

REPRESENTATIVE POLICY BOARD
CONSUMER AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 26, 2024
MEETING TRANSCRIPTION

Mark:

I'll call the non-meeting to order. Safety Moment. What are we talking about? It's probably happened... Lapse of attention... You got to read it, everybody. A stumble, now be careful, don't stumble down on a stairway. I've done that. So, be careful, you can read it. Create good housekeeping practices. Reduce wet or slippery surfaces. Avoid creating obstacles in aisles and walkways. Create and maintain proper lighting. Wear proper shoes, and control individual behavior. Has everybody got that? I don't want anybody getting hurt on my watch.

Okay. What's next? Minutes, we can't approve, right? We cannot do that.

Jennifer:

No.

Mark:

We're going to the Lead Service Line Project Update, Consumer Affairs Committee meeting for February 26th. Okay, who's the person doing that? Is that person here?

Rochelle:

Tom Barger.

Tom:

Good afternoon, everybody. How are you?

I just want to give you guys a brief update on what's going on here with the Lead and Copper Rule. So, this will only take a couple of minutes, there's some other folks on the call that can also participate in case there's any questions or clarifications that are needed. I think a lot of this is going to be a refresher, right? I think we've been over the majority of this, just wanted to bring it back up and refresh people's minds. Really want to go over a couple of the areas of focus currently that we're working on. First and foremost, one of the primary responsibilities we have at this point, is the development of what's being referred to as an initial inventory, where we have to identify all service lines in our water distribution system regardless of intent.

So, domestic lines, fire lines, lines to community gardens, other irrigation lines, et cetera. All service lines, regardless of diameter or intended use are involved, they're included. That includes private side services, so that's a new thing for us. We have a lot of good information on utility side, or main to curb services, less so on the private side services, so that's where we're really focusing a lot of our time and effort. On an annual basis, moving forward, we'll have the responsibility to submit this inventory summary to the State Health Department, with an increasing amount of responsibility over time. We also have to include, per regulation, an interactive posting on rwater.com. We're in the process of developing that with CDM Smith, as you may recall. That was part of an earlier conversation.

Couple of things that we're doing to try to build this inventory, is Kevin Watsey and his group have sent out about 12,000 self-identification postcards that include QR codes, so this goes to a lot of the homes in the area, or at least primarily focused on the city of New Haven, and the surrounding area here immediately surrounding New Haven, where we're looking to fill in some of the blanks that are currently out there, asking the consumers to really scan on a QR code and go into the basement, provide us with an update as to what their service lines might be comprised of, including a photo. You know, a picture's worth a thousand words, so we'll bring all that information back into the organization. We're using one of the CDM repositories for that data, so that's working out reasonably well. Could be better, but we will continue to point back at that QR code and develop it further.

We're going to be kicking off, in the very near future, some vacuum excavation work in New Haven. Our contractor is finalizing some locations where we're going to be doing some pointed excavation right over the service lines to put eyes on those services. This will help us verify what we think we know and identify, again, some of the unknowns, some of those blanks that are out there, help us build into this inventory. We're also responding to consumer requests. So, as you can appreciate, that self-ID postcard goes out in the mail, some people can respond to that, they have the wherewithal to understand QR codes and that type of thing, but not everybody does, right? Not everybody has a smartphone, maybe people don't have access to computers.

So, we are receiving customer requests over the phone, primarily into the call center, to say, "Hey, is this something you guys can help us out with?" So, we're in the process of standing up that response. And the last thing, as far as this slide is concerned, we're continuing to engage with our municipal partners, providing them with the information that we're sharing with you this evening, and asking them to help us gather this information to the extent that they can, and support us, because some of their constituents may call them directly and say, "Hey, gee, do you guys know what the water company's up to?" So, we want to make sure that our municipal partners are aware of our efforts. Next slide, Jen.

Stephen:

Hey, Tom, can you remind us of the timelines on this? How much time do you have to complete this, or when do you expect to do it?

