

SOUTH CENTRAL CONNECTICUT REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY

ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

MAY 23, 2024

MEETING TRANSCRIPTION

[ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING BEGINS AT 1:40 P.M.]

Mario:

First Item on the agenda is the approval of the minutes from March 28th.

Suzanne:

I'll make a motion to approve the minutes.

Catherine:

I will second that.

Mario:

Any additions, corrections, amendments? Hearing none. All in favor say aye.

Committee members:

Aye.

Mario:

Opposed? Then it's unanimous. Thank you. Perfect launch. We're going to move on, since the legislature has recessed for now, to the legislation session update memorandum, which was in our package. Sunny are you going to kick it off?

Sunny:

Sure. I can certainly. I'm not sure whether Nicoletta is on yet.

Jennifer:

She's on her way.

Sunny:

Okay. So, if you look at the memo itself, this touches upon a few points that was raised in the last meeting. So there were a few AI builds. Then it goes back to the sewers and liens and all that. But the one major update, as far as the legislative session is, both the house as well as the Senate passed unanimously our enabling legislation, which was a big thing. So one good thing is even though I don't know whether as of today the governor signed it, but still the way that the Connecticut legislation works

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is if it doesn't get vetoed or sent back, automatically it becomes into law as of the 15th day. So we got passed on the 8th of May, which means the 15th day is today. So tomorrow it should go into perfect. So with that said, I'll open it up to Nicoletta to kind of walk through.

David:

While you're on that topic though, was there an effective date? Was it like as of July one because there were several actions that could be taken.

Sunny:

You want to chime in on that Nicoletta?

Nicoletta:

Sure. And just to clarify again, and I had to get further clarification from the Governor's office because this is a special act. So it is 15 days, it'll pass once it reaches the Governor. So it's a special act now. It still has to go to the Secretary of State, and then once it hits the Governor's desk, that's when the clock starts ticking.

David:

What's the expectation of that timetable to go to the Secretary of State?

Nicoletta:

So it's hard to tell because there's no rhyme or reason. It's all up to the staffers that do it. There is nowhere in the Constitution that says they have a certain time, but typically within the next weeks. If they don't drag this out. But once it reaches the Secretary of State's office and then the governor's, I'll update everybody accordingly.

David:

Just to finish though, but the second part of my comment was, is there an effective date? Did it say in the legislature, this is effective October one, like some laws are, July one.

Nicoletta:

It's effective upon passage.

David:

Really? Okay.

Sunny:

Except for January one.

David:

Okay. That is-

Sunny:

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January one, 2025.

David:

That was one of the aspects of it I was getting at. Okay.

Mario:

Nicoletta, is there any indication if the Governor is wanting to sign it?

Nicoletta:

Yes, actually, so I spoke with the deputy legislative director for the Governor, and she indicated that if we would like a proper bill signing, then she can put it on a list for us. So I've been in contact with her. She knows about the bill, she knows our interest in it. So I haven't heard back from her on exact time yet because, again, it still hasn't reached the Secretary of State's office yet. But as soon as that happens, I will let everybody know. It's not confirmed, but if we want a proper bill signing, I think that that's something they can do for us.

Mario:

Sometimes you want to be under the radar, though.

Nicoletta:

Yes. Yes.

Mario:

A decision to make.

David:

Well with other aspects of things that we're working on, and we'll hear about that.

Nicoletta:

That's up to you guys, if you want me to pursue this or if we just want to fly under the radar. Up to you all.

Mario:

Discuss it later in executive session. Thank you.

Sunny:

Nicoletta, do you want to kind of summarize the bills that we supported, as well as the ones that passed, as well as the ones that got opposed and died? I think those were like 10 bills, which you were actually.

