

REPRESENTATIVE POLICY BOARD

MARCH 27, 2025

MEETING TRANSCRIPTION

Bob:

Welcome to the Representative Policy Board, the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority. This is our monthly meeting for March. I'd like to start with the safety moment that has to do with stretching and there are several reasons there. One through five, I don't want to read them, I'll let you all do that. But in summary, stretching is an important aspect of any fitness routine, whether you're an elite level athlete or starting an exercise program for the first time. Increased flexibility has various health benefits that will improve quality of life and increase overall fitness and performance. Okay, we're also going to allow there to be public comment tonight. I don't know if there's any public here, but we'll give them each three minutes if they have anything to say.

Hearing none, we'll move on to the approval of our minutes from our February 27th meeting. Hello, Greg, Jamie? Second it. Any discussion? Hearing none. All those in favor of the minutes that they've been presented, please say aye.

RPB members:

Aye.

Bob:

Any opposed? Thank you very much. Moving on to communications and that is that there's going to be a budget review at the Finance Committee meeting on Monday, April 7th at five o'clock. And also there will be another meeting that is a joint meeting between the Land Use and Consumer Affairs and that will be on Thursday the 17th. Anyone can attend any of these meetings or even both. So and I believe Jennifer has sent out an email questioning anyone if they've wanted an actual hard printed copy of the presentation?

Jennifer:

Yes.

Bob:

So if you would like it that way, please respond to Jennifer so she can get it out to you. Next I have the reports of our committees and that is first Finance. [inaudible 00:03:08] that be?

Tim:

That'll be my honor. Number one, you took most of my thunder. The Finance Committee will have the joint meeting of Finance and anyone who wants to join us on April 7th, 2025, that's our next meeting. So I bring that to the floor first so you'll all show up. And then on top of it, the meeting was a pretty quick meeting in so far as, it's always a little scary when the auditors show up, but this was just the intro to say hello, to say that they were on the case and that they would be commencing the audit and doing their thing and then coming back to everybody at the appropriate time. So we had met with CliftonLarsonAllen, David Flint, and that was a real quick hello and goodbye.

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After that we had a meeting, well actually a review by Ms. Kowalski and Rochelle went over the various projects, the approved projects and everything seemed to be on track and going well. And upon that presentation, there really was no new business, nothing further to discuss. So in another lightning quick, Vin Marino wins the award for the fastest meetings. We adjourned at 5:10 and Vin mentioned he may not be here for this meeting because he was off to Europe for some affair. I'm not sure that's the case. I just thought I'd add that in. So beyond that, I will just add for a little color that I did sit in today with the authority. It was my turn to step up and sit in with the Authority and I can report that they do have fulsome meetings. They're very intelligent people we support and vote for and it was a great meeting and they threw me out after about an hour and a half, but I thanked them for their time. And that's it from me.

Bob:

Any questions of Tim in Finance?

Stephen:

Hey Bob, this is Steve. I have a question for Jennifer on the hard copies. Have they all gone out for either meeting?

Jennifer:

No, they have not gone out yet.

Stephen:

We're meeting Monday.

Jamie:

It's going to go out after the Authority meeting?

Bob:

Yes, that's Monday. Well, we have to have them for the seventh.

David:

For the meeting? Yeah, probably. Yeah.

Jennifer:

Okay. Yes, they'll be going out around the 1st of April.

Stephen:

Okay.

Bob:

Okay. Next would be Land Use, Mark.

Mark:

Hi, can you hear me?

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Bob:

Yes.

Mark:

Okay. We had a meeting on March 12th. Very interesting meeting by Mr. Savoy, was our guest for the project engineer for the Whitney renovations to the Lake Whitney Dam. He went back, we talked about the historical background, the project goals, the challenges and risks, the evolution approach, permitting and early contractor involvement. They're doing something that I guess is new. They bring contractors in that do this kind of work because they're going to build a dam behind the dam and then they're going to fix the dam that's in front of it. It's a very intricate situation. They're having some trouble with getting the permits, but it's just that because we don't know what's going on in Washington, but they look like they're on track. They know what they're doing and it was a very interesting meeting. Does anybody have anything to add to that from my committee? Thank you. Okay, and our next meeting is, we have a meeting on the seventh and the, what's the other one? The 17th, I'm sorry.

Tim:

Hey Mark, it's Tim Slocum. I did have a question for you, Mark, if you could answer or someone could answer, with respect to your comment on they were having trouble with the permits because of what's going on in Washington and I'm only curious about that because this has been going on for some time. Is it really that or is it just because these are processes that take time or is there a shortage of people to review? Or is it because they just got the requests in just within the last 20 days?