Tom:

Yes, a little bit up in the air on that, to be honest. Right now, we're looking at the Lead and Copper Rule revisions for this particular initial inventory. We have an initial submittal date of October 16th, 2024, so in the fall of this year. It doesn't have to be a completed inventory by any means at that point in time, we just have to be able to submit to the satisfaction of the state, the information we have at that point in time. You may have heard or read about the Lead and Copper Rule improvements. That's another set of revisions that are still in play. Those may or may not replace the Lead and Copper Rule revisions, gets a little confusing with all the acronyms. Depending on how that plays out, that may not come into effect until 2027. However, the inventory will continue to be developed. We look at that 36-month period as a little bit of grace, and we'll make the best use of it and continue to build the inventory.

So, those are basically the two dates. October 2024, and in anticipation of an October 2027 date. Different components and pieces of this will fall out in either of those two baskets. A little too early to say definitively which ones will get pushed down the road to 2027. We got fingers and toes crossed. Keeping getting back to the slide deck here. Again, another focus of our activities right now are in the areas of communication. This Lead and Copper Rule, these revisions, these improvements, have any number of communication requirements with the consumer, both in advance and in arrears. So, we

have to pay attention to those. And we are, and what Kevin and his group are working on now is, again, continuing to push the QR code, solicit more return information.

We're looking at these community meetings where we can get out and talk to the public and tell our good story and ask for their assistance. And we're also preparing to share required public education materials. Again, any number of points where public education material requirements have been built in. The consistency here is important, because it's language according to the EPA, and regardless of how you're communicating that, whether it's in a postcard, or a letter, or a billboard, it all has to be consistently spoken of in the same text. So, Kevin's doing a good job at that. Next slide.

I don't know, Rochelle, if you want to speak to any particular components of this slide, I know Rochelle and her team have been working overtime on trying to sort through the finance of all of this. I know it gets very complicated with the different buckets of money that are being made available, but I know, given our configuration as a utility, limitations and challenges is part of that. I know Rochelle has been working with the Connecticut Department of Public Health, specifically the State Revolving Fund folks, to try to sort through this. So, Rochelle, I don't want to take anything away from you. If there's anything here in particular that you feel is appropriate to mention to the committee, please.

Rochelle:

I'll actually mention two things. I think one of the key things that's important, it's very clear it has been since the beginning of this, that we will only get the grants if we do the full line replacement. Good news though on that is, since we have already gotten out of our system on the utility side, all the known lead lines, we will get credit for that replacement. But it's clear that to get the grant, we have to do the full line. The other thing that I just want to mention about the IUP is, the Intended Use Plan that DWSRF publishes, and we have provided testimony, and Jeff, we appreciate your support. I know you've also provided testimony.

Jeff:

Yes.

Rochelle:

And that's appreciated, because I do think that, with the current grant levels, and we realize that the grants, they do need to be capped, but they are relatively small, all relative to our best estimate of the project. So, that's really just some of the key things I want to mention.

Tom:

Okay, any questions so far? Anything that I've mentioned or Rochelle?

Mark:

I don't have a question, but as an organization, I think that we really should get publicity out. I know what you're doing, talking to the town leaders and such, but I think we should make... In other words, when this starts hitting, people are going to say, "Well, why is the bill so high?" I think we should really get it out there, saying, "This is coming, this is coming, this is coming." If we have to even repeat it every month. It's kind of like when you drive up to a street and you stick your back hoe in the ground and nobody called the neighbors to tell them what you were doing, they all go, "What are you doing?" And

you're cutting trees down, stuff like that. So, if they have it as best you can get, it's still, no matter how much publicity you put out, there's going to be somebody that says, "What? I never heard of it."

But I think that, really, we should go to that side and us being the Consumer Affairs Committee, we're going to get hit with the complaints on this. And I think that, as much publicity as we can get out until we start digging in the ground more, that should be not a top priority, but should definitely be a priority going forward. And also, what do you mean the whole line has to be replaced in order to get full funding? Does that mean from the street to the house, or into the house?

