

SOUTH CENTRAL CONNECTICUT REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY

JANUARY 23, 2025

MEETING TRANSCRIPTION

David:

I will call the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority meeting to order for Thursday, January 23rd, 2025. It is 12:30 and I note that in attendance we have Suzanne joining us remotely. Welcome. And we have Catherine and myself here. Kevin is due any minute. Mario I think is in the next room. Actually, do you think you could get him in the other room? We are on time so I will call the meeting to order and the safety moment. Very appropriate for this time of year, so that's good. With that, I'll move on to public comments. Is there any members of the public here, Jennifer?

Jennifer:

No.

David:

No. Okay, so then that answers that. Then we'll move right into the recess as the Authority to meet as a Pension and Benefit Committee. Who would like to make such a motion?

Mario:

I move we recess as the Authority and meet as the Pension & Benefit Committee.

David:

Very good.

Catherine:

Second.

David:

Seconded to adjourn as the Pension Benefit Committee and reconvened as the Authority? All in favor?

Authority members:

Aye.

[PENSION & BENEFIT COMMITTEE MEETS FROM 12:31 P.M. TO 1:23 P.M.]

David:

Thank you. All right, we are right into acts arising and there was nothing that needs approval from the Committee. So then we'll go right into consent calendar. What's your pleasure? Consent calendar has been presented.

Mario:

So moved.

Catherine:

Second.

David:

Are there any points of clarification? Anything you want to hold off? No? All right then since you're ready to vote, all those in favor say aye.

Authority members:

Aye.

David:

All right, reports of RPB committees. January, okay. Finance committee. I attended the Finance Committee but I only attended because they went into executive session and then I didn't come back. So I didn't know when they were done and I didn't know what was going on. So basically, before I left the meeting they had voted to go an executive session to discuss hiring a consultant to review the compensation of the Five-member Authority. I was very surprised to see when they came out of executive session, they postponed the decision on that. I didn't know that until yesterday when you sent me the minutes. So that was what their decision was on that. The other items on the agenda was they reviewed the financial documents quarterly financial reports and I don't recall what else was-

Rochelle:

The dashboard.

David:

The dashboard? Okay, thank you, right. Were there any significant comments from members? No? Okay. It was a 55-minute meeting.

Sunny:

Yes.

David:

I read the minutes. I looked at the time purposely because I guess they were discussing for a while. Anyway, all right, so that was that. The next committee that met was Land Use Committee, Mario?

Mario:

Thank you. The Committee met on January 8th. Most significant information from there is that Peter Betkoski was asked to attend our meeting. So thank you Peter for being here.

Peter:

Thank you.

Mario:

They did do their update on RWA properties, invasive species, et cetera. And the actual presentation on all that information was short to the highlights, so thank you very much for that, that's an improvement, instead of reading through the documents since they're provided it in advance to the Committee members and all. And they also received the presentation on the Deer Hunt Update, which I know is in our packet but I'll give... Are we doing that in detail?

Sunny:

Yes, not too much detail.

Mario:

You are going to do that?

Sunny:

Yes. Not too many details.

Mario:

I could give you the two-second highlight, which is bow and arrow. Four RWA properties involved, it's for the health of a forest, it occurs during November. Amount harvested were 40 deer, which is about normal for a deer harvest in the last several years. There were 188 permits issued. And all the deer have to be checked in at an RWA check station and those are run by volunteers at all the check stations, so we do not have staff doing that. And that's for presentation in a real short nutshell.

David:

Good. The next item listed is Consumer Affairs. Kevin, that's not until Monday?

Kevin:

Yes.

David:

And then I attended the Executive Committee meeting and they received an update on. And that was basically it; that was pretty much all meeting. That's all I'm going to say. It was an update that was interesting, thank you. Caught me better before I did. All right, next item is business updates. And we'll start with the CIS system.

Prem:

Thank you. I'll start off with the CIS memo that was first attached. So just a little bit of a background, very high level. Do you remember when we actually did the RTP approval process? Way back when we started the project. We have engaged with the [inaudible 00:04:46] solutions provider. They actually provided recommendation to OCA and Steve Casazza was the quality auditor at the time. So we actually have engaged the same personnel. Steve had been doing time-to-time audits and we recently did an audit, this was 6-1 audit that we do and it was performed in December and January. There is one more left that will happen that will go live in March. So overall assessment came out very positive in the sense there are areas that I've highlighted in the memo data migration. Which was one of our biggest areas of concern from the past history, so our past to note there. We have the cash functionality which basically

covers everything from being able to take calls, being able to send bills, collect payments, as close to 100% as possible.