Nicoletta:

Yes, so overall I was tracking, so first of all, I wrote it in the memo, three and a half months per session. There was over 2000 bills that got proposed and only 200 of those passed. It was a lot of hard work, but the fact that our enabling legislation passed so quickly and unanimously is a huge win for everybody. But

there was 33 bills that I was tracking overall. I was tracking so many because language can get slipped into these bills pretty easily and it's good to just keep a general eye on things. But most of them died, which is good news for us. The biggest poison pill that died was house bill 5004, and that was the big, the green monster they dubbed it.

What this bill would've done is it would've rolled back stream flow regulations that were negotiated with DEEP back in 2013. And although that language got taken out before it was even voted on, it just would've done a lot of detrimental things to the industry as a whole. So that died. However, to that point, there is talks of a special session that's going to be happening at the end of June, and there's rumors that that bill will be on it. More to come on that. But Yes, that was a bad one that died, which was great.

SB two, the AI bill. I know that was something that Sunny wanted me to watch closely. It also died, but going forward, I don't know if I mentioned it in there, this is something that we will need to track and keep a close eye on is the AI stuff, but that died. The House and the Senate, even if you're on the same party, let's say you're both Democrats, both Republicans, the House and the Senate, they do not get along. So a lot of bills died because of that reason.

Let's see, what's another priority? The dam safety bill, that was passed, let me pull up my notes on that. And we actually supported this. This was due to a dam failure in Basra. So this just sets out a process for DEEP without a prior hearing to order a dam's owner or caretaker to remedy a problem with the dam that threatens public safety. I think that's towards the bottom. So that passed, but I brought that up because in the coming months, the CWWA is going to be convening a working group. Larry Marcik from the RWA is, I believe, somebody that Betsy appointed to be on this. And what this working group will do is to address the DEEP permitting process and how it takes so long and the process can be grueling. I know Sunny, I think you were on the call with DEEP about, I'm not sure, I wasn't on the call, but that working group will be starting within the coming months, so that's a good one. I don't know if you wanted to add to that Sunny, at all.

Sunny:

Yes, just I would say to add to the artificial intelligence bill too. So originally, the bill did not really pose any concerns for us. But as Nicoletta said, during the last days, during April, we were tracking this bill. There was a concern that was inserted as an amendment in the language, which included water utilities along with other utilities. So the original bill, which went to Catherine's point, the intent was to protect the AI from making any discrimination of sorts when it is used for recruiting and all that. So the intent was meant to be in that fashion. But there was a language that was inserted by I think Senator Looney and a few other members of the House and Senate where it became the utilities, if they make any decisions which could effectively affect any consumer or customer using AI machine learning processes, then that would be violating whatever the legislation that we passed.

So we have concerns about the wellbeing that, supposing if we make, let's say the lead service lines, we use artificial intelligence to decide which lead line needs to be replaced effectively, that's going to impact the consumer as well as the rates in some fashion. So as part of, I would say regional water, as part of all the utilities, we worked with CWWA, as well as internally we worked with our lobbying firm to make sure that that language wasn't going to appear. But effectively that SB 2, even otherwise, died. So the intent was good to begin with, but there was an amendment introduced, which I would say wanted to kind of backtrack on that support for some reason and said, we are not going to support this bill, so effectively it died. But there is a very good possibility that it will again show up. So we'll keep an eye for it.

The dam safety is very similar. The dam safety was something, the good thing that came out was we had a working group that came out of it. So Larry Marcik is now part of it, which means we can give productive, constructive inputs on moving the permitting process. And if you remember the Prospect Dam, which had been in the permitting for almost eight months, which we got in the last two days, that takes a lot of time. So Brittany Dam would be very similar. So I think now having our insider's perspective is looking at it from a utility perspective. You're making us responsible for dam safety, but at the same time kind of expedite these processes so we can actually work on the dams rather than waiting to hear from Army Corps and the DEEP dam safety to give us the permit. So it is good to have the bill so they're hearing our concerns. Nicoletta, go ahead. I think that was two, which I wanted to add some more.