Rochelle:

It means we have to do the customer side. If we've already done our side, we will get credit for it, so that's good, but we're not going to get grants unless we do the full line, both sides, to the extent that we haven't already done the utility side.

Mark:

I just remember being in New Haven and water bubbling up from the street from my parents' house, and the water line was broken, it was 100 years old, whatever it was. And we had to call North Haven Sewer, it was a lot of money, and they replaced the line all the way from the street into the house. Is that what you're talking about?

Rochelle:

I would say, and others can chime in, but from the curb to the...

Mark:

To the box inside.

Rochelle:

Yes, to the box. Does not include the plumbing inside the home-

Sunny:

Correct.

Rochelle:

... but it does include the customer side of the line.

Sunny:

It's not downstream of the meter, Mark, right? So, we will replace the portions that we typically maintain. So, according to the rules and regs, the customer actually owns from the meter all the way to the street.

Mark:

Okay.

Sunny:

But in terms of rules and regs, we actually maintain the portion from the water main to the curb valve. But in this case, when we mean both sides, we mean both sides of the curb valve, to the street as well as to the meter. Anything downstream of the meter is the homeowner's responsibility.

Mark:

So, that's a new thing. In other words, if somebody, like I said, my parents' house, the pipe broke, they were responsible for replacing that. I remember that the water company came and North Haven Sewer shoved the pipe through the thing and got it through, they [inaudible 00:15:05], and that's how they did it. But we were responsible for that. And you're saying now that, to get full funding, we're going to have to take that responsibility on?

Sunny:

Correct.

Rochelle:

If it's lead. This is related only to lead lines, I just want to clarify.

Sunny:

Right.

Mark:

If it's lead. So, what will we be replacing? I'm a little confused. What is lead? Isn't the lead from... Or is there a portion of lead that only goes to the pipe and that becomes copper? Or from our main line to the... You know what I'm trying to say? Isn't it all lead? If it's lead there, is it lead right into the house?

Sunny:

Right. So, the pipe we are trying to locate is actually, just going back to the earlier slides that Tom mentioned, what we are trying to even identify is the material of construction of the pipe. So, say, prior to 1980s, lead was okay as a service line material. But, I would say, post-1980s EPA's, regulations came into play, and all of them were not to be lead. But in our cases, we have been actually regional as being the New Haven Water Company was there. Right from 1940s onwards, there has been a concerted effort to replace lead lines, and we also did not allow lead service lines to be installed. But given the neighborhoods are extremely, I would say, East Haven, West Haven, and New Haven, they're all pretty old. In terms of numbers, we still have unknowns, as we call it.

So, we do not know exactly what the material of construction of the service line is. So, the inventory exercise is to identify the service line which is made of lead, or copper, or plastic, or any other materials that could be there. And sometimes, even if it is galvanized iron, if it was actually upstream, there was a lead service line feeding from the water main, it could very well come under replacement. So, the effort is to identify the material of construction of the service line half inch one, and service lines that goes into the home itself. Anything downstream of the meter, which is the internal plumbing of the house, we are not going to look at. So, we are actually looking at the pipe itself, Mark. So, the service line itself.

Mark:

If the pipe is not lead, from the house to the street, and we dig it, what is lead? Is there any lead that is ours that goes to the regular pipe? That's what I'm trying to get at. Is it lead all the way to the house, or just a little piece of lead? There could be just a little piece of lead?

Sunny:

See, when it is a lead service line, it could run all the way up to the curb. So, as Rochelle mentioned, we have actually replaced our side of it, as we keep finding lead service lines, for the long, I would say, about three, four decades or so.

Mark:

So, in other words, we've been replacing from our main to their lead line?

Sunny:

To the curb valve, actually. So, to what we are responsible for.

Mark:

I got you.

Sunny:

This is the first time where we are looking at, because the EPA's regs are been there for the last, I would say, after Flint, Michigan, now we are looking at the homeowner's side. Typically, we would only look at the utility side, and most utilities would do that, because we are not responsible from the curb to the meter, actually, that's the homeowner's responsibility. Because of the LCRR, it makes us to look at the homeowner's side.

