal year '26 versus activity for Blue Drop, so I am comfortable and we'll have to just adapt if and when it becomes necessary, so the proposed budget for fiscal year '26 is the same as it has been. No change, okay?

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Naomi:

Okay. That's \$60,000? Is that what he said?

Jeff:

Yes.

Stephen:

Plus, you have 10, you said?

Jeff:

What's that?

Stephen:

You have another 10 for consultants to set aside?

Jeff:

Yes, it's \$60,000 total, \$50,000 for the OCA and \$10,000, consultants.

Naomi:

Okay. Next on the agenda would be, Jeff, you're up for a report?

Charles:

We have to approve it.

Naomi:

Oh, I'm sorry. Yes. [inaudible 00:29:21] make sense. It has been moved by Charles.

Stephen:

I'll second it.

Naomi:

Second by Steve. All those that are in favor, let it be said by the sign, saying aye, whatever.

Committee members:

Aye.

Naomi:

Thank you. Okay, Jeff. I'm just trying to push you along.

Jeff:

Thank you. If anybody has any questions, just reach out. No consumer complaints currently. No applications. I did want to share, as part of my report tonight, a water-related experience. My son, my

oldest son lives in Richmond, Virginia, and a couple of weeks ago they had a significant outage. Richmond is a population of 250,000 people, but Richmond Water also serves suburbs of Richmond. They had a pump failure on a Sunday night, and they got a boil water notice. When the pump came into their possession for replacement on Tuesday, they had switched gear that failed. They actually had no water, no public water for four days, and being the unsympathetic consumer council that I am/unsympathetic father, sympathetic consumer council, as soon as my son called to tell me about the fact that courts were closed, schools were closed, his office building, they were not allowed in because no fire protection, I said, "Keep a log. Keep a log. I want to know all the disruptions, so that I could share it with the Regional Water Authority."

He's like, "Okay, but where do I brush my teeth?"

So, he kept a log, and he gave me examples of the things that he and the people that he works with experienced. I'm just going to take a minute and tell you this, because I think we really do take for granted availability of water, and I think when you don't have water for four days, it's pretty dramatic. So, here we go. It started off with no bathing, no drinking water, no water to cook with, no water to brush teeth, no water to shave. Then, it went to laundry. Then, it went to washing dishes. Can't flush toilets, can't wash hands, can't clean. Fire suppression, sprinklers, can't go to office. Fire department hydrants, restaurants all closed, dentist appointment canceled, food spoilage from not being able to use it, because no water to cook with.

Hospitals were very limited in what they would accept by way of patients, except for ER elective surgeries canceled, dentist office closed, pets impacted, baby formula, homeless shelter closed, animal shelter, no new animals accepted. Then, he talked about businesses, like hair salons and other businesses that were completely shut down. He decided he couldn't stand the fact that he, after a couple of days, couldn't shave, couldn't brush his teeth, so he got in his car and he drove out to Glen Allen and a couple other suburbs that were 20 miles outside of Richmond, and they didn't have any water. It was also the first week for the new mayor.

Prem:

Oh, wow.

Jeff:

The director of Richmond Water resigned. They did get the water back online, so it went from Sunday night to Thursday, and then Thursday, when they received notice that the switch gear had been installed, the pump had been installed. Mechanically, they were ready to go. They were told that it would take five hours to build up adequate pressure, and so they left the boil water notice in place for a couple more days, so essentially, there was about a one-week impact to the capital of Virginia and suburbs, and to hear my son describe it, it was fairly catastrophic. He's a lawyer. He works in a firm of about 50 people, and the courts were completely shut down. The office building that he's in, all the office towers in downtown Richmond were shut down. The schools were shut down, the universities were shut down. I told you what the healthcare ramifications were, so if we want to do a recent test case of how disruptive lack of access to drinking water can be, then we have one from this month in Richmond, so thought I'd just share that as food for thought.

Stephen:

Jeff, the hospitals, I'm sure, have some supply because-

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Jeff:

They were okay the first two days.

Stephen:

Yes, but it sounds horribly irresponsible, on the part of that company, not to be prepared for safety, for fighting fires. I mean-

Jeff:

The lack of the redundancies and the questions that were being asked, everything came to a head very quickly.

Stephen:

Yes.

Charles:

It's hard to believe one pump had that big of an effect.

Jeff:

Yes. As a matter of fact, if you Google it, if you Google "Richmond water crisis," you'll see there's a big investigation. It's still a very, very significant news story in Richmond, about how it happened. It's the City of Richmond Water Utility.

Mark:

The whole city, there was no water in the whole city?

Jeff:

There was no water.

Mark:

225,000 customers had no water?

Jeff:

Correct.

Mark:

Wow.

Jeff:

And there's all kinds of programs now for people impacted financially due to the water crisis: public aid, state aid, United Way programs. I mean, it really had a devastating impact on a lot of people.

Stephen:

Hey, Jeff, think about the fires, the floods, and the hurricanes, and this is a minor thing compared to that.

Jeff:

Exactly.

Rich:

So Jeff, answer me this. What lessons can we glean from this for even the cities and our footprint, and what work should they do?