So all of those were pretty good in terms of what was being performed as an assessment there. Shadow billing test was another one where if you remember I talked about tablet billing, whole system, SAP and the new system. So that was a positive thing that we did. We are actually planning to do another one in UAT which is coming, so very positive note there. Integration very positive as you could imagine, we have close to 1,000 integration we are doing with all the different solutions. So that was very positive, we were able to test everything. Then finally the technical infrastructure. I know there was a lot of concern about the SaaS solution on the cloud so we had done that as well. So overall very positive on that as well. A couple other things that he had noted down, which is actually things that we need to watch.

So the next eight to 12 weeks before we go live, which is April 2nd, there were specific areas that you want us to focus on, training being one, as we all know. Use-back second testing that's happening as we speak. The deadline for us to complete that is the end of February, so the team is working through that. And obviously the go live readiness, so are we really ready with the change and there's a whole communication plan that the team had worked to. You probably have seen some water lines that came last summer, we have one coming up next week for the winter water lines as well. So that's something that you need to watch in terms of making sure we are following the next eight to 12 weeks pretty closely. Another area that he had mentioned was plan for delinquency, so I just wanted to also update board.

While we are going live on April 2nd, as part of the best practice and standard, we are not turning on the shut-off process because you typically want to make sure that everything is going well before you turn on the shut process. So there is a plan that we are trying to put together and that's been planned for June 2nd for the turn-on to be successful. So some close watch over there. And then obviously to monitor resources and priorities, we have security manning when you're getting close to the end of the project, more activities are supposed to be done. We have a close focus, UA team training activities happening along with the delinquency that I just talked about. So we are going to be focused on that. So a lot of consideration that was given from Steve. He had clearly mentioned that literally we got to watch that at least day-by-day now. People used to do month-by-month, week-by-week, now it's day-by-day, so very close on that.

Last but not least, the assessment also talked about go/no-go criteria. It's basically a long story short, a checklist that has everything in it for readiness and then we check off, go through the process of making sure everything is good and then we turn off. So we don't have any surprises as we had in the SAP board. So that's the overall assessment. Very quickly, some recommendations that came about. I want to go through each and every detail here. One of the things was quick actions, decisions and issues addressing those things as we're getting closer. I went back at the time and he did, it was over 47 different things we were supposed to be looking at. We have addressed, we are down to seven now, so we just good, we are trying to make progress there. Again, resource I'd already touched upon, EAT, which is happening right now. Training, delinquency, vendor coordination availability. This is another big area of focus for us. So wanting to make sure that when we start cutting over to the new system we got to have all of the vendors aligned so everybody does their thing.

So as a matter of fact, we are going through a mock we call a mock dress rehearsal, which is happening right now. So basically we are practicing that, just before we do it, we actually practice it. That's happening right now as I speak. I believe by end of next week we'll be done with a mock rehearsal, which is good. Overall I think we got a track, I don't want to present a rosy picture that everything is

great. There's a lot of pressure on the team. The team is working through and making sure that we are probably working on training. Again, there's a whole training plan of three months for the size of the company VR, it's never seen so we have actually put together a whole training plan. Just as a highlight, we have around 72 sessions. The training hours are around 432 hours, times how many hour people attend the training, so we are talking thousands of hours of training. So basically, working through that process. Any questions for me on that memo? Because that's the highlights.

David:

Thank you, Prem.

Mario:

I greatly appreciate it. The next review that he's going to be doing, is it early enough so that you can make that go/no-go decision?

Prem:

The original plan was that he's going to be coming in mid of March, but we are trying to address that to come a little bit earlier, like first week of March. So, we will have the time before we start the cutover.

Mario:

With the data migration and the meter to catch functionality, so we have the meter in the field, that data comes in, does that go directly into the billing system or that goes into the metering system and then it gets transferred over?

Prem:

So basically, all of our lease rate comes from our AMI system because they're all also in there, so it's going to come out of that. But the good process is that there's whole validation, we have a 16 set of validations. So, it's going to come from the AMI system to the billing system.

Mario:

Okay. So that is not changed in the AMI system, so we will capture that data and then it's just a matter of making sure the license transfer works.

