

REPRESENTATIVE POLICY BOARD

FINANCE COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 10, 2025

MEETING TRANSCRIPTION

Vin:

Okay, it is five o'clock and I want to call the Finance Committee meeting to order. Thank you everyone for attending. Jennifer, do we have a quorum?

Jennifer:

Yes, we do.

Vin:

Awesome. Thank you for that. All right, let's start with our safety moment. We want to prevent slips, trips, and falls. It probably happens to most of us, lapse of attention, thinking about a personal problem, or distraction by an activity that ends up in a slip, trip, or fall. Stumbling down a stairway, trip over an uneven surface, slipping on ice. It can be a variety of regrettable events ranging from a simple bruise to extreme injury. Six guidelines to help you be a safer person, employee, and home owner. Create good housekeeping practices, reduce wet or slippery surfaces, avoid creating obstacles in aisles or walkways, create and maintain proper lighting, wear proper shoes, and control your own behavior. All right, be careful out there. It is cold and slippery. Let's move on.

Item number two is a lead pipe inventory update. And are we ready for that update?

Sunny:

Hey, Tom, if you want to, I'll have Tom jump in and do the updates.

Tom:

Good afternoon, everyone. Good to see everybody. Just going to spend a couple of minutes providing an update on the service line project. And then maybe if there's questions as we go along, feel free, we can address them as we go. Or if the preference of the committee is to wait, whatever your pleasure.

At this point, the RWA continues to work with our service line project consultant, CDM Smith, and their predictive analysis subsidiary, Trinex, to comply with various aspects of the lead and copper rule revisions. So really, right along since the initiation of this project, our primary focus continues to be a concentrated effort on determining service line inventory materials. So, originally, we're looking to capture legacy data from tap cards, and once we had our arms around that initiative, we identified some geographic data gaps. So, in an effort to try to improve our data set, we initiated a vacuum excavation program and happy to report that that program has been completed. We found it highly successful, very informative.

What we did from that point forward, is we then combined the legacy tap card data, a lot of our historic information, with the data captured from the vacuum excavation efforts. We asked Trinex to take that information, input to their software. They did that. That process has been completed. What we were able to do with that, now, is that software produced an initial inventory of service line materials, and that service line inventory has been submitted on schedule to the Connecticut Department of Public

Health, in accordance with the regulation. There's been a second requirement, really, 30 days following that submission process, and essentially, that's to provide notification letters to specific subsets of our customer base and inform them of those results. That has also been completed ahead of schedule. So, two requirements so far, and we're two for two on that.

When we start to think about the information that we're providing, so we're out in front of people's homes doing vacuum excavation, we may be inside their basement spaces doing identification of plumbing, we're providing letters informing them of what we think they have for service lines. You can expect that's going to generate some questions, right? "What does this mean for me? How do I interpret this information?" So what we were able to do in recognition of those inquiries, is we offered a proactive sample collection offering, if you will, to provide customers with some reassurance that they did not have exposure to lead. It also provided a lot of good information for the utility. So, not only were we looking at lead and copper data, we were looking at some other chemistry that we can now use, going forward, as we're taking a look at and possibly making some amends to our corrosion control treatment technology. So, it's really a win-win in that regard. They have information that's meaningful to them, we have information that's meaningful to us.

What we're doing now is, we're continuing to further develop our inventory using or promoting different initiatives. So, we have a QR code out there, it's part of our website, it's a request for consumers to provide information back to us. It saves us the trouble of going out to a home, accessing somebody's basement area. Some folks are not comfortable with that. So, this gives them an opportunity to provide the information that's meaningful. We're also continuing our daily activities involving the metering, Cross Connection, and construction departments. These folks are putting eyes on service lines on a daily basis. We're capturing that information and bringing that back into the utility.

It's worth mentioning, at this point, the folks that are out gathering this information have direct access to the software at LeadCast, and so they're able to firsthand put that information into the software so it's not coming in on the back of a napkin type of thing and being given to other people to do the updating. The staff is doing it themselves in real time, it goes right into the database and is then a permanent matter of record. So, that's working out very well for us.

As we look to the short term, moving ahead, we're looking at transitioning now from our inventory development cadence to begin to look at service line replacements. And we want to be able to do that on a smaller, localized pilot program type of format. So, we're doing that now, so we're starting to gather enough information to get a better understanding of what we're facing. We're not ready to go full scale on service line replacements. We're going to start to just nibble away at this a little bit, gather some additional information, and learn from that so that we can apply it to the bigger scale when we go full.