Rochelle:

Right, that's a key change about this regulation.

Mark:

But we have, in the past, been changing from our pipe to their pipe, which is lead? Or we've replaced that with plastic or whatever we use, right?

Sunny:

Yes, we would typically replace it with copper. So Yes, it might very well turn out that most of the pipes, I would say, the newer buildings and all that may turn out to be very well copper. So, that's the effort that we are doing the inventory framework.

Mark:

Okay. Thank you very much.

Sunny:

Sure.

Naomi:

Okay, Tom, I have a question. When you speak about these community meetings and things, who's going to be behind that, getting that organized?

Tom:

We had met with the New Haven Health Department, and Director Bond had put us in touch with the different community management teams in the city. And I know Kevin Watsey has been reaching out to each of the... And I think there's around a dozen or so, and reaching out to each one of those and trying to set those meetings up. And we've had one so far in the Dixwell neighborhood, and we're continuing to try to schedule meetings with the remainder at this point in time. So, we'll continue to solicit that type of meeting.

Naomi:

Okay. My other question-

Sunny:

If I may add-

Naomi:

Go ahead.

Sunny:

Yes, if I may add, Naomi. So, this is going to be a multipronged approach. So, as Tom said, I think even earlier, David and Larry has been meeting many of the top, I would say, the mayors and the town councilmen and the alders and all that, for the various municipalities. Tom and Kevin have been instrumental in making those connections with the Health Departments, and we've been sending out letters, and also, we have actually sent out correspondence for their vetting of the document before we even send it out to the customers.

With the New Haven, what are trying to do is, we are trying to establish more community level meetings, because in other cities and things, which was more effective, was using churches and pastors and things of that sort, where it's much more effective. They hear from somebody whom they respect and trust. So, that's been an extremely effective model in other cities. So, this is going to be a multipronged approach. There is no one size fits all, per se. So, that's how it's going to be, because as Mark mentioned, the more awareness that you bring to the customers, it's better off.

Stephen:

Sunny, what percent of the water company side lines might be lead that are still there?

Sunny:

Right. So, right now I think we have, say, a 100,000, 120,000 meters, so to speak. So, out of that, at this point of time, on the customer side, we feel we have only unknowns, as we call it. We do not exactly know what they are. So, the unknowns are close to 23,000. Out of the unknowns, based on some percentages from what we see across the country and the various cities, 20 to 30% of them may turn

out to be lead, as what we infer. So, out of 23,000, if you apply 20%, it could be about 5,000. If you apply 30%, it could be about 7,500.

Stephen:

Yes, I was asking on the Water side. How much do you think is left of lead that the water company, from the main to the curb box?

Sunny:

Right. We are expecting unknowns at this point of time based on the service records that we have. We have close to 2,000 plus unknowns on the utility side.

Stephen:

Okay.

Rochelle:

I will just add, not to complicate this more, but part of our project and our estimation includes the replacement of any remaining goosenecks.

Mark:

What are the goosenecks made of?

Rochelle:

They're made of lead. Is that right, Tom?

Tom:

Yes, that's correct. Yes, goosenecks are lead.

Mark:

Okay, just wanted to know.

Tom:

Yes.

Rochelle:

And those we've also been replacing as they've been identified.

Sunny:

The goosenecks are upstream of the curb valve, between the water main and the curb wall.

Tom:

Any additional questions? We just really have one more slide to go through. If not, we'll move along to the last slide. So, just wanted to focus for a couple of minutes on the vacuum excavation process. I don't

know, you may or may not be familiar with this, but essentially, this is a focused excavation of a relatively small cylinder. If you can kind of picture that, it's a maybe 12 or 15 inch across hole that's done using a vacuum, high-pressure airline and vacuum, to excavate a cylinder right over the service line so that you can then put eyes on it, you can take a look and get a much better appreciation for what that line is. And we're going to be doing several 100 of those in the city of New Haven, and then we'll build out. All of the other communities will build out over a period of time.