Prem:

One thing I would like to add, I know me and Sunny talked about it as well is we have asked him to do a weekly report. So, we kind of talked about that because he's going to be providing us on a weekly basis that one of our checklists. So, it's not like he's coming in March and only then we'll know, we'll know every week. So, it is intense but it's needed.

Sunny:

Kevin, you've requested a dashboard to be shared. Steve hasn't come up with one. He kind of showed us a few templates and we have asked him to work with the PFO to develop a dashboard that the leadership and the governing teams can look at as well as once it's ready, we'll circulate. I think those are the [inaudible 00:11:50]. So, he's going to do a big [inaudible 00:11:53]. So, we've a monitor because his recommendations were very useful, and I think the PMO staff is taking it and putting it together

because there was significant amount to roll out in the next 12 weeks. So, we requested him. So, he has spared the time, he was busy, but we did say that, hey, can you please kind of navigate and shepherd as required? So, he's going to give that additional [inaudible 00:12:17].

Mario:

Excellent and holding off on the delinquents.

Sunny:

Thank you.

Mario:

Good move. The little bit of monies that we might charge or insignificant compared to the possible problems that it could raise. However, I did notice, and this goes back to the consent, so I do whether I guess this or not. We haven't done the red tags I think we call them and the top 100 calls, is that intended to end once we get into the delinquent module, which I think you had scheduled for a couple of months after?

Prem:

June 2nd.

Mario:

Is that to be added again or reintroduced?

Prem:

Yes.

Mario:

Okay.

Prem:

The way we are thinking is as far as the shut process, there are many different things, one of them is going to be red tags as well. As a matter of fact, there is a period when we are cutting over where we won't be doing any shots as well. So, we will be starting the process down and that's what we, Jim, Hal, Brian will work together to make sure we can solve the process.

Sunny:

We have reduced it, not supplement.

David:

Other comments or questions? How do you feel, Prem?

Prem:

A lot of pressure but a lot of good pressure. But the team is really looking forward to it, right? Because they're motivated to finish what they have started three years ago. So, a lot of excitement and of course there's a lot of learning, so I can feel it. Literally we had some conversations where... I'm into the daily standups now, so I have not done this 10 years ago but now I'm part of that, so it's almost like making sure. So, it's good, team is feeling good. I'm proud of what they're doing.

Mario:

Does that go down to the customer service group?

Prem:

Yes.

Mario:

Okay.

Prem:

So as a matter of fact, the way that we have planned the training schedule, it's unimaginable the way that the number of hours we are training because we had to run the business operations and train people. So, a third of our people are on the call and doing things versus the two thirds are getting into training. So, it is a big exercise we are... And it's not just for customer service, it's for field people, everybody. So, it's a matter of fact almost close to 80 folks are involved in the project. It's almost [inaudible 00:14:45] significant amount of people

Catherine:

And you're that you have significant, I'm not going to say 100%, but significant level of buy-in for the new system because every time you change something it's the training and the commitment that will make it fail if you don't do it right?

Prem:

Yes, no, I think that's a great question because one of the key things that I'm looking at is adoption, not just the technology change. How far are people able to adopt the solution, get themselves. So, one of the examples I would give for that is we are creating a mock system where people can go in and practice, not just train. So, we are scheduling time to the level that they can actually go and practice too. So, it's almost like a whole different level of trying to make sure that the people are comfortable, to your question. Am I totally comfortable? There are areas that I'm concerned, defects are one of the areas and I'm looking at a number of defects and one of the recommendation was really monitor the defects. And if we are going to be for something after the go live, trying to understand educational risks, financial operation risks. So that's one of the reasons why I'm daily talking about what's going on but it's manageable, I don't want to say that it's problematic. But if there's anything, I'll come and I'll let the board and I'll be available.

Catherine:

Will the practice module be available for onboarding purposes between people.

Prem:

Yes, as a matter of fact, interesting enough, we of course with business team as well to make sure there are certain things that are part of onboarding, not just for purpose of customer service but every other department field and other areas too.

Catherine:

Okay.

Mario:

Okay.

David:

Couple comments. I definitely notice and appreciate the crispness and seriousness with the updates, the attitude has changed and that's important because I know that. I know that it affects the whole company because we had that before, we can't do shots, so the delinquencies are off a little bit, that happens and that's part of it, but hopefully the end is better and helps us with that, and that's important. That's all I'll say. Okay, thank you. Good luck.