Nicoletta:

That was a perfect summarization, actually. Another bill that passed, I see it's on the screen here, is Senate bill 292. And it does have PFAS in it, some language regarding PFAS, but this is strictly for manufacturers. Starting January 1st, 2027, manufacturers must submit a report to DEEP outlining if there's any intentional use of PFAS in products. These products are carpets, ski wax, dental floss, apparel, cleaning products. So we're going to keep a close eye on it, but right now there's no need for us to worry about that specific bill. But that's a perfect segue into something that I've been talking with Sunny and the rest of my department about, the communications department is a PFAS liability bill.

Starting in June, we're going to be putting together another working group about how as an industry we can put something forward in Connecticut to exempt water utilities from any future liability. There are two bills right now. Federally, there's one proposed in the House and the Senate, but those are still in the beginning stages of the legislative process and everything moves far more slowly in Washington DC than it does in Connecticut. So that's something that we're going to be working on with the CWWA and maybe the Connecticut section of the AWWA. But Yes, I would say that overall this was a really successful session for the RWA and the water industry as a whole. Any questions about those bills or anything in the memo that I can help clarify?

Catherine:

Congratulations on a very successful, everything you supported passed, everything you opposed did not.

Mario:

A couple of questions, Nicoletta, if that's okay. The Senate bill 192 about dam safety, was there anything that said that DEEP had to actually take care of their own dams that they own? That they don't know anything about?

Nicoletta:

No, I don't think there was. The weird thing though, there is a section in the bill that if the dam poses no threat to public safety, like let's say the owner of the dam, if the the only threat is the owner's land, then DEEP is hands off. They're not doing anything about it.

Mario:

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Yes, I like that part. That was good. Eliminate a number of them. And then senate bill concerning consumer protection. Entities from purchasing or operating certain small unmanned aircraft systems, does that say that we can't use our drones?

Nicoletta:

So that's what we were looking at. And there was no exemptions for water utilities in that bill, the last version that I read of it. So that would've been very problematic for us. And that one did die too.

Mario:

Because it passed in your memo.

Nicoletta:

Oh, sorry. I was thinking about Senate Bill 2. Let me review that one a little bit further because the last version I read of it, let me see. Can I get back to you on that? Let me just review it a little bit further just to make sure.

Mario:

Just bought this brand new, cool drone.

Sunny:

I think item four, I can add some light to it because that actually pertains to more Chinese-made drones. The one that we bought is actually American-made, so we would be okay. But they did, from what I heard in the last CWWA meeting, there was enough pressures put on, I would say, from various entities and even manufacturers of the past, I would say purchases, from using it. So maybe going forward would be, some of these would be restricted, especially with the Chinese-made drones. But we didn't really have any concerns over the way that the language was there exactly.

Mario:

And were we walking in lockstep with CWWA? Do you know?

Sunny:

Yes. I'm part of CWWA. So we continuously, on a biweekly basis, we interact with CWWA.

Nicoletta:

No, no, I'm really excited about that. I'm here right now for the joint conference right now and I'm just looking at this. Okay. So Yes, so that memo that we're looking at right now is an earlier version of the one that I made. The newer one that I sent out, that may not have got set in time, but I put opposed and passed in that one. So this was just an earlier version. So I apologize for any confusion in that typo as well.

Sunny:

Any other questions?

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Nicoletta:

We did oppose that.

Mario:

Thank you very much.

Nicoletta:

Yes, thanks everyone.

Mario:

Figure out how to work not only with AWWA, but other organizations too, to vote or implement some legislation, national protection. Need to at least, there's probably enough water type utilities that support it. Yes. The next item is asset management and implementation update. And there's a work plan. And Sunny, do you want to?

Sunny:

Yes, I'll just give an introduction and then Tiffany can take over and walk through what we did. So the asset management plan, what regional water worked on, almost goes back to 2013, 14. So we started long time back, but it's been in fits and starts ever since. And Tiffany was very instrumental in kind of advancing that during that stage, especially with the West River frequent plans. She looked at it as an entity and kind of made significant improvements in terms of how we manage the assets, work with the team out there, with the operations maintenance folks and frequent folks.

