

REPRESENTATIVE POLICY BOARD  
**CONSUMER AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**  
MAY 15, 2023  
MEETING TRANSCRIPTION

Stephen:

It's 5:35, I'll call the Consumer Affairs Meeting for May to order. Even though we don't have a quorum yet, we can start out with the other agenda items that don't need a vote. First on the agenda is the safety moment. Very sobering information here. It's things you already know, things that you want to be aware of and things that you should do coming into this season because of the nature of the consequences if these safety procedures aren't followed. So please take a look at that. Number two is public comment. Jennifer, do we have anybody on?

Jennifer:

No, there are no members of the public present.

Stephen:

Okay. We would normally go to approval of these things, but I think we'll skip that since we don't have the quorum. We'll move on to agenda item four, which is a process improvement update. Prem and Dana are here today for that. So Prem, I'll turn it over to you.

Prem:

Thank you, Steve. Before we get started, I do want to introduce a new member of the team here, Paul Weiner, who's actually with us today. Paul actually joined us, he's got more four decades of experience, especially on [inaudible 00:02:09] side. He comes from Avangrid, so I knew him from the past days when I used to work for them. And now he joined us here as a process excellence director. Kind of helping also Dana, because if you remember, Dana used to have the old hat. Now we have Paul helping us in the organization. He'll be helping us to move along for all the process areas so Dana can focus on CIS and other projects we have, so from the customer side.

Stephen:

Okay.

Prem:

Again, Paul, welcome on board.

Paul:

Thank you.

Stephen:

What's his title again, Prem?

Prem:

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Paul is actually a Process Excellence Director.

Stephen:

Process excellence. Okay.

Prem:

He's a Process Excellence Director and as a matter of fact, I don't know, Paul, if you want to introduce yourself, he actually was an RPB member as part of... I don't know, Paul, you want to go ahead and give a little bit of your background?

Paul:

Well, you're right. That was many, many, many years ago when I lived in West Haven. Probably back in the late eighties. I represented West Haven on the policy board and I was actually on the consumer affairs committee at that time.

Stephen:

Wow. Do you remember who was Chairman Paul? I was just be I've been on it a long time and that was just before I started.

Paul:

Chairman of the Consumer Affairs Committee?

Stephen:

Yes.

Paul:

Well, I was for a short period of time.

Stephen:

Ok.

Paul:

Then I moved from West Haven to New Haven, and I guess the rules didn't specifically say that you had to live in the town you represented, but it just felt like the right thing to do for me to resign. So that's why I dropped off the board because I wasn't living in West Haven anymore. And then, like Prem said, I worked at, used to be called United Illuminating, most recently Avangrid for 40 some odd years, and so I've had a lot of experience through managing the call center and managing billing and being customer service and all that stuff, so I'm familiar with a lot of aspects of the utility industry. Electric and water are surprisingly similar when it comes to how they operate. They're not that different.

Stephen:

Except our demand is going down. I think that electricity is going up.

Paul:

Mixed, yeah. We're facing some of the same things. There's a lot of energy conservation initiatives where we can, trying to convince people to use less electricity, just like the water company is pushing conservation on the water side. So we saw some of that on the electric, but then there's a lot of other things happening that's pushing it up. But you're right, it is actually increasing

Mark:

The double kilowatt hour.

Paul:

Right.

Stephen:

Mark Levine, thank you for coming.

Mark:

No problem.

Prem:

Thank you, Mark.

Mark:

Jennifer, I forgot to put a piece of tape on my finger.

Stephen:

We interrupted Paul. Paul, was there anything else?

Paul:

No, no. Unless you have any questions.

Stephen:

No, it's a great background and we're glad to have you. Welcome.

Dana:

Welcome.

Paul:

Glad to be here.

Prem:

Thank you, Paul. And I think to go on with our agenda item here, the Process Improvement Update, since Paul has just been a couple weeks here, so we are going to give him a free card for this time, so he's going to be kind of transitioning into this role. So I have Dana here who'll talk us through a little bit of the process improvements we've been working on.

Just as a little bit of a background, we actually have a fiscal '23 goal. So we have to, again, this is also a metric that we kind of track through making sure we at least do four process improvements that has big impacts on the organization, and then we always make sure that we have enough identified as part of our full process areas so we can deliver at least four of them to meet our goal.

So with that as a backdrop, why don't we go to the next slide. Okay. So that's the agenda item. So we'll go through the process improvements here. So Dana, would you like to go ahead and kind of walk us through a little bit of the process areas and the improvements identified?

Dana:

Sure. Thanks, Prem. So good to see everybody. Looking at the FY23 goals, Prem mentioned we had an objective to deliver four distinct business process improvements in fiscal '23. We were focused on the four key areas of process that RWA has continued to focus on, which is meter to cash, source to consumption, the procure to pay, and recruit to retire. These are the four critical streams around the company. There are many other smaller streams and different types of processes that feed off of these, but these are sort of the core big engine type of processes that help RWA function and function well.