Prem:

Thank you.

David:

I do want to say this because Sunny and I've had several conversations about this and I know we all know what's going on here. We've had a lot of people that have put in a lot of hours on this and well, maybe if we slow them down a little bit and make it take a little longer, they have bought into wanting to get this done now. And that sort of goes along with what you were saying which why I wasn't sure, but they bought in... Yeah, 60 hours and 70 hours a week are tough. But I'd rather do it and know that there's light at the end of the tunnel soon than prolong it than have 50-hour weeks for so long. And that seems to be the prevailing attitude from what I've been told, and that's good. Hunker down, let's just get this done and do it right more on something we'll be proud of.

Catherine:

That's great to hear.

David:

Yes.

Prem:

We'll focus on good quality product always.

David:

Yes.

Prem:

Me and Rochelle, many, many calls we keep saying, "Good quality product."

Suzanne:

Like our water.

David:

That's perfect, lifesaving.

Suzanne:

Absolutely.

David:

Yes.

Mario:

Part of your advantage's probably the disgruntledness if you will, of the SAP, the difficulty in working in that system. So, like okay, this has got to be better, we got to get forward. Thank you.

David:

Anything else regarding CIS? And this really is a KPI, the other one-

Mario:

I think this is good.

David:

So that's fine? Okay, thank you. All right, so then we'll move on to monthly highlights. We have the board report, I think it was nine pages this time, so thank you.

Sunny:

I'm certainly not going to go over the nine pages.

David:

No, please.

Sunny:

I'll just give the highlights of the first page.

David:

Yes.

Sunny:

The regional supply strategy, you're going to hear it as part of 7.3. So I'll go into it into some more details. There is some information which came in today, which we are processing, so we'll get into it. The commercial business, again, they're doing as budgeted and they are proceeding in a positive direction to meet the targets of 9.2. In terms of the bond ratings, it was pretty good during the last quarter, we had both in terms of the blue drop as well as regional, both Rochelle and I took extremely good meetings with S&P and Moody's. They both affirmed our ratings for regional. And the feedback that we've received from both of those entities, even with Blue Drop, they did mention that it would be investment grade. So it was good to hear.

And one of the things that I would highlight is if you look at the last sentence of that second paragraph. So it was pretty good coming from S&P because Moody's have always been very positive of ours. S&P was, I wouldn't say skeptical, but very cautiously optimistic. But this time they actually came and summarized it in a way that if the capital needs will be addressed and if continued growth of liquidity, they would be more than happy to look at recommend a raise and rate.

Catherine:

That's fantastic.

Sunny:

It was really good. They captured it themselves, so it was really good. So engaging with employees, we had of our teams cast almost 130/140 employees came in. So we addressed the strategic, say updates, the half 30 updates. So it was well received. And we also had to start our winner who came from Prem's group. And you all know Keith, so as you know he's really a star performer. And then I kicked off the 60 with Sunny, which was really well received. So we had a very good chat conversations with almost 20 people I think on Tuesday and Thursday. So I'm going to have one more coming Tuesday and Thursday. So it's almost 30 people invite, so it's about 20 people who show up. And it's voluntary, people can come and chat, it's a Blue Sky discussion, anything they can ask. First time we had some questions on a blue drop. The second time the conversations entirely changed. Even going back to, I would say, who is going to be the RPB representative for Branford? I said, "I don't know."

Mario:

They're all Branford residents.

David:

I ask it every month.

Nicole:

How are you guys?

Sunny:

DSX, went into I would say rolling out the next mini-modules and the key partnerships, one key meeting which I took with the mayor of New Haven because we are going to start to phase two of doing the inventory or at least shortlisting more in terms of identifying the unknowns to a much greater extent. Good meeting, I think Sean Madison is going to be the point of contact for us in terms of one individual entity was going to coordinate with the rest of the groups within the city. And then the Climate Haven

Initiative progresses hopefully in the next meeting, that's something I can give you a small synopsis of what we have done so far with Climate Haven. And then we had this good meeting which Steve Vitko and the group organized with the Northeast Mid-Atlantic partnership for Forest, which was a big hit. They all came over, they through the plans, they had tours around our areas as well as we kind of sponsored some lunches and all that stuff. It was extremely well received and they pretty much said that you guys have set a very high bar, now for the next year we have to move about beyond. So we had very positive meeting, that's pretty much the highlights.

