

SOUTH CENTRAL CONNECTICUT REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY

JANUARY 26, 2023

MEETING TRANSCRIPTION

David:

It's 12:30 and I'll call the Regional Water Authority's January 26th meeting to order. I would note first item on the agenda is a safety moment. Liz, did you want to do a little brief rundown on this?

Liz:

So snow shoveling safety where most people won't have a problem shoveling snow. They can put some people at risk for a heart attack, so we have to be mindful about lifting and strains.

Luckily, we haven't had any snow, so do not shovel after eating or while smoking. Take it slow and stretch. Shovel only fresh, powdery snow. It's lighter. Push the snow rather than lifting. If you do lift it, use a small shovel. Lift with your legs, not your back. Do not work to the point of exhaustion. My suggestion would be call the guy to do it.

David:

Well, I'll take issue with that one thing, Liz, thank you for that. And that is when you said it's good that we haven't had snow yet. I disagree. I live in New England and I love having snow, although some years it's too much.

We'll move on to public comment. Are there any members of the public here, Jennifer, that you know?

Jennifer:

No, there's none here.

David:

Then we will move on. We are ready to recess as the Authority and meet as the Pension & Benefit Committee. Who would like to move that we do that?

Catherine:

So moved.

Kevin:

Second.

David:

And there's a move and a second. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

I heard all four voices of the members present. Now we are in the Pension & Benefit Committee. Suzanne, it's all yours. Thank you.

[PENSION & BENEFIT COMMITTEE MEETS FROM 12:32 P.M. TO 1:07 P.M.]

Suzanne:

Okay, so we are out of the Pension & Benefit Committee, and I'll turn it back over to you, David. Thanks very much.

David:

Okay, thank you, Suzanne. Very good to have them back. And at least like you said, it's better news, so that's good than what we had last time. I would note that Tony joined us during that portion of the meeting. So thank you Tony for making it here.

We certainly wish you the best getting your strength back. We'll move on to consent calendar. What's your pleasure with that?

Catherine:

David, I move approval of the consent calendar or the [inaudible 00:39:20].

Suzanne:

I second, David.

David:

Thank you. Are there points of clarification regarding any of the items?

Seeing none, sensing you're ready to vote. All those in favor signify by saying I.

I saw it or heard hands and voices, so I think we have a unanimous vote.

Next item is finance and we have some type B three amendments. So Rochelle, did you want to give us a little explanation of that in addition to your memo?

Rochelle:

Sure. So prior capital spending updates, we had broached the subject about putting monies into our reserve due primarily to external factors that are impacting some of our more critical large projects.

And we had talked about not wanting to do it too early and making sure that we had good estimates as to what we needed to put into the reserve. So we're at the point that we do want to propose amendments to go into reserve. And we also have one amendment, I'll talk to that one first, on a project that is actually accelerating. It's actually head of schedule, it's our water treatment valve replacement program.

And so the first proposed amendment is to move monies from the derby tank. That, as you know, has been a bit delayed, although it's now progressing. Move monies from that project into the valve replacement project. And this would impact fiscal 23.

And then basically in fiscal 24, because there was money in the fiscal 24, part of our five year capital plan, for the valve replacement program, we'll be able to replenish the budget for the derby tank.

So that's the first item that's moving 1,000,195 from Ansonia-Derby project into the water treatment plant valve replacement program.

All the other projects are moving monies into the reserve, and that includes the Lake Whitney Dam improvement project. That's primarily due to the additional design work that is required for that project.

So we're going to move 700,000 into the reserve account. That's what's being proposed. The Lake Gaillard water treatment plant, clarifiers and recycled building improvements, there has been delays in that project relative to some initial delays relative to the approach to the bidding and now material deliveries. So we want to move 2.6 million of that project into the reserve.

The Seymour Wellfield generator replacement project. This project, there's really two things that are impacting this. One is the lead time for generators, but also from a positive perspective, we got a recent notice towards the end of December that this project was approved for congressional directed spending, it will be partially funded. That's a grant.

And as we're going through the process, there is a protocol that we need to follow. So we definitely want to avail ourselves of that congressional directive spending. So that coupled with the lead times on generators, we're proposing to move 550,000 into the reserve.