Jeff:

I'm working on a memo to the RPB. I'm going to write to you. When they finished their investigation, EPA is involved. Apparently, two years ago, EPA issued a scathing report on the condition of Richmond's water treatment plant and warned that something like this could happen. The poor mayor, who took office the day the plant failure, was unaware of the EPA report, so there's this massive investigation that's going on. The Richmond Department of Public Utilities director resigned. The head of the water utility resigned, so I'm going to write a little story to you about it, because I do think that there's a story of non-compliance. They swept it under the rug for a long period of time. They had multiple audits that they failed. They had a lack of capital planning. They had a lack of redundancies. It was a systemic failure across the board.

So, in terms of lessons learned, I reached out to Sunny the first day it was going on, and I thought I was going to be breaking news to him, and he knew all about it already. He said that the Regional Water was keeping an eye on it, because they wanted to develop lessons learned that they could incorporate into their emergency response plan, but clearly, the outage brought to a head what they had essentially swept under the rug, which were failures on a number of fronts. My son had sent me photos of catastrophic flooding within the plant when they had the power outage initially. Then, the pump failures occurred, and then the electrical failures occurred. Apparently, they couldn't manually operate valves to prevent the flooding after one of the systems failed initially, and it just dominoed from there. Also, apparently, they didn't notify the state right away. I mean, it's just a complete catastrophic failure.

Mark:

We're a little different than them. We have different water coming from different ways. We don't just rely on one plant. It sounds like they relied on one plant. Is that correct?

Jeff:

Yes. It's really stunning. but the point of this isn't just to throw them under the bus, right? The point of this is to understand the importance of the annual capital plan. There were repairs that they just didn't make, apparently going back to '21. So, how it is you put off critical repairs for three plus years and ignore the EPA, ignore state regulators? The investigation is a work in progress, but it's something that I wanted to make you aware of, that I'm paying attention to it because I think we can learn a lot from it.

Stephen:

Hey, Jeff. It's got to be more than that, because we have a response plan for all of these different scenarios, so it would have to be failure of multiple things here before that could happen.

Jeff:

Well, again, we've talked over the years, when we talk about the capital plan, about redundancies, right? Because you are going to have failures. And it's how you respond to it. But it's also the ongoing maintenance, the ongoing capital program, all these things came together at once for them. They had a significant outage, and now they're still trying to figure out exactly what happened. Everybody's circling the wagons.

Mark:

It sounds like you described what happened. They're going to have a year's investigation on what happened, and it still won't fix it.

Stephen:

It's pretty apparent.

Jeff:

I mean, now they're being cited by the Department of Health. I mean, there's all kinds of regulators that are in there now, so they're not going to have any choice but to solve the problem.

Prem:

Yes. I think, Jeff, to your point, it also depends on the infrastructure, the aging infrastructure issues, and not knowing how old they are and them not looking through the recommendations for the past few years. I think Mark made a comment about the business continuity planning, right? So, these are all the different pieces. It looks like there are multiple levels of failures, like how you're saying, right? So, it is a good use case to really learn from it, right? So, if there are things or challenges that needs to be addressed, I think really aligning to that, so it's unfortunate, I feel.

Jeff:

When my son originally told me what was going on and what he learned in the office, it sounded almost like a bar exam question, "How many laws were broken?" Because there were staffing issues. They didn't have trained staff, because this all began when they had a storm. They had a power outage from a storm. Then, they had a pump failure. Then, they had a flood. Then, they had switch gear fail, so it was all, they didn't have adequate staffing at the plant during the storm. Either they weren't trained properly, or they didn't have enough manpower to respond to what should have been a temporary power outage, and then it snowballed from there, but interesting in terms of what can happen when you don't do the things that people take for granted.

Prem:

Yes.

Naomi:

Thank you. Jeff?

Jeff:

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Yes.

Naomi:

Do you have a report for us?

Jeff:

That's it.

Naomi:

Oh, no. I'm sorry. No reports.

Stephen:

I don't know if we are going to pay him. He's working for the city of Richmond now.

Jeff:

No, no, no. Stop that.

Naomi:

Now the OCA's invoice. Could I get an approval for Jeff's invoice for-

Stephen:

I'll move it.

Charles:

Second.

Naomi:

Okay. Moved and seconded by Charles. Is everybody ready for the vote? All those that in favor, let them say aye.

Committee members:

Aye.

Naomi:

All that are opposed. Hearing none, seeing none. [inaudible 00:43:43] vote. New business? Anything new anybody wants to talk on? Okay, we'll move right along. Our next meeting will be on Monday, February 24th at 5:30 PM. That would be hybrid.

Mark:

I just wanted to say one thing before we leave. You there, Charles?

Charles:

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I'm here.

Mark:

Well, I was asleep at the switch when you talked about drilling 800 feet for your well. That wouldn't have been included.

Charles:

No.

Mark:

Okay, so that wouldn't have been included. I was asleep at the switch. I didn't think about that, okay. I just want to let you know the 800 joint would not have been included. Just, I want to remind you of that. Thank you. Sorry to interrupt.

Naomi:

Can I get a motion to adjourn?

Mark:

So moved.

Mark:

Motion to adjourn.

Naomi:

Thank you. Thank you. Have good night, everyone.