David:

All right, thank you.

Suzanne:

I have a question.

David:

Oh sure, Suzanne.

Suzanne:

So the question I had for Sunny, was you said something about rating improvements if we do X, Y, Z. And it was garbled, what was it that we needed to do to improve our rating?

Sunny:

Right. One was the capital spending, and the second one was the continued growth of liquidity, if you want to add.

Suzanne:

So, what did they say about capital spending?

Rochelle:

Basically, what they're looking for, Suzanne, because they always say these are things you can do to increase your rating, and these are things that could go the other way. So, when they talked about they recognized and what we to them about our capital program, although it's high now, it will actually mitigate and we actually, we might remember in our 10-year plan we actually saw that. So that was really promising to us because our plan will keep but then it will mitigate a bit. And then with liquidity they want to see a continuation of our improved liquidity, which we've been able to demonstrate. So we thought that comment in there, it was really positive.

Suzanne:

And improve the liquidity, meaning improve reserves and reduce debt?

Rochelle:

It's primarily related to cash and cash equivalents. Which they count as liquidity, which unfortunately doesn't include all our restricted reserves. But we have been able to improve that, we've been able to

improve how they calculate coverage, which is actually based on our audited financials. So they see a good trend and I think we could continue to demonstrate that we're on a good path.

Suzanne:

Thank you.

David:

Questions?

Mario:

Moody's did not... Oh, sorry. Moody's-

Rochelle:

Moody's was fine, but we thought this as S&P tends to be more conservative so that they had such a favorable comment.

Mario:

It's just that Moody's was so short in the report, I was like, "Okay."

Rochelle:

It was also positive.

David:

Okay, I'll turn it over. We're on to our, Deer Hunt updated with Nicole, come on up.

Sunny:

You can stand up and deliver, Nicole.

Nicole:

No, that's okay. I just still am practicing social distancing in some ways, so I'm staying away from people. Thank you for having me, you guys, I really appreciate this. This is sort of one of the bigger tasks I do all year. So, it's always nice to tell people about how it goes and what happens. So, thank you. Okay, we can get started. Okay. So, as you know, the deer hunt started here in 2009, which is still our largest property. Three more properties were added to the deer hunt Ansonia/Seymour in 2014. Bethany and Prospect in 2015. And Ansonia/Seymour is the smallest property where we only allow about eight hunters. But Bethany and Prospect are of similar acreage. So we have 20 and 25 hunters in those sites respectively. Next slide, please.

So just a quick reminder why we are doing this. As you guys know, we have a forestry program that obviously depends on regeneration and excluding deer as part of that program has become a very important part of making sure the forestry program can continue. As you guys, you were probably no stranger to deer browse in Connecticut. This photo was taken by Josh a few years ago, actually he lent me it from 2018. And you can actually see the stark difference where the deer are allowed to browse,

that there's almost no vegetation that's native that's coming up where they're allowed to be. So, excluding them, like I said, is really important to forest regeneration. Next slide, please.

Just a quick overview for the hunting season. I usually start sending out applications in February, March, and then we have a whole process to get the amount of hunters by the end of the year in October. So, this year we started out with 360 applications that I mailed out. Out of that, we had 188 participants each year. The number usually varies between about 188, we have 205 spots scattered throughout the four properties. So, a lot of hunters, especially if they are first year participants, they have to go through a proficiency test and if you don't show up to certain steps along the way, you exclude yourself from the process and that's how we basically end up with about half of the people who actually apply for the deer hunt.

So, this year hunter population, we had 135 hunters in North Brantford. We had Bethany in 25, Prospect 20, and Ansonia/Seymour eight. At North Brantford we actually reserve 152 spots, which gives us the total 205 permits. But we never really fill up that area. So North Brantford not only serves as a site where people want to be, it also is our overflow site where people who don't make the lottery or get accepted into Bethany Prospect or Ansonia, they go over to North Brantford if they decide that they want to there. So as in years past, we have 10 days of scouting and this year the dates sort of move around. So this year the scouting started October 5th and ended on October 14th. I usually start it on a Saturday morning and then ended on a Monday. And this year we had 30 full days of hunting. This year the hunt started on Monday, October 28th and it always ends November 30th, no matter what happens. And that's in accordance with the permit from the Department of Public Health.