Also, the Lake Gaillard water treatment plant, HVAC improvement project. This was also recently approved for congressional directed spending. We are actually going through this process for our fiscal 22 award that we got. This is also impacting the timing of this project, and we definitely want to avail ourselves of this money.

There was also some initial delays in the approach to bidding for this project. So we're proposing to move 1.8 million into the reserve. The derby tank still has a balance that we'd like to move into the reserve of just under 1.2 million, it's 1,000,185. Then also pump station generator replacement, this is also being impacted by lead times on generators. So we want to move 525,000.

Really what we're doing for these critical projects is to make sure that we have the money available for these critical projects that are underway. That we're not using the money, just moving money or spending money to hit our target, but really wanting to put the monies aside to make sure they're available.

We did anticipate this as it relates to our pending rate application. So we have two resolutions for approval within the memo.

David:

Are there questions?

Suzanne:

Rochelle, just a simple summary is in this last part of the resolve, we have some delays in projects, we have some alternative funding, and we also have... I think one thing got done early is why we're moving all of this money.

Rochelle:

Correct, yes.

Suzanne:

Okay. All right. Thanks very much.

David:

All right. Any other questions or comments?

Suzanne:

Would you like both moved at the same time, David?

David:

Yes, I think so.

Suzanne:

So I'll make that motion. We resolve that the Authority approves the transfer of 1.195 million from the Ansonia-Derby tank capital budget account to the water treatment plant valve replacement program.

And then secondly that the authority approves the transfer of 700,000 from the Lake Whitney Dam spillway improvements capital budget account, 2.6 million from Lake Gaillard water treatment, and recycled building improvements. And 550 from the Seymour Wellfield generator replacement account, 1.8 million from the Lake Gaillard water treatment plant, and 1.185 from Ansonia- Derby tank capital budget account. And \$525,000 from the pump station generator replacements all into the reserve account.

David:

All right. Motion's been made. Is there a second?

Kevin:

Second.

David:

All right. Any further discussion?

Thank you, Kevin. And I saw Catherine's hand up too.

Catherine:

I was muted. It's fine.

David:

Okay. Any other questions or comments?

All right. Those in favor signify by saying aye.

I believe we have all of us here.

Suzanne:

And may I ask just David, are we seeing any improvement in the speed at which materials, supplies, labor, whatever it is that's holding up projects, is moving along?

Sunny:

Yeah, I can take that question, Suzanne. Yeah, certainly. I think in certain cases we do see some improvements, but in other cases, like the generators, the control panels, anything electrical instrumentation related, when it is microchips and all that, so there is delays to the [inaudible 00:47:22].

Probably more so than what it was earlier. But for pipes and fittings and valves, we are seeing marginal improvements, for sure. It has been I would say both cases. So there is some light at the end of the tunnel, depending on I would say what you're procuring. But in other cases, it's actually gotten worse. That's why I think one of the cases that Rochelle touched upon was to see the [inaudible 00:47:47] valves. We tried to switch manufacturers, and after consulting with operations, the originally specified manufacturer was going to get delayed significantly. We switched manufacturers and that valve was available on a much faster basis. So that helped, I would say, in condensing the timeline from almost I would say two years to a year. We are evaluating these options as we continuously seek to improve the schedules.

Suzanne:

Thank you.

Rochelle:

Thanks for the approval.

David:

You're welcome. Any other questions?

All right, we'll move into business updates. I don't know, is there anything new with COVID or are we ready to go to the business highlights?

Liz:

Yeah, it's status quo.

David:

Okay. Having said that, this is probably an [inaudible 00:48:43] time to talk about this. Mario and I have been talking about meetings, whether we should be going to a hybrid or staying as a all Zoom, Teams meetings remote. And the executive committee of the RPB has recommended that they go to a hybrid format starting with their February meeting.

And I'm going to suggest that we have our meetings going forward, at least for the time being, we're certainly going to monitor COVID, but we have them in-person with the ability to log in if needed. If somebody is away on business or pleasure or duty and can still Zoom in, that would be great.

We've actually done that in practice for years, had people call in, but now we have better technology to be able to Zoom in as needed. But I'd like them to essentially be considered in-person meetings unless COVID rears its head again. And again, feel free to Zoom in or Teams in if you need to because you're way of business. It's more important to have you be part of the conversation than not at all.

But it would be nice if we could move to in-person meeting, starting with the February meeting.