In fiscal '23, we identified six process improvements focused, as you can see here, on some IVR improvements in the contact center, looking at our employee engagement through our SharePoint and intranet activity, growth and participation with the commercial business in terms of some new field dispatch, looking at some job billing improvements for the jobbing and the billing processes there, lab billing improvements, and some capital budgeting and planning improvements, looking for efficiencies and ways to improve how RWA functions within these key processes.

I'm happy to report that we have completed four and are actually on track to complete all six before the end of the May fiscal year. So far, the IVR process improvements have been completed. We've done an upgrade along with streamlined some of the activities and prompts that our customers have to manage as they're using the IVR. Specifically we had some long messages playing that indicated that there was a significant wait even when there wasn't. So we did some improvements there. Are continuing to look and look for ways to improve that customer call flow and we were excited. I think we've reported out a couple of times on the IVR transaction survey that we instituted in the fall and continued to get very positive customer ratings on their transaction in the contact center using the IVR survey mechanism.

We also launched the intranet, so this was a revamped, completely new approach to the use of the internal websites. Historically, it was a traditional HTML type of a webpage. What we've done is moved to the use of SharePoint, and this is a much more interactive and integrated type of web interface for our employees. So it utilizes new types of forms that instead of having paper forms, they're digital and able to get directly to HR, directly to purchasing. We have a great way of new interactive hubs where we've done pet contests, we've done our United Way campaign. It's a great opportunity for folks to follow different webpages. So if you're very interested in what's happening on the HR front or in the capital planning area, you can get regular updates on what's happening in those division webpages, and it creates a much more interactive and easy to use tool, both for the people who maintain the pages, because, for examples, like our HR organizational charts are tied directly to our day four system. So

rather than needing to manually update and load pages to a webpage, everything is all immediately updated and integrated.

Additionally, we looked at the commercial business improvements. As we are working with our new commercial partnerships, we saw that there were opportunities to streamline the way in which those smaller businesses are doing dispatch and customer service appointments. So we utilized a new tool called MobiWorks, rolled that out, trained those folks out in those different locations, and it's got a fully integrated situation where those jobs, the costs, the information relative to revenue and costing is coming right back into the QuickBooks tools for the financial team. So it's a lot more streamlined, less paper, much more visibility both for fellow employees in those commercial areas, as well as simplifying some of the processes behind the scenes around that paperwork management.

If there's no questions on those three, we can go to the next page. In terms of the jobbing process improvements, these are the types of jobs where we have stock and we're working on very manual historically processes where it's a little challenging for folks to create those bills and get that information out to our customers, very manual in its nature historically. Managing the inventory of the unit costs has been streamlined with a new database and tool called Sales Pad. Again, it's a subset of our Great Plains tools and is fully integrated there so that now as jobs are quoted for contractors or laying pipe, things like that, this is all fully integrated, reduces those manual handoffs and really simplifies that quote to actual cost as we're getting that information out to customers for those jobs.

In terms of the lab, these last two that we're looking at here, the lab process improvements and the capital planning and budget, are well underway, and we do expect that these should be largely complete before the end of May. The lab had been working on an older version of a customer facing webpage is a little outdated, little clunky, and also some of the billing processes, again, tend to be manual, tend to have needed to be a lot of typing and handholding by the individuals who do the administrative work in the lab. With the new lab management system that was implemented believe about a year, year and a half ago, all of these updates to the lab billing overhaul and simplification will help to keep that in a far less manual and more integrated processes. Those lab tests are completed and the billing can be automated and more streamlined as it moves through that approval process.

And additionally, looking at the budgeting process, we know as a group of departments, as we work through the capital planning and budgeting and all of the information that as board members you guys are familiar with seeing during the budgeting processes, it's a very manual and regimented process. It's a great process because it's so detailed, and what they're looking for here is to have some new ways to get the supply chain challenges in purchasing for materials and capital costs for those projects a little more proactively completed and available for that budgeting process and to develop new ways of doing the pipe requirements in advance of the fiscal year. Again, the more information we have up upfront, the easier it is to feed that process and do those budgeting expectations so that we can get those budgets out in a more timely manner with a lot less manual work over time.

Any questions or anything on any of the improvements we've been able to implement so far this year?

Stephen:

Any questions from committee members? Dana, I have a question on the lab. This is for this for the for-profit side of the lab? Customers of the lab?

Dana:

Yes.

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Stephen:

And interacting with them?

Dana:

Yes.

Stephen:

Okay.

Dana:

Yes. So it would be for those customer accounts and the bills and invoices we're sending out to those customers, streamlining those processes, yes.

Stephen:

Okay. And for all of this improvement, when did you start on these things there? We have four complete goals here. Was this just within this year?

Dana:

Yes, it was all within this fiscal year. Some things, I will say, like the IVR has been on our roadmap and for a little while, and we've done incremental improvements over time, just over the years. I don't even want to really necessarily call them a lot of improvements. So these are all part of longer term strategic initiatives, but these improvements themselves were specific for this fiscal year.

Stephen:

Well, it looks like great progress and congratulations. Good job there.

Dana:

Thank you. Yeah, the teams have worked really hard. Thank you.