So this year we harvested 40 deer, 22 bucks, 18 does, most of those came from Gaillard as they usually do. And this is within the range of deer we can expect to over the course of the 16 years now. The surveys are due to me next week on Friday. So, some of this data that you have is just sort of the preliminary reports back from the hunters, but we can get a flavor of what's been going on with them from about the 80s or so permits, the surveys that came in. As always, we have two check stations, one at Gaillard and one at Bethany. The Bethany check station serves as the check station for Bethany Prospect and Ansonia/Seymour because it's about centrally located and it's about 8 to 10 minutes from both of those other two sites.

This year I'm happy to report no accidents or injuries, but we put some really good safety measures in place. Especially, I'm particularly proud of the hands-free automated descent device. So, I guess you guys heard the first year I started there was a hunter who had a near miss and fell out of a tree stand. Well, that was not an acceptable outcome. So, a couple of things. Well, because of COVID, we didn't have the proficiency tests anymore, so we reinstated that and had a way to do it safely so that people were not exposing to themselves to COVID and other respiratory diseases. We found a few alternative locations outside, if need be, we could have them and space people out so that we never have to cancel the safety meeting ever again. And also, we do them in September where the weather is still pretty nice. So even if it's raining or something, there's still shelter, and you can social distance if that ever needs to ever happen again.

But a lot of hunters, although we encourage them to hunt with a partner because that's just safe, you can't acquire that from people. But to keep them as safe as possible, if you've ever taken the NRA hunting class for safety, they say if you fall out of your tree stand, you should just do this military style push-up and cut yourself down with a knife, that's the actual practice. We're like, "I don't think that is the best way to do that if you're alone." So, we looked at technology all the way from making them carry little eye tags, which seemed onerous expensive, and we'd probably never get those back, to other things. And one of the things we found was this really great device, they have a few of them now,

they're called automatic descent devices, where you have a lifeline that you climb up and you can use that to get yourself down, but this lowers you from the ground. You just press a button, and it just drops you down slowly.

And there are some models that are around \$50. We don't recommend a specific one because you can't. But the ones they like are actually about 50 to \$65. Some of them are multi-use where you can pay 150 bucks, and you can use it over and over. The ones that are \$50 are like a bike helmet where if you do use it once, you can't use it again. It's like a car seat that gets in the accident or something. So that's been really successful because a lot of hunters didn't know you could even have that technology and they've really gone on board, which we're proud of. So, no one's fallen out of the tree stand, at least not that they've told me. So that's good. Okay, next slide.

So, these are just the surveys that were returned as of the land use committee meeting. Obviously more surveys have come in since then. And if you guys are interested in sort of those very specific results, I have to submit a report to the Department of Public Health and you guys can get the final hunting effort hours if you're super interested. But as of that date, the total hunting hours, which we measure by the number of days the hunters go out to the number of hours they spend out each day, totals 1,429 hours. So, on average, even though I haven't done the exact map, most hunters spend about two to three days out there, it's usually on the weekends. That goes up because some hunters are retired so they can spend a lot more time, but on average they spend about two to five days out there depending on the site, and they're out there for four or five hours a day, usually early morning from 6:00, to about when the hunt ends at 1:00, if they're not tracking it here.

So far as of that date, January 31st, 26, hunters have returned their surveys. They obviously seem to put in more hours at Gaillard, with 1,018 hours. Bethany only four surveys had come in, but already those four people spent 136 hours there. Prospect, they had seven surveys returned and they spent 262.5 hours. And Ansonia/Seymour, only one person returned, and they were out there for 13 hours, so two days, basically.

So, this is the Deer Harvest. Next slide, please. Thank you. Yeah. By property. So like I said before, we harvested 40 deer total, 22 bucks, 18 does. That's within keeping with how many does we harvest. As you guys know, we have a doe incentive where we encourage hunters to harvest the does because based on the research they did when the hunt got started, they determined that the best way to actually control the deer population was to hunt the does. So, the doe incentive has been in effect, and it doesn't really vary. Most years, aside from the two years where we had really dry hot weather, they harvest between 30 to 45% of the deer are does. So, this is within keeping with that the last 16 years. Next slide, please.