Suzanne:

So David, I'm not opposed to any of the above. I just was very curious. I heard that for the first time at the consumer affairs committee meeting, which I'll report on a little bit, but I'm very surprised at our timing in terms of going into in-person in February. Just for whatever that's worth.

David:

I'm sorry.

Suzanne:

No, I just think everybody's locked in their houses. More people than I have ever known are contracting COVID in particular. And I think it's a curious timeframe. I'm not sure why now, but I'm happy to truck in.

David:

Well, like I say, I think there was not as big a crisis as could have been or was possibly expected by some after the holidays when people co-mingled from different families and whatnot in terms of the difficulty and the severity of people getting it. And I didn't want to have our smaller group not at least be respectful of the fact that the larger group of the RPB is now going to be meeting in person.

Although it's a hybrid, like I said, I know some of their members are going to Zoom in, they're just not going to want to come to a meeting. And that's fine. That's certainly an option here.

Like I say, they will just be more liberal about the fact that we always had call in availability for meetings anyway for our group, because it's easier to manage.

So we'll see how that works, and those who can make it in person, make it in person, those who want to continue with the Zoom and Teams meetings, formats, we'll keep doing that. So it's an option to come into 90 Sergeant Drive.

All right. With that monthly business highlights. Larry, any additions to your?

Larry:

Yes.

David:

[inaudible 00:52:03] what you want to verbally talk about.

Larry:

Just two quick additions to the memo. On the commercial business progress, I'm pleased to say that Dennis and Rochelle worked together so that we have provided two term sheets to two plumbing companies that we've been in conversations with. We have reported on that at prior meetings, but we are at the term sheet stage that they have accepted.

So due diligence is beginning, and hope to bring that to the authority in the next month or two for review. Then of course, both of those are large enough that they will require RPB approval in both cases.

Secondly, I reported that we had an all employee meeting, had about 150, 160 employees show up at the Long Club where we were able to give not only a year in review, a calendar year review of major accomplishments of the various divisions in their departments. But we also had a fascinating presentation by a futurist by the name of Michael Rogers.

He has recently served as the futurist in residence for the New York Times. He was a keynote speaker at this January 13 event that I mentioned. And he also wrote a book that you might be interested in looking at called Email from the Future, Notes from 2084. So that was interesting.

But the part that I found very interesting is that he contended that the RWA's future is all about sustainability and collaboration, including such things as you would expect, managing water sustainably, encouraging urban and suburban spaces be developed for conservation purposes, focusing on value through customer participation, and balanced pricing products and services. And partnering with other organizations to provide services and shared resources.

Those are themes that I'm seeing crop up from time to time in water publications. So I thought it was an interesting prediction for RWA between now and 2030, early 2030. So that's all I wanted to add to my monthly business report.

David:

Are there any questions of that or the items in the report. Catherine?

Catherine:

Yeah, I do have a question. Maybe this is for Rochelle, maybe this is for Larry. First of all, let me just say congratulations on the work that was done in order to get the Congressional Directed Spending award. I think that's fantastic. And I'm just one, curious as to whether there are concerns about timing of getting that money because of the issues with the debt ceiling.

Rochelle:

It should not be, because these projects are actually in the appropriations bill. And I also think just based on the timing that we're going to need to go through it will be fine.

Catherine:

Okay, thanks.

David:

Okay. Any other questions or comments regarding the report?

All right, then we'll move to reports of the RPB committee meetings. Oh, I can close mine because you have yours open.

Good. All right. So in January, Tony, were you able to get to the Finance committee meeting on January 9th? I don't know if he has the microphone on. No.

Rochelle:

He's on mute.

David:

I see him now, his mic is off.

All right. Well, Larry, do you recall, or Rochelle, do you recall what their topic was?

Rochelle:

Larry, do you want to speak to it?

Larry:

No, go ahead, Rochelle. That's fine.

Rochelle:

So one of the things that happened at the January 9th meeting is we came back to the committee with their requested revisions to the RPB dashboard. I believe tonight they're going to make a recommendation to the full RPB to accept that. I think you were all on some emails about what those additional items are. So that was discussed in January.

David:

Okay, thank you. Land Use Committee. Catherine.

Catherine:

I am embarrassed to say that I was unable to attend that meeting, but with Jennifer's assistance, I did have a chance to review the video of the meeting.