Mark:

Okay, well some things you ask them to get the permitting in advance and you can't get the other permitting until you get this permitting. So it's kind of both, it's a long process for the permits in the first place and now you know, we're concerned that there may be longer time because of what's going on in Washington.

Tim:

And all of this permitting is basically federal permitting?

Mark:

No.

Tim:

No. Locals are in-

Mark:

No, a lot of state permitting too. But the Feds-

Tim:

Right, so there's a combination of factors, most of it being government oversight and just the particulars of the process.

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Mark:

Yeah. There's an example. They found some plant, I forgot the name of the plant when they were doing some digging around there and if anybody helped me with the name of the plant, but they found some plant and then because they found the plant, the whole process had to stop because they had to write a proposal of how they're going to take care of this plant and move it and then bring it back to where it was.

Very interesting thing and you know, maybe something, if it's okay with our chairman that maybe this survey should come and make a presentation to us and you would hear how intricate this project is in the sense of how they're going to know, build a dam behind the dam, then build a dam and then glue it to the front dam. You know, because we don't want to ruin. It's a very intricate, very intricate proposal and very, very, very expensive.

Tim:

Yes. Thank you, Mark.

Mark:

No problem.

Brian:

This is Brian, I think we're also scheduled for our regular meeting on April 9th.

Mark:

That's right. Thank you. Brian. April 9th, our regular and our combination meetings on the 17th. Right?

Brian:

Combo meeting. Yeah.

Mark:

Thank you Brian. I knew you'd keep me in line. Anybody have any questions?

Brian:

Thank you, Mark.

Bob:

We'll move on to Consumer Affairs. Naomi?

Naomi:

Good evening. The Consumer Affairs Committee met on March 17th, we in turn started off without any members of the public. There were none. We moved on to have a motion to accept our minutes from the February 24th meeting. We also had guests that came to our meeting. We had Prem and Dana. They both went over a new customer service information system. The go live date for that system will be on April 2nd, 2025. They reported the different things they had been doing with the training, targeting certain things with social media, direct mailing of the campaign to our consumers. They also talked about how they had closed meetings with different activities for the teams that were there. They also

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received feedback from some of the employees that things that they thought were good or things that were concerned about, but they were able to move forward and they were assured that there will be people here.

The go-live day just happen. We also had our attorney, the OCA, which was there, reported on one complaint. That complaint is in Jersey, they're actively working on that. We also had a motion to approve the OCA February invoice, which was made. Let's see. Then we have a reminder that we also will be having a meeting. Well Finance will be on Monday, April 7th, everybody's welcome to join. We also have another meeting combined with the Land Use and the Consumer Affairs Committee on Thursday, April 17th, and the Consumer Affairs Committee will have our regular meeting on the 21st at 5:30. Meeting was adjourned at 6:12 PM. Anybody have any questions? We also had spoken to Prem and Dana and they did assure us that any members, they would put out a date that would like to go and see the system. We'll walk through the file and let everybody know. Like a field trip.

Bob:

Thank you, Naomi. Well that we'll move on to Authority and management, David.

David:

Okay. Good evening, Mr. Chairman and members. Thank you. We did meet today. Thank you, Tim for your comments. Glad you enjoyed the meeting and found it worthwhile and important. We first met as the Environmental Health and Safety Committee and Mario is in Washington DC lobbying with members of Congress to inform them of projects, which include some of our projects. He's doing it on behalf of another organization, but it is helpful to us, so he zoomed in to that. But I'm going to give his report, so if you don't mind. We had a lot of memos and reports and updates that we received today, so we're going to go through them and give you the highlights. We got an update on recreational activities for the summer and we continue the increase in robustness of our programs that we do and we have the Lake Salt and Install boating program is Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Daily inspection of our trails. First weekend of June, which is Trails weekend in Connecticut.

There will be, we're going to host a walk and then the RWA is collaborating with other groups for fishing and hiking activities like salt stall or [inaudible 00:13:53]. We also received a physical securities update. Obviously we won't go into too much detail for the nature of it, but there have been significant security updates to various facilities that we have. In line, those of you who've been around for a while. In line with the goals we had about a year and a half, two years ago when we talked about the enhancement through increased personnel as well as increased technology and increase in some of the infrastructure. So I think we'll leave it at that and let you know that we've done that. Maybe with the committees, we'll talk a little more detail than in a big group like this, but we've had quite a bit of upgrade with our physical securities. We also had a risk and resiliency update.