Yes. So, as you can see, this is just a breakdown of the specific year for 2024, but also compared to the other years that have come before. So, nothing super exciting. Like I said, it's within keeping with how the deer hunt results have kind of come out in the last couple of years. This is just a fun little chart that I like, it just shows. Well, if you guys were ever interested, I mean I could talk about this all day, but what was really cool was when the deer hunt got started, you could see how the number climbed. It's because the deer were just not used to being predated. So, the hunters would tell me stories, but the deer would just sort of come and approach them and then they were able to harvest a lot and then those numbers dropped sort of precipitously because we had 2011, remember that really long brutal winter where the deer population decreased across the state?

And as you can see, aside from the deer being not used to being hunted, the numbers are within for the last 16 years around that average. That was just a weird anomaly the first time the deer hunt was had, which I thought was really, really interesting. I've been doing some tracking on weather and

temperature to see how that's affecting the deer hunt, especially with climate change and how we're starting to see that winter start a little bit later, it's a lot warmer. In the beginning of October, we had a bunch of days where we hit 75 to 80 degrees and if you've ever hunted, those are bad conditions under which to hunt. If you don't have a freezer or if you're way out in the woods, hunters, especially if they're using the deer for meat, they don't actually like to drag deer in those conditions because the meat spoils really quickly, so then it's just worse for the hunter to take an animal when they can't use it, especially if it's for food source.

But anyway, back to my little thing. So that's pretty much it. My final thoughts, like I said, we've reached the 16th year mark. What's interesting from more of the surveys that I've gotten them back, is that the hunters are saying they're seeing a consistent amount of deer, but the deer aren't coming close enough for them to shoot. And we really emphasize an ethical shock for them. They have to use the bow and arrow, but if you're going to use a bow and arrow, whether it's a compound or a crossbow, you can only really shoot about 60 feet accurately. Anything past that, you run a bigger risk of deflecting the arrow off of a little branch, which can really change the trajectory.

And you don't want to shoot the deer in a spot where it's going to run around, and you have to track it further. You want to get it in the lung or the heart so that it bleeds out very quickly. I know that sounds really brutal. But it's actually much better because the animal dies quicker, and they can harvest and remove it and then utilize it. So that's been interesting where people are saying, "Oh yeah, we saw like 10, 15 deer." Or, "Oh..." It's not in this presentation because this was not quite finished. But one of our hunters has a YouTube channel and so he goes out there and films. And literally the day he was taking down his tree stand, like a herd of eight deer just passed a stand. And this was at 1:10. He's like, "I didn't see them all year..." But they know, they're getting a lot smarter.

So between us hunting the property very specific times, the number of black bear that are around, also the number of bobcats, those animals are also preying on deer farms. So we're seeing this balance come back where the deer are becoming a little bit stronger, being much more wary because they have hunting pressure on them, which I thought was really interesting. And so in the summer after this hunt, I mean Casey and Josh will go out to the research plots, they'll look at them to see if there's any change. That's been sort of an ongoing situation even before I started. And the report to Department of Public Health is due the Monday after I am done getting all the surveys in.

Mario:

Sure. Is it a limit of one deer per hunter? Is that-

Nicole:

No, you can use your deer tags on our property. So, what they usually do is we actually have hunter who harvested two those and got two bucks and he's like, "This was the best deer ever." So, he used all of his deep tags on our property. So, when you check your deer, you have to check them with us just so that we know how much you're harvesting. But then they have to report too deep as well because there is now an online reporting, so everyone can keep track.

Catherine:

Sure. So, you mentioned that there are black bears that are taking the deer. Do the bears create any type of problem with our forest?

Nicole:

No. They're supposed to be there and it's really interesting as a larger fauna first. I know some people feel that deer... But they're supposed to be there, they're supposed to also hunt deer. They're omnivores, they're doing their thing. The crazy thing is in Gaillard, before the hunt started, the black bear population has increased before. I don't know what it was in terms of conservation, were they a species of least concern in the area? You know how they rank those things. Nationally black bear are doing quite well. I think I listened to a podcast about wildlife and a couple of months ago they said the actual count for black bears somewhere about 800,000, which is pretty good for a midsize predator that has to live around humans.

So, they're supposed to be hunting deer, they're supposed to be taking the weak and the sick. But our hunters have a doe incentive, but as people we have to consume that meat too. There's probably not a hunter who's going to get to take a sick deer. So having sick deer in our forests, especially when we have diseases that are in neighboring states like chronic wasting disease and other things that are on the horizon, having a population of deer that are being predated, taking them is reducing their pressure and reducing their numbers so they're not close together, passing these diseases back and forth. So, it's really important.