But it's our hope, by gathering information like this, and we're going to be working within the public right of way, we're not going to be doing any type of excavation on anybody's private property, we're not going to be moving people's pavers out of the way, we're not going to be disturbing landscaping. We're being very selective where we're gathering this information and what we hope to do, is to gather representative data that we can then apply in larger scale to the neighborhoods in which this work was done. So, you don't necessarily need to go to every single home and do this type of excavation. You use representative properties and then you help to allow that information to then develop over time, and it gives you some predictability as to really what you can expect to find. So, that's the theory behind vacuum excavation. It's a fairly popular and well-used option.

We're using a New Haven contractor, McVac. Their yard is over on Quinnipiac Avenue. CDM will be our inspector on that job. Again, we'll be initiating in New Haven and expanding as we gain some experience with this, where we find that this will be moving more rapidly, providing us with the information that's important for us. And as we've said here a couple of times, we're really going to be focusing on identifying of those unknown services, both utility, from main to curb valve, and on, I say here private side, but it's not going to be on private property, it's going to be on the house side of the curb valve, which remains within the municipal right of way.

That will provide us with validation points on the utility side of the curb valve, homeowner side of the curb valve, and then we're also going to see if we can, with permission, gain access to the basement of the home and be able to determine what the nature of the line penetrating the foundation is. And that will be the three points of validation that the State of Connecticut says will be required by every utility in documenting service line compositions. Any follow up on vacuum excavation? Yes, Steve?

Stephen:

You said you were cooperating with other water companies?

Tom:

Well, in the sense that we always talk with our peers to see what others are doing, so we're trying to learn from those that have gone before us, and we're trying to work collaboratively with other utilities in terms of sharing information, what works, what doesn't work, those types of things.

Stephen:

Yes. Are you kind of where everybody else is, generally? Or would you say you're ahead in what you've done?

Tom:

I think for utilities our size, Steve, in many ways we're a little bit ahead of what our peers are doing. I think Rochelle had mentioned that we've been removing utility-side lead services for decades. That's just been a normal course of business for us since the 1970s. That's put us in a much better position

today than the utilities that didn't do any of that type of work. And certainly, we're well advanced above and beyond the vast majority of the Municipal Water Departments that don't necessarily have the experience or financial wherewithal to kind of go down this road proactively.

Stephen:

Yes.

Tom:

So, I think we're in pretty good shape.

Stephen:

In that vein, does the RWA construction crew do all the replacing? Do you farm any of this out?

Tom:

Well, I think I'm going to let others... Yes, Sunny, if you want to chime in on that, I know there's some specific issues with that, Steve.

Sunny:

Yes. We're not doing any replacements at this time, Steve. So, at this point, it's just the inventory portions of it, which is due October 2024. So, the replacements will be done once we find the lead service lines, then the replacements come in. But just to answer your question, right-

Stephen:

No, but you said over the years you've been replacing them.

Sunny:

Yes, that's on the utility side. We have been using our crews to do it, exactly right.

Stephen:

Yes, that's what I'm talking about. Yes.

Sunny:

Absolutely, Yes.

Stephen:

And your crews do all that work?

Sunny:

Correct. Correct. But going-

Stephen:

And would... Go ahead, I'm sorry.

Sunny:

Yes, going forward, for the customer side or the private side lines, we intend to use outside contractors in a competitive bidding process, because when we use state funds or federal funds, we are supposed to, I would say, competitively put the bids out so contractors can bid for it. So, that's a requirement of SRF funds, so that is absolutely required. So, what we will do is, for the future replacement of service lines on the customer side, as well as on the utility side, we might actually take other contractors to help out. It's because of the funding issues as well as, I don't think we'll have enough crews to even go and do the replacements, because it'll be pretty fast-paced and we need to mobilize across all 15 towns.

Stephen:

So, the way this is structured, it's not the homeowner, but you'll be responsible for actually doing that replacement work.