This is something that the American Water Infrastructure Act mandates and it has to be done every five years and it has been done with a special key assessment of malevolent acts and natural hazards, infrastructure, resilience, monitoring practices, financial infrastructure, chemical handling, operations and maintenance and evaluated 292 asset threat pairs. So it was quite a bit quite thorough. Forward planning, they plan an update of emergency response plans based on the 2025 assessment outcomes. We also received a cyber risk update, and again, this one by its nature will be general, but we have had quite a robust emergency preparedness plans as over the years. Some of you have heard what some of them are that we've done and had business continuity planning as well as documents for cybersecurity strategy would be safe. Again, the American Water Infrastructure Act mandates this. We completed one in 2020 with an update every five years, so we're in the process of that now.

February 2025, the RWA, which is last month, conducted a tabletop exercise simulating a website defacement incident, and there was positive feedback and certainly lessons learned afterwards and things to look at for that. We also received an environmental hazards update and the RWA started the disposing of unsafe and environmentally harmful buildings way back in 2014. Some of you who been around a long time know that we've been disposing of the buildings, which been some rental houses with asbestos and lead paint and other things. There's also Hydrilla, which is an invasive aquatic plant, which poses risks. Right now it's in a significant area of the Connecticut River and we are certainly watching that to see whether waterfowl or other acts of nature will end up getting it around us. We certainly hope not, but we're keeping an eye on that.

Environmental planning is creating a detailed reservoir inspection and rapid response plan to address it so that we're prepared. We also received a remote water monitoring buoys report. We have since last year, we've had a couple of buoys that have remote monitoring and they can test and they give us updates every 30 minutes as to various aspects of the water and the environment, and they're helpful. They're in addition to what we're doing and it's been great to have them, continuous data from the buoys aids and better operational decisions and early warnings, which help with reservoir management. And then we received a staffing retirement update.

Again, being personnel. It will be a little bit high level on that, but anticipating a significant number of retirements up to 22% of our workforce, which those of you have been around a long time know that's a little less than it happened because we have received some retirements. But our head of HR, Liz Cowell, presented a comprehensive strategy which addresses impending retirements, succession planning, knowledge transfer strategies, leadership development, technology implementation, monitoring and evaluation and union partnership. So that was the Environmental Health and Safety committee. Are there questions regarding any of those various reports that we can answer?

Mark:

On the retirements? These are the people who can retire?

David:

Right.

Mark:

Not necessarily going to retire.

David:

Correct, yes. A lot of people who can retire don't. They seem to like it here very much, which is wonderful. It is a great place. I guess with that, I'll hand it over to Sunny for the business.

Sunny:

Oh, sure.

David:

I'm talked out.

Sunny:

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Yes, thanks, David, thanks chair. Good evening everyone. So as part of, I would say my monthly updates, I updated the board on the regional supply strategy. Rochelle and I have been meeting, I would say been hectic in the last three or four weeks, almost. I think 40, 50 towns getting close to at least the 50 mark very soon in the next two weeks. So it's been going pretty well. We updated on the commercial services. We are continuing to meet, I would say the target for the year is there was another 38 cities tender refunding bond issuance in mid-March. It was extremely well received. That's going to save us a significant amount of dollars each year. Then I also wrote, which I sent an email out yesterday to all the folks on the World Water Day. I had an op-ed that was written. The other one, which is in my monthly report, is the corporate social responsiveness report, the 2024.

It's available online, so if anybody is interested, you can go online and read it. Plenty of, I would say, information, lots and lots to learn and read and it kind of, I would say, walks over the entire 2024. Then the regional economic growth and business retention. Larry used to meet on a regular basis, the president and CEO of the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce. We continue to do that. We engage with them in a significant fashion. We do sponsor, I would say a role there for economic engagement, so I did get updates from the chamber in terms of their economic outreach and how we can actually partner with them both on the economic outreach as well as workforce development. That's the monthly updates plus all the other monthly reports that go with it. Then in terms of the numbers, after nine months of actual results through the Feb 28th, the operating revenues are over budget by 3.657 million, about 3% primarily due to HSV jobbing, miscellaneous facilities to the tune of 4.2 million.