Catherine:

Thank you.

Nicole:

Yes, no problem.

David:

Thank you. Next?

Mario:

You had mentioned and if it was warm, the hunters don't want to... And you mentioned to take them for the meat. I presume they all are or are some just doing it for the joy of hunting?

Nicole:

Both. I think the vast majority of people who've responded to our survey say they're using the deer for meat; some hunters are trophy hunters who like the bucks with the antlers. That's also fine. But that's why we sort of put the doe incentive there because we know that that's going to be the more effective way to control the population. The DOE incentive also works because in areas where if you do not want to hunt Gaillard, like if you live in Prospect or Bethany or closer to there and you only have 25 spots and those spots go really quickly, it behooves you, no pun intended, to actually take a doe because then you can guarantee your spot at your first choice of hunting [inaudible 00:42:26].

David:

We love your energy. You briefly mentioned at the land use meeting, just so we know, what are some of the other things that you work on? I know you work on several projects.

Nicole:

Oh yeah, okay. So, I didn't know how much time you had. So, the full intros, my official title is natural resources analyst. I have Trevor, who you probably met years ago, and then JT, John Triana who had my job. So, I do three things, the deer hunt, I'm the hazard tree person because I'm a licensed arborist, so that's always fun. So, I take down trees, not myself, I just hire the contractors, but I do the evaluation to remove them. And then I also help John Triana manage the flood warning system. So those are my big official things. But because we all sort of love plants here, I do nature walks. If anyone's interested in doing one on this Saturday, oh my God. So come to Maltby and you can learn about how to identify sugar maples and oaks and stuff, section from 10 to 12. And then I also just do a lot of planting all over because I like plants.

Prem:

Once in a while I send my team to go and have fun.

Nicole:

That was the hottest thing, the whole walk I had planned and we got out there, it was 90 degrees and it was like, "Oh God, this is going to be like the baton death march. We're just going to go around the parking lot in the shade." No, it was like a hike, like two miles in. And then we got there, and I was like, "That's not going to happen." Well, we're going to die.

Prem:

Yeah.

Nicole:

But we did. We made an hour, the lemonade outside, saw enough trees. It was good.

Prem:

I was a helper, so I [inaudible 00:44:07]-

Nicole:

Yes, you were a good sport. You were a great sport. Thanks, guys.

David:

Thank you very much.

Nicole:

Appreciate it. All right, see you this time next year maybe.

David:

All right. So, the two items left on the agenda, Blue Drop update and some potential related action and then link with detail. So why don't we take a 10-minute break and then we'll come back, and we'll plan to go into executive session for those items.

[BREAK FROM 2:08 P.M. TO 2:18 P.M.]

David:

are ready to make a motion to be back in session,

Mario:

I motion that we move into executive session [inaudible 00:00:18] statutes 1-216 [inaudible 00:00:22] motion [inaudible 00:00:27].

David:

Is there a second?

Catherine:

Second.

David:

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

Authority members:

Aye.

David:

Suzanne. Oh, okay. Very good, thank you. All right. With that we are in executive session, so let's get the latest update.

[EXECUTIVE SESSION FROM 2:18 P.M. TO 3:13 P.M.]

David:

We are now out of executive session. Can I have a motion to go back into executive session. [inaudible 00:02:37].

Kevin:

I move that we move into executive session [inaudible 00:02:46].

David:

Is there a second?

Mario:

Second. Inviting [inaudible 00:02:52], Jennifer is anyone else online?

Sunny:

Is Cody there?

Jennifer:

Cody's here.

[EXECUTIVE SESSION FROM 3:13 P.M. TO 4:00 P.M.]

David:

All right. Then the next item is, we'll go back up to item 7.2, which is the monthly business report. And I would ask that we go into executive session for the purposes of discussing personnel matters. [inaudible 00:01:08] with the usual language.

Mario:

So moved.

David:

Is there a second?

Kevin:

I'll second.

David:

All right. All those in favor, say aye.

Authority members:

Aye.

David:

Aye.

[EXECUTIVE SESSION FROM 4:02 P.M. TO 4:06 P.M.]

David:

Can I have a motion to adjourn?

Catherine:

So moved.

Kevin:

Second.

David:

All right, all those in favor, second that by saying aye.

Authority members:

Aye.

David:

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Aye. All right, thank you, Suzanne, for joining us remotely.

Suzanne:

Thank you.