Sunny:

The Authority will be responsible, but as with any other bidding that we do, we will actually bid the contracts out and have contractors bid for it. And maybe we will shortlist at least two or three contractors so they can actually go and work on different towns. But we are also looking at non-invasive methodologies, like pipe pulling or pipe bursting, where we are not going to open up lawns and all that stuff so it causes a lot more complications. So, there is many things that are evolving, Steve. Our primary, I would say, target for this time is to focus on the October 2024 deadline, and try to get as much of the unknowns to either turn out to be lead or not to be lead so we can actually file the inventory to the best of our abilities.

Stephen:

Yes. I manage the program to replace septic systems in individual homes, so I know what you're going to run into.

Sunny:

I know. It's not, I would say, easy. You're exactly right.

Stephen:

It's daunting.

Sunny:

It is.

Stephen:

So, you're expecting also to get some sort of funding for this, and if not, is the homeowner going to be responsible, to some extent, financially as well?

Rochelle:

No, that's the issue. We won't get grants if there is any customer-side funding from the customer themselves. That's been made clear to us from our initial discussions with Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

Stephen:

Yes, but if the requirement is that this line's replaced, and it's your responsibility to do it, you incur the cost, correct?

Rochelle:

Yes.

Stephen:

So, how are you going to recover that?

Rochelle:

We're going to recover as we did build in, as best we knew it, the estimates, even in our tenure model, this is going to become part of our capital program, and that's why we're really pushing and Jeff and others' involvement to support our case and our testimony with DWSRF. The fact that the grants are capped at relatively a low level, means there's going to be more burden on the customers. Good news from that perspective, I didn't mention earlier, we do have support through DWSRF that will be able to phase our program, and we'll be able to re-qualify for the grants for each phase of the program. So, that's going to help, but still, the grants are going to pale in comparison to the cost.

Stephen:

Yes, but there's a lot of customers that aren't going to have any work done, but are going to end up paying for this as well.

Rochelle:

Yes. That's how rates are set, right?

Stephen:

Yes.

Sunny:

What we are trying to do, Steve, is if you go back to the earlier slide, Jen? I think even this one, if you look at it, there is, I would say, talk about that project subsidy is 75% with a max of \$5 million in accordance with the DCAP. So, what we are trying to do, even for this vacuum excavation, we actually went through an extensive exercise of even CDM Smith, plus McVac, all these things we went through are very elaborate. RFQ, RFP kind of, I would say, qualifying three people, and then choosing the best in terms of technical and the price. And we ran through DWSRF and DPH so that we can qualify for grants. So, just with what Rochelle said, even with New Haven, West Haven, East Haven, Derby, and so on, we are targeting economically disadvantaged communities so we can maximize the grant portion.

So, I would say Rochelle touched upon it, but just to keep the capital expense to whatever extent we can optimize it, we are trying to see how much better we can get on the grants. How long will this grants program continue? We don't know, but we would like to keep, I would say, getting the grants up to \$5 million each year. But again, we are looking at many different methods to cut the capital spending to the point where, if it is non-invasive, maybe it could be cheaper. So, there's a lot of things we are looking at so that the end result is, the total capital program is since becoming as expensive to the rate payer, ultimately.

Naomi:

Sunny, when he went back, I think Tom said something about the privates. Who are the privates? An example of someone. Are you talking businesses, or apartment complexes that are private?

Sunny:

I think the term was private, but it is actually customer side, I think. The private is actually the customer side. He kind of clarified it. So, anything downstream of the curb valve, it's classified as private. You can call it customer side. It is something that the utility doesn't typically maintain.

Naomi:

Okay. Then one other question is, I guess we're all representatives for our various towns, will we have anything to do with this project whatsoever? Are we going to be in the loop or out of the loop, or what's going to be our actual...

Sunny:

Very much. Very much. So, we would love to be part of it, because that'll be the biggest advantage for the Authority.

Naomi:

So, are they going to plug us in someplace down the road?