Well, I got stuck in another meeting. I couldn't get out.

David:

Oh, it's interesting you took the video of the meeting and took your job that seriously. Thank you so much.

Catherine:

Yeah, so I reviewed the video of the meeting and I also talked to Peter. So I can give you a report on what happened at the meeting even though I didn't attend.

David:

That'd be great.

Catherine:

Following the safety moment and the approval of the minutes, there was a really good presentation given by Lisa de Francesco or de Francesco, I'm not sure if I'm pronouncing her name correctly, on environmental education. It was really, truly fascinating what she is doing and has been doing for 22 years with the RWA.

This is very impressive. I will say that there were a lot of comments by members of the land use committee indicating their support for the environmental education program and strong recommendations that we consider budgeting additional money to expand this program.

The next part of the meeting was the typical comprehensive update given by John Triana. There are lots of things in there, I'm not sure which to highlight. There's movement on the forestry update. There is movement with respect to the disposition of the rental houses.

There continues to be some challenges with respect to encroachments and also people dumping on the property, which led to a significant discussion about trespassing and the need to expedite as much as possible the building of the police force.

Sunny was really helpful in giving an outline of the progress that management has made in building the police force. But of the two issues that came up the strongest that I saw in reviewing the video, this committee is adamant about dealing with this trespassing problem which is building the police force and strongly recommends improving or at least funding the expansion of the educational program. That's about it, unless anyone has any questions.

David:

You did a good job, Catherine.

Catherine:

Okay, thank you. That concludes my report.

David:

Thank you very much. All right, Suzanne, were you able to make Consumer Affairs on Monday?

Suzanne:

I was, and the Consumer Affairs Committee had no public comment. They had the section, but nobody made public comment. They discussed in executive session the security issue. The two observations I would make about that that I think I can say in a public session are one, one particular member really feels like we've talked about this ad nauseam. There's a plan in place and we don't need to talk about it anymore.

And two was that it does feel like the conversation related to this is just an observation, that it's getting quite operational and it's left the board level conversation.

So I don't know if Larry, or in discussing it with Mario, can just revisit what that looks like at a board level conversation rather than the nitty gritty of all the operational issues associated with executing this?

So we get too mired down in what I think are management operational issues that really are taken care of by Larry and his team, not board members, but ask the questions at the top level that help provide oversight and accountability.

So that's my 2 cents there. We also reviewed our WA's rules and regulations for water service, and he mentioned what they were, there wasn't a lot of discussion. They were relatively benign.

And then after that, Attorney Donofrio talked about having the same budget for this year as last year, but interested in raising his rates without having to impact the total amount spent. And they're going to talk to him about that because it's been many years since he's raised his rates. And then lastly, he reported on a customer issue that is ongoing but getting resolved, and that the New Haven Environmental Advisory Council has requested some information and a participation in a meeting, which he's also working on.

But those are the highlights of the meeting.

David:

All right. Thank you. Any questions? We're going to see some of that tonight, as you say, with the policy of the board being an item on their agenda tonight.

All right. With that, we come to our last major item of business, meet as a Compensation Committee. I'd like to take a break if we could first, because then that's going to be somewhat meaty. Greg, part of it

will be in public session. We'll try to do that part early on to make things work logistically for you to be able to stay as long as possible.

All right. Let's take a 12 minute break. We'll meet back at 1:45.

[BREAK FROM 1:32 P.M. TO 1:45 P.M.]

David:

Why don't we call the meeting back to order? It's 1:45 and we're at the point for the Compensation Committee. I'll accept a motion to recess as the Authority meet as the Compensation Committee.

Suzanne:

So, moved.

Catherine:

Second.

David:

There's a movement and a second. All those in favor signified by saying aye.

Group:

Aye.

[COMPENSATION COMMITTEE MEETS FROM 1:45 P.M. TO 3:06 P.M.]

David:

Moved and seconded. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Passes unanimous. We are now back to the Authority and the last item is act on matters arising from committee meetings, and there are none of those. So I would ask for a motion to adjourn the Authority meeting for the month.

Suzanne:

I'll make that motion.

Catherine:

Second.

David:

Alright, it's our second by Catherine. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Aye. Alright. We'll see you in about 3 hours at the 6:30 RPB meeting.

[AUTHORITY MEETING ADJOURNS AT 3:06 P.M.]