Stephen:

Any other questions from members? Okay. Hearing none. I guess that's it for the update. Thank you, Dana.

Dana:

Of course. Thank you.

Stephen:

And Prem?

Prem:

I think this is good. Yep, thank you.

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Stephen:

No, we appreciated that and was a last minute call too. We had different agenda planned, but we'll get to everything eventually here. So we skipped over approval of the minutes. Now that we have Mark, I'll entertain a motion to approve item three, the minutes of last month.

Tony:

So moved.

Stephen:

Thanks, Tony. Second?

Mark:

Aye, me.

Stephen:

Thanks, Mark. Any corrections, additions, omissions? Hearing none. All those in favor?

Committee:

Aye.

Stephen:

Any opposed? Any abstentions? So the minutes carry unanimously. Jeff report to the OCA.

Jeff:

Thank you, Steve. It's been a busy month since we last met. I had completed my review of the proposed fiscal year '24 capital and O and M budgets, and you all saw my budget letter to the chairman of the Five Member Authority, David Borowy. Last week, Rochelle and Mr. Vitko and I, along with Dave Fox and Naomi and Catherine, were all special guests of the New Haven Environmental Advisory Council, and I thought that it was a very productive discussion about the rate structure of the authority, and I thought that there were some really good explanations provided, especially by Dave Fox, as to why the rate structures are what they are. We dispelled some misunderstandings that some members of the advisory council had regarding the rate structures for different classes of customers.

I finished my review-

Stephen:

Didn't Dave do that before?

Jeff:

No, previously there were some statements that were made and a promise by us to provide an explanation of the rate structure. So this was the meeting at which the explanations were provided. There was a memo that had been authored by Dave Fox and provided to the group prior to the meeting. The meeting was the opportunity to discuss the factual information.

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Stephen:

Thank you.

Jeff:

Sure. I completed my review of the pending application to the RPB for approval of the acquisition of target one, a confidential plumbing business along with real property, and I'll be submitting my memo to the RPB this Thursday the 18th, a week prior to the public hearing at the RPB on the 25th.

I've also completed my initial review of the pending application that the RPB will have a hearing on in June, assuming that at the meeting on the 25th, you accept the Finance Committee's recommendation to find the application complete. And that's the application pertaining to the Chemical improvements project at the Derby wellfield.

I reviewed the authorities pending application for a non-substantive land use plan amendment with respect to some trails in Guilford. I was asked by chairman of the RPB a couple weeks ago, Mario met with me on a Friday afternoon and asked me to do a presentation to each of the three statutory committees at your June meetings with respect to some corporate governance issues, including the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act, confidentiality of various materials that are filed with the Authority under protective order, as well as discussed in executive session, applicable ethics requirements for RPB members and other related matters. So I'll be making those presentations at the Finance Consumer Affairs and Land Use Committee meetings in June.

And I also attended several meetings of the Nominating Committee, which is chaired by Mr. Mongillo, and including the Friday afternoon meeting, and the RPB will be hearing a recommendation from the nominating committee to fill the vacancy created by the loss of Tony DiSalvo from the Five Member Authority. So lots going on. No consumer complaints, thank goodness. All quiet on the consumer escalation front. And that's my report. Thank you.

Stephen:

Thank you.

Mark:

I'm out of meeting. It's almost over. Sorry.

Stephen:

Well, any questions for Jeff on all that's been going on? I've seen him quite a bit, but others of you have not. Great thing is no consumer issues, so we're good there.

Jeff:

Yes.

Stephen:

Okay. Thanks Jeff.

Jeff:

Sure.



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Stephen:

If there's no questions. We'll move on to item six, which is the approval of Jeff's invoice for April, \$6,333.50. Do have a motion?

Naomi:

So moved.

Tony:

I move. We approve.

Stephen:

Thanks. Okay. I'll take a first from Naomi and a second from Tony. Thank you.

Tony:

You got it.

Stephen:

All right. Any questions on Jeff's invoice? All those in favor?

Committee:

Aye.

Stephen:

Any opposed? Okay. That motion carries. I asked item seven as volunteers to attend the authority meetings and at the beginning of this meeting, Naomi offered to be there for June. Mark, I don't know if you would like to make any of these.

Mark:

I always love going to those meetings. It's a bundle of fun.

Stephen:

Well, they're hybrid, so you can do it either way.

Mark:

Oh, they're hybrid now? Good. I can do it. Oh, great. I'll take July 27th if you want.

Stephen:

Oh, okay. You know already? Great.

Mark:

Okay. As long as they're hybrid.

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Stephen:

Yeah. No, we can. Yeah, we can. That takes care of two of the ones we have them. We don't have to think about this for a little while till August and September. Okay. Any new business come before the committee? I don't have any at the moment. Our next regular meeting is June 26th at 5:30 and I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

Tony:

So moved.

Naomi:

Second.

Tony:

Thanks, Tony. Naomi, seconded it. All those in favor?

Committee:

Aye.

Stephen:

And we're adjourned. Thank you, everyone.