Kevin Watsi, in communications, has been doing a good job since day one. You can appreciate that there's a lot of information to share here with customers, not only as we receive feedback, but also proactively. We'll want folks to know what we're doing and Kevin's group is doing a great job with that through website-based initiatives, also through the notification letters that I've mentioned previously, on social media. We've been meeting with the municipalities, health departments, community management teams. We'll be meeting with the New Haven Alders in the not too distant future. So, we're trying to get this word out there and work proactively with partnerships.

I think I'm going to defer to any details around funding over to Rochelle just so that I don't misspeak, but I know that finance group has been very active in seeking every thin dime that's available to us to pay

for engineering initiatives and a lot of the field work that we've been doing as part of our development process. So, I'm sure there's more to come on that.

And again, moving ahead on our schedule, we're going to be meeting with the City of Milford next week, talking to them about a couple of these small pilot programs that we're hoping to put together. We're cautiously optimistic we'll be able to start doing that field work before the end of this fiscal year, assuming all the stars align. A lot of that is going to be dependent upon the intervention and level of activity the State Health Department wants to involve themselves with. So, I think that's about all I have to say about this now, unless there's some specific questions, or if Sunny and Rochelle want to add anything that I inadvertently missed.

Rochelle:

Maybe the only thing that I'll mention is, you might recall that, probably now a few months ago, a resolution was put forward to the RPB regarding the DWSRF funding for the planning portion of this initiative. And we can get up to a 75% grant up to \$5 million for the planning phase. And we do have paperwork pending for the first phase of replacement. In fact, we'll be talking to DWSRF more about that tomorrow.

Vin:

Thank you. Does anyone have any specific questions?

Tim:

Vin, I did have a question if I may. Where you are considering starting some of the lead service replacements in the other half of this year, have you begun to formulate where you would do that? Would you do it because you achieved certain economies if you'd started in Milford, in New Haven, or do you think you'll do some of the smaller impacted areas? Any thoughts on that process?

Tom:

Tim, I think what we're looking at doing initially, and why we picked Milford, is just simply because of the admittedly limited data that we have thus far as we're putting together historic data with vacuum excavation, QR code from self-assessment work. We're looking at Milford because it seems as though Milford has, again, at this point, the majority share of the lead that we've identified. So we want to be able to go after that proactively. We're going to look in the immediate area of where that lead is suspected, those addresses, look in that fairly tight polygon, but look in those areas to see if there's other lines that will qualify for replacement, some of those galvanized lines, and we can have some economy of scale around that.

We don't want to go too far afield, because we don't want to get out over our skis too far here, but we want to be able to at least have a pilot program so we can gather information. And then, again, learn from that so that we can then make those adjustments as we go forward. I think that will spread out to other municipalities, but right now, Milford is the focus because of the 17 lead lines that we've identified. 13 of those are in the city of Milford.

Tim:

Okay. Well, thank you.

Tom:

Sure.

Tim:

That helps.

Vin:

Jamie, do you have a question?

Jamie:

I don't know, maybe. What happens to the lead pipes when you pull those out and you replace them? What do we do with the old lead pipes? I'm curious. Thank you.

Tom:

I believe that, right now, if the lead is removed, I think you have two options. You can essentially abandon it in place as one option. If you were to remove it, I believe there's no further restrictions on that. It just becomes part of metal scrap for recycling purposes.

Vin:

Great. Any other questions? All right, hearing none, thank you very much for that presentation.

Tom:

You're welcome. Take care, everyone.

Vin:

Let's move on to the approval of the minutes of the January 13th, 2025, meeting. Is there any motions? Jamie?

Jamie:

I'll move it.

Vin:

Okay. Is there a second?

Tim:

I'll second.

Vin:

Thank you, sir. Are there any comments, questions? Hearing none, all those in favor?

Committee members:

Aye.

Vin:

Any opposed? Any abstentions? The ayes have it.

All right. The Authority meeting attendance list is provided as item number four. If you're on that list, please make sure that you attend. Jamie, I believe you're taking care of the February meeting for us. Thank you for that. And if anyone has any conflicts and needs coverage, just either let another member of the committee know or let me know. Thank you.

All right, new business, item number five. The FMA Third Party Compensation study discussion, I moved that to the May agenda only because I did not want it to conflict with our April budget considerations. All right? So I just wanted to let you know that I did that. Our next meeting is going to be March 10th, 2025, at 5:00 PM. It'll be a hybrid meeting. Is there any other new business to come before the body?

Tim:

No.

Vin:

Is there a motion to adjourn?

Tim:

So moved.

Vin:

Is there a second?

Jay:

Second.

Vin:

Hearing no objection, we'll stand adjourned at 5:14. Thank you all for your day.