The operations and maintenance expenses are under budget, predominantly due to payroll being \$522,000. Pump power being \$473,000, they're all more maintenance and repairs. The pump and valve maintenance are less, outside services are less. Information technology licenses and maintenance fees are less by 199,000, so chemicals are less by \$158,000. Employee benefits are down due to post-employment benefits reimbursement that's higher than budgeted and in terms of draw, the coverage is 119% with no shortfall. The budgeted coverage is supposed to be 114, and all of that is favorable due to the refunding, the acquisition, the HSV, and also the asset of financing and the loans and the grants and lower than budgeted pilot. With that, the storage and rainfall and the raw water storage is 88%. The long-term average is about 87% for the same period. In terms of rainfall, it's 32.99 or 4.3 inches lower than the long-term average. Any questions?

Stephen:

Yes, Sunny, this is Steve. If I might, why was the operating budget over? What was the main reason?

Sunny:

It was under Steve.

David:

There's one item that's over, and that is the public benefits by 473. Yeah. pump power is up because of the public benefits charges significantly, as we heard about in the news.

Stephen:

Okay.

Sunny:

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If the revenues are up, the expenses are down actually.

David:

Yes, expenses are down 2 million, but that one item is up, but the expenses are down 2 million overall.

Stephen:

Yes, so the revenue, what was the main reason for the revenue?

Sunny:

The revenues are up primarily due to the HSV acquisition, Steve, that contributed significantly because it was not part of the original budget.

David:

The home safety valve that we purchased from Aquarion.

Stephen:

Oh, okay. By the way, I saw the article in the paper. Good job, Sunny on that.

Sunny:

Thank you.

Stephen:

And I have a related question to the environment. Can you remind me what we do with the materials we collect from HazWaste?

Sunny:

We typically have Clean Harbors who is a contractor who comes and removes them from our site.

Stephen:

And they take everything? One person?

Sunny:

Yeah, everything. Yeah. It's a company that does hazardous waste disposal, Steve. It's a pretty well-known company actually.

Stephen:

I know about them.

Mark:

They come and set up the whole operation, really. Our staff really just directs traffic. I believe that's the way it's done. I've seen them set up where they put down plastic cardboard, have the tank there, and they have somebody. Our staff is more a reception and directing traffic, if I'm correct, Clean Harbors comes in and does most of all the work.

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Sunny:

Right. I mean, our staff does traffic as well as, you know, kind of classification of the hazardous waste materials. So it goes into the right bins.

Mark:

Yeah, well, Clean Harbors does that too.

Tim:

I had something...

Naomi:

Sunny and Rochelle, do you see any effect that this may have, judging by the news today from the DPH about grants and things, because I know we may be looking for things down the road. Does that have any effect on us?

Sunny:

It's good. I think it goes to the question that originally Tim had raised in terms of, I would say is there any impacts? I think it could have some impacts because a couple of weeks ago I did meet with DPH more on an industry-wide representing the Connecticut Waterworks Association. The industry is concerned in terms of what could come down the pike, whether the grants will be given as per the original allocations that we were to get, as well as the priorities in terms of where the new priorities might emerge. Those are issues that not just us, I think everybody is concerned about.

Bob:

Tim, did you have something else?

Tim:

I did. Actually, it was something that came out of my, sitting in on the meeting today that I thought was invaluable because it came up in conversation today when David was giving the report about succession planning and things like that, and I was very happy to hear them as they were reporting that in the union contract negotiations, there's always so much more that could come out of those than just pay rates and retirement plans, and one of them was some changes that was going to allow better succession planning by changing some of the work rules and responsibilities and enabling management to actually bring people along to do different duties and have different responsibilities and ultimately help out the improvement to the organization by working from within.

I thought that was good, a good strategy. I think a lot of unions are working with municipalities and people like this. Not only just keep their jobs, but also because it does make sense and I thought it was something worth applauding and bringing to the attention because I know everyone is concerned about succession planning, whether it's in a maintenance crew or in top levels of management. It is important in an organization like ours.

Bob:

Thank you.

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Tim:

That was it.

David:

Thank you.

Brian:

This is Brian. I have one quick question, and I don't know if it's answerable yet, but with the destructuring of the EPA and regulations, how is that going to impact, I mean, two major ones I'm thinking of. Do we know if anything's going to happen to the lead pipe rule or the new PFAS regulations? Has anybody heard anything on any of those?