Sunny:

Correct. And if you look at, I would say, the letters that were sent, I think typically Kevin Watsey copies the RPB member of the town when we send the draft letters for the mayors. And if the first alderman has to review it, typically the RPB member is also part of that list when we send it to the health director and alder. So, perhaps I think, even for New Haven, you may have seen it, but it was a long time back, so it went back, I would say, maybe 12 months ago.

Naomi:

Oh, okay.

Sunny:

Yes, so I think the first correspondence that went out, the draft we presented to the city of New Haven sometime in Feb-March of 2023, then they blessed it around the end of March 2023. And further subsequent to it, we also sent it to all the other towns for them to review the draft correspondence before it went to the customer.

Naomi:

Oh, I remember that. Right, okay.

Sunny:

Right. It's a continuous exercise that we do so that all the RPB members are involved at the same time. We would certainly like your help to, I would say, communicate this better, and to make everybody aware of it. Everybody reads it, but not necessarily everybody understands it.

Mark:

That's exactly what I've been talking about, is that that's what we have to do as the company, otherwise we're going to get a lot of back in the face. We're going to get a lot in the face. So, we all have to know and they have to keep talking to the people that this is coming, this is coming, this is coming. And build your arc, so to speak. But anyways, thanks for the great report and I think we're going to move on. Does anybody have any other questions?

Stephen:

I just have one. I have one other question, Mark. I don't mean to beat a dead horse, I'm just curious about rate making here. It seems to me that, if someone doesn't get anything replaced here, unlike other capital projects, they're not getting anything out of this. Do you know what I mean?

Rochelle:

So, Steve, can I just answer that? So, we're required, under our general bond resolution, to treat each customer in the same class the same. So, we don't do rate making by individual customer, and that's under our general bond resolution. So, that means all residential are treated the same, all commercials. That's a key foundation in utility rate making.

Stephen:

Yes. Well, I understand that. If you, in the capital projects, improve your system somehow in general, there's a benefit to everybody. With this, if there's nothing to be gained from them, it just seems a little different. If I'm wrong, I'm wrong, I don't know. I'm just curious.

Jim:

Steve-

Mark:

Yes, it seems like-

Jim:

... one thing we considered is that, for the past 30 years, Regional Water Authority has been doing due diligence and removing lead goosenecks out of the system. So, all those goosenecks that we've been replacing, and the service lines that we have been replacing, that was part of the rates for all customers. So, we're just continuing on with that, although now we have a timeline.

Stephen:

Yes, okay.

Rochelle:

Well, I think the other difference, to your point, this, I think until very recently, it wasn't envisioned that the utility would be responsible for the customer side. And that's a unique aspect of this.

Sunny:

Right. From what's said in the front end-

Mark:

Is that a definite right now, or is that still maybe turned around? That they're going to be responsible for customer side?

Rochelle:

As of now, it's a definite and possibly getting even a specific time frame under this LCRI.

Sunny:

Correct.

Mark:

Okay.

Sunny:

Yes. So, the EPA might very well mandate the utilities to replace both sides of it. At that point, the utilities are left with no other options, so it becomes... The way that, from what we hear, talking to the Connecticut DPH, as well as to the EPA folks, the general, entire, I would say, the regulations are moving is, they would like to pretty much make, whether it's a big city, small city, municipality, it doesn't matter what it is, they're going to make the regulation so stringent that, eventually, both sides are going to be taken over and replaced by...

When I say taken over, just the responsibility of replacing the service lines by the utility. At this point of time, they're not, I would say. We are bringing it up just to, going back to Tom's earlier point, the LCRI, which was just, I would say, came out maybe a few months ago, there is almost 140,000 comments given by the industry professionals, American Water Works Association utilities. So, all of them have expressed the same concern as you have, Steve. Who's going to pay for it? So, you're making us do it, who's going to pay for it, right?

Mark:

Another unfunded mandate.

Stephen:

It seems like the end result is compliance to a regulation, it's not service.

Mark:

That's right.

Stephen:

I understand where it's going, but I'm just curious.

Mark:

When they're going to replace that pipe, are they going to dig it up, or are we going to come up with some kind of thing where we'll be able to shove a pipe through the old pipe?