So with that background, so what we did was we wanted to kind of put it in the front burner, so to speak, for the next few years of having one of the more strategic initiatives directed to the asset management itself. So with that said, we had a very close working team made up of team members from the entire, I would say the organization, finance, hr, engineering, operations, treatment, maintenance. The entire teams came together and started identifying many different activities that we should take off in the next three to four years.

So with that background, I will open it up to Tiffany for her to kind of elaborate on what we did in last year, 2023, the past, present, and future. Tiffany, if you want to add more color to what it did as well as walk through as to where we are going with these initiatives, I think that'll be great. Thanks.

Tiffany:

Hello everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you about this, this afternoon. We did quite a lot in this last calendar year, or in the last 12 months, with asset management. And you'll see here that we're using a little bit new language than what we may have used in the past as enterprise work and asset management. And that is really in recognition of the fact that our work practices are what fuel our asset management program. And we've had the approach for quite a few years now that asset management needs to be worked into the fabric of the work that we do every day.

So because it has been a little bit of time since the 2015 Enterprise Asset Management Plan was developed, and the business has certainly grown and changed over that period, this initiative over the last year was really to kind of reinvigorate that from a strategic level and look at those kind of planned end goals that we had set out at the very beginning of our asset management journey. Take a detailed look at where we are today, and reconcile those two things together to form a road map on our path

forward. So as Sunny said, that's really kind of looking actually starting kicked off back in September with our new road map and then kind of looking through the next, we think, five to seven years for the implementation of all of the items that were introduced during that road mapping process.

Some of the things I really wanted to highlight here in this information for you is the amount of involvement of the business in this process. We had 30 interdepartmental workshops across 16 different departments and we really saw a very high level of participation from the business in those exercises. And then a small team from within the organization was used to take all of that information, everything that we heard from them, as well as those items that may have been outstanding from the prior plan and strategic perspective, also kind of benchmarked to industry standards like the EPA's guidelines on what different phases and activities you should use for your work in asset management program. And all of that was brought together into this roadmap.

I've also discussed here the fact that we have created this in a program called Ardoq. There are some advantages to using that for this type of work. It allows us to create relationships between the different pieces of information and to look at how each of those initiatives is going to interact with different parts of the business. I've included from you just a screen grab from the Ardoq system. This is something that we were trying to understand, what is the breadth of impact of this programmatic work?

So you can see here across the top, we've got every department within the Regional Water Authority organization, and going down the left-hand side, I know you can't read them here, but we're just demonstrating those are some of the items, the 103 items that were identified for the roadmap. And we've kind of identified how each one of them is going to, which parts of the business they're going to touch. So this is just to show you guys at a high level how much the program may be impacting the business. And that means not only while we're doing the work, but the outcome of the work. So it's intended to be spread across the organization so that we're really seeing that asset management be woven into the work that we do every day.

I would be happy to answer any questions. I know we kept this really high level, but if there are specific details that you're interested in, we can talk about those.

Mario:

Level is good, Tiffany. Thank you.

Tiffany:

Okay, good.

Mario:

Tiffany, how is this related to the work order programming? Do they talk to each other and how does that relate to GIS? And do they all talk to each other?

Tiffany:

Yes, so Ardoq is being used from a program management. So as we're rolling out the program and the initiatives, it's intended to assist with, from a strategic level, how the program is developing. So, this program isn't something that would be long-lived in terms of asset management. It's here to help us with that project part of the work. But in terms of some of the items that we have on here, there's quite a few related to integrating systems and how systems talk to each other and how different areas of the

business are currently using maybe a whole handful of programs, and how can that be streamlined and more automated in the future.

So we actually have a few different types of things that were highlighted with each of these items. We did identify whether or not they were improvements to systems that we currently have from a technology standpoint, as well as if they would be enhancements to the systems that we already have. So we've got some idea of these items, whether or not they would leverage assets, technological assets and processes that we're already using, either by expanding them to a new user base within the organization or by building those bridges between systems.