Sunny:

I can answer that. Yeah, I think we have been following that, Brian, on almost a weekly basis because all utilities, we are interested to see how regulations might change, if they change. At this point of time, I think the regulations are continuing to be as they were as of October 16th, 2024. So we still continue to kind of advance the project as we had envisioned, and we want to do whatever that's going to be, you know, part of the original five-year to 10 year planning process. So we are not changing the way that we are heading, as well as even PFAS. The deadline was 2029, where we have to comply with the regulatory approvals and have the treatment processes in place. So we are kind of continuing along the same way, irrespective of whether directions are going to change. But certainly I think we've been hearing rumors that things could change, not necessarily that it could change, but we don't want to kind of, I would say, discontinue the road that we are traveling.

Brian:

Well, that's good because I think we should be proactive on the environment and stuff, even if the... So thank you.

Sunny:

The reason is because four years down the line, administrations could change and we would still have to meet and comply with whatever the new regulations are. So continue on the same path.

Bob:

Are there any other questions for management? Thank you. Okay. Does the OCA have any comments?

Peter:

No. Thank you. Nothing from the OCA.

Bob:

Okay. Thank you. Before we adjourn, there are some members that they're in need of reappointment. Their terms are going to be expiring, and that would be Ansonia, Cheshire, Hamden, Seymour, Derby, and Milford. And there are also, we did not get reappointments in the past from East Haven, North Branford and the governor's rep. So I'll probably be sending letters out to the chief elected officials of those towns or what-have-you, the governor, and seeking whether or not they want to reappoint. So I'm

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hoping that to be the case, but if not, please let Jennifer know. So when the letter is drafted, we can share that in the body of the letter.

Tim:

As an interested party. What are the expiration dates?

Bob:

I believe it's July.

Tim:

What is the expiring term date?

Bob:

I believe it's July one.

Naomi:

It also, the date you stay in place [inaudible 00:31:13].

Bob:

Until you're reappointed.

Tim:

Yes, I gathered that.

Bob:

Or someone else is reappointed.

Mark:

I know about that.

Tim:

Right.

Bob:

It's July one for three years.

Tim:

Okay, thank you.

Bob:

Okay. Also, I don't know if now is a good time to share this, but David, on behalf of the Five-member Authority and asked me to get our thoughts on changing or adding an additional member to that Authority board. So I don't need answers tonight, but if anybody wants to think about that, and then at

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some point in time we'll have to be appointing a committee if we do that, and I believe this year, Catherine's term is expiring at the end of the year, December 31st. Okay. That's all I have for sharing. Anyone else?

Peter:

Just one quick, what's the reasoning for expanding?

David:

Well, the legislation allows, that certainly allows to be up to seven members, but if we become part of the AWA, then this body will have six appointees, so it'll be helpful to have another person onboarded rather than have six new people all at the same time. We'll have one that has a little bit of a leg up, and then the others will come along in due time.

Greg:

We should wait until PURA acts on it.

David:

Well, not for the sixth member. We're asking that you consider that now, if PURA acts and denies it, then we'll be asking for the seventh and final member. But if PURA approves it, then you have your complement of members and then it'll be up to the AWA's RPB to come up with their five.

Brian:

Are there any issues with us being at six on voting issues where you don't, you have a majority. If you had a three and three vote?

David:

We've never had a three to two vote. I can remember a couple of four to one votes, but we've never had any three to two votes as a five-member authority. So I don't think we're in any danger of having tie votes during the short time period in which it would be six members. If you did-

Greg:

Don't jinx it.

David:

It could be, but it would be nice to have some more experience. And...

Peter:

You thinking about that, adding the sixth person the same requirements as the five members have now they have to be within our footprint.

David:

It does not have to be, it's your choice, but the other two members, when it expanded from five to seven as the regional water authorities five member authority, it became seven. The other two

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members could be from outside the district. But that's your choice. It's an option, right? Should a be, right.

Bob:

Well, everyone think about it and we'll probably be discussing it some more in the future. Like I did, I did share some of the towns that their representatives terms are expiring. Okay. I don't know if there's anything else.

Mark:

I make a motion we adjourn.

Bob:

Hold on. Mark.

Jay:

Our Finance director, Rochelle, we haven't heard from if she had anything to offer.

Bob:

I guess that's a special request. Rochelle, do you have anything you'd like to share at this time? So we're good. Okay. That was good.

Greg:

I'll second the motion. I think Mark made the motion to adjourn.

Bob:

Okay.

Mark:

Yes, I did.

Bob:

There any other discussion regarding to adjourn? Hearing none. All those in favor of adjourning, please say Aye.

RPB members:

Aye.

Bob:

Any opposed? Have a good night everybody.