Sunny:

I think that's exactly what I was mentioning. Maybe I would say I didn't use the exact terms as you did, but I think that's close enough, Mark. Close enough.

Mark:

I thought we would do that. It'd be cheaper that way, right?

Sunny:

Yes, it's non-invasive, so I think the people-

Mark:

Non-invasive. Oh, you said non-invasive. That was it. Invasive plants, non-invasive, but they know with me.

Sunny:

Right. I think pretty much you captured the gist of it.

Rochelle:

It looks like Suzanne has a question.

Naomi:

There's a hand up.

Rochelle:

Suzanne has a question.

Suzanne:

Yes, thanks. I just wanted to mention, I know that it's a hefty lift, and I know that it feels like it's compliance to regulation, which it in fact is, but underneath that regulation is the desire to make sure that all lines leading to the consumption of our water are free from lead. So, that is, in itself, the service. I just wanted to make sure we revisited that piece of it.

Mark:

That's a good point. Good point. Thank you very much, everybody. That's the best discussion we've had on this topic yet, I think. Thank you very much. Okay, do we have a quorum yet? Jennifer?

Jennifer:

No, we don't. Nope.

Mark:

Okay, so where do we go? We got to listen to Mr. Donofrio now.

Jennifer:

Yes.

Mark:

We can't vote on this bill either.

Jennifer:

Nope.

Mark:

Okay, Mr. Donofrio, you might not get paid this month.

Jeff:

In terms of the OCA, the OCA was starting to write his memo to the RPB last week, in anticipation of the RPB scheduling a hearing on the authority's application for a chemical improvements project at the Lake Whitney Treatment Plant. When the OCA received in his inbox an application that apparently has bumped to the front of the line, potential acquisition of assets of Target 3. So, that the OCA received after signing the protective order, the confidential information, and right now, the OCA is looking at that material in anticipation of having to issue interrogatories pretty quickly. No consumer complaints. A couple of consumers reach out to me with various questions about items that don't amount to a complaint, as much as they do information and playing matchmaker with finding the right person at the RWA to answer questions. But no current complaints in my office or community.

Mark:

Thank you. Listen, Jennifer, how many people do we have here? We have Steve, me...

Jennifer:

And Naomi.

Mark:

Naomi, that's it? I thought there was somebody else here. Charles is here, isn't he? Charles?

Jennifer:

Yes.

Mark:

So, that's four, that's not enough?

Charles:

Here.

Jennifer:

Well, Charles isn't on the committee.

Stephen:

He's not on the committee.

Mark:

Oh, I thought he was on the committee. Oh. Thank you for coming to our meeting, Charles. Sorry about that. All right, so how do we get Jeff paid?

Jeff:

No worries. Next month.

Stephen:

Jeff, I'll give you a loan, Jeff. I know you're good for it.

Jeff:

No, no, we're good.

Jennifer:

I could always revise the agenda for the special meeting on Wednesday and add that to it if you want?

Jeff:

Please don't.

Mark:

Oh Yes, go ahead, why don't you do that?

Jeff:

Don't worry about it.

Mark:

Do that. That sounds good. If that's okay? I want to make sure he gets paid. If you ever saw his office, man, he's got a big rent over there. So, I don't want him to get thrown out. But anyways, if we could do that, Jennifer, I'd be for that.

Jennifer:

Okay.

Mark:

All right, listen, are you going to be coming to that meeting, Jeff?

Jeff:

Yes.

Mark:

Okay. Okay, so we can't do anything else, right?

Stephen:

Nope, that's it.

Mark:

Upcoming meetings I can talk about is February 28th, the special joint meeting, I hope everybody can make that. That's all hybrid, right? Or you can go to it too?

Jennifer:

Yes, it's hybrid, or you can go in person or by Teams.

Mark:

Okay. And the next meeting is Teams only, and that's on March 18th. Day after St. Patrick's Day. Okay, I I don't even need a motion to adjourn, let's just say goodbye. Thanks a lot, guys, for coming.