And then we also identified what we called opportunities or brand new things. So things that are not part of the RWA's technical ecosystem now. So unfortunately, I did not share that for you here, but we have documented that already. And Larry Woodward, as the enterprise architect, was actually one of the core team members who worked on this plan and he's actually kind of the keeper of Ardoq at RWA. So those items and the information that we've identified here as being pertinent to the enterprise work and asset management plan are going to be incorporated, or have been incorporated, into the technology roadmap and master planning that we have there as well.

Sunny:

If I may just add your question. So the GIS integration is part of it. Already we have integrated the horizontal assets into the GIS. The vertical assets, if you look at the memo, I think Tiffany has put in there as part of the CMMS, we are actually integrating the vertical assets as we speak. So that was part of the original strategic plan from 2020 to 2025. So that'll happen. And even to your matching of work orders, that's the eventual evolution of this asset management. So people should be able to, I would say, take the work orders, do it, whatever they see on the tablet, they should be able to close out those work orders and then it gets updated. So the eventual transition of more predictive, proactive operations and maintenance is what the final output should be out of these two, three year endeavors.

Prem:

So can I add a couple more details in here? So I think I just want to be careful, right? So to answer your question, there are two big pieces. We are talking about the preliminary maintenance part of it that is creating a work order to look at some of the early on detection and maintaining a plan. So a good example would be our Whitney water treatment. We actually do print maintenance today using our in for program Mario, right? Which is our asset management program. So we already have that in place. When you talk about work order management, we are implementing the UMAX system, as you know. For short cycle work, we call field service work, there's something called service plane that we are going to be putting in place, which is going to be used for work order management. The goal eventually would be a collaboration of how we are going to use that for long cycle work, for work order management system.

So we can actually talk to GIS in four, which is our asset management system, and service link coming together. So there's going to be a lot of collaborative work. It's on the road map to what Tiffany was saying before, but that's the future state. So some of it is already in play. And to Sunny's point, all horizontal assets are in the info system today. The vertical assets, we are almost up 80% complete. We will be completing that end of this year. So all assets will be in one system. And then this integration is part of our road map, which is actually getting done now as we speak. So in a couple of years we'll be actually rolling out some of these, as you asked a question on work order management, it'll be in place for all assets. So that's the idea, for more work to happen there.

Mario:

So one is a word of caution. Don't think that you're going to pick two different software programs and they're going to talk to each other. Make sure that that already exists. You spend a lot of money, as you already know. But the other is, make sure that the operations people are involved heavily.

Prem:

Oh yes.

Mario:

They're the ones to do it. And this is the perfect use of AI to take your history from your work order and try and do the predictive maintenance and replacement, so that we can do our budgeting that I've been asking about since 2015.

Sunny:

Just to kind of add to your point, Mario, so out of the 110 or 113 activities, 70 to 80 of them are going to be operations related. And when we formed the work group, we pretty much knew there was going to be a heavy emphasis on operations folks. And even if you look at the organization chart that is set up, it actually takes a lot of resources, where Jim Hill's folks would actually contribute significantly. And we are trying to do it more in-house, given they have a lot more knowledge expertise that's residing in here, instead of using consultants, because they're just going to be going and collecting knowledge and giving us the same information. So we are using consultants more in a very strategic fashion. But going to your point, there is already a cognizance of using in-house staff, as well as being cognizant about their number of hours they can dedicate. But there's going to be 75% of the work that's identified that's going to come from [inaudible 00:29:15] staff. Other questions?

Suzanne:

So when we do the asset management, big picture prioritization of \$30 to \$50 million that gets spent annually. This is the implementation process, the operational implementation process, of that plan.

Mario:

This is a tool that will be used to identify what projects should be done based on historical, based on what we replace. We now know this pump has reached this age standardized on a lot of equipment. So therefore we should expect we're going to replace four of those pumps this year.

Suzanne:

So this will actually inform the big plan.

Mario:

It should inform the budgeting.

Tiffany:

Yes. If I could expand on that just a little bit for you. The capital budget, we see things appear there when they're either at the very beginning or the very end of their life cycle. But Enterprise Asset

Management is really talking about those assets throughout the entire process. So it will definitely, there are many initiatives here related to capturing information that will inform that decision-making process on replacement, or renovation, or improvements to assets that we have and are managing, but just as much if not more, is related to those business practices and the work that we do on those assets while they are operating and running through their life cycle.

So we only purchase things once and we only retire them once, but we maintain them every day. So both of those are part of the perspective here. And in regards to the focus of the program, I will say I think that we've learned a lot over the last 10 years on asset management, specifically here at RWA. And if you look at the very first bullet point of the memo, you'll see that we're really highlighting the importance of asset management throughout the organization, and a recognition that this is not just an accomplishment to be done on a programmatic level, but also on an individual level. And those individuals being the employees and the staff who are performing that asset management work, and getting out there, and putting their hands on our equipment, and making those observations about its equipment condition and performance over time. Both of those things need to come together in order for this program to be successful. And I do believe that this roadmap addresses those concerns.

I like to say, we should be thinking about asset management almost as a culture here at RWA, similar to our safety culture. It should be a part of every activity that we are doing. We're thinking about whether we should be continuing to maintain a piece of equipment or should be thinking and planning for the replacement of that. Now I'd really love for Jim to take a little bit of time and talk about his experience with this, because he has been very involved over the last year, both him and many of his staff members. And, like you said, to hear from the operation side of the business is really important. Their buy-in is crucial for this program's success.

Jim:

Yes, I've been working with Tiffany for, I don't know, at least the past nine years on this. And we have learned a lot over the years, and it's going to be a group effort between engineering and operations to get it done. The operations are the boots on the ground looking at the equipment, maintaining it on a daily basis. This year we've picked out a few things, targeted a few things that we could specifically get done. The Inform AAM did change to Hexagon AAM in the interim, and now we're working with that group and we're at the end stages of getting in assets, a complete list of assets, into the system, which will be fantastic. We also put all our horizontal assets in, what was it, during Covid, I think. We have to complete the program on those, so they'll have preventive maintenance schedules.

Mario:

Thank you, Jim.

Suzanne:

Yes, so I guess I would just want to say what I think I'm hearing and then you tell me if that's, what I'm hearing is it's fine to have an asset management program and then you have your people who are implementing it, both engineers and operations. But the key is getting them to work together effectively and having one inform the other on an iterative basis to make it work. Is that what I'm hearing?

Tiffany:

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That is an important characteristic, yes. And I think not just to have reports, that's on shelves, but to have procedures and processes that our employees are following out in the field as they perform their work as well.

Mario:

The key is to have both the operations people and also the finance people and the engineering people to buy into the system and the data to more efficiently and effectively operate the system.

Suzanne:

Okay. Thank you.

Sunny:

Just to add to that, so the reason why the end goal is also is going back to Kevin's point earlier about the capital spent, will it actually increase or decrease? If we can optimize the life of some of the adherents by more proactive and predictive services, we can actually impact the capital dollars. So I think that kind of adds to the point that Mario made.

Mario:

Kevin?

Kevin:

So do you remember Ted's project Priority Matrix?

Mario:

Yes.

Kevin:

Does that tie into here? Would that be, or some list like that, be an aspect of what we're talking about?

Sunny:

It should actually work together because this will identify when assets need to be replaced at the right time that they need to be replaced. Therefore, they could go on the capital prioritization matrix so that when we rate something, it'll be based on this asset management plan. So we'll know that we're replacing an asset.

Tiffany:

Yes. My expectation for that in the future, if we could vision that, would be that you're not starting from scratch when you do that prioritization, that there'll be more information from a qualitative and quantitative perspective coming in from the reports and programs and documentation that we have here for that process. I think for the prioritization, it's important to capture the opinion and experiences of the people, but I'm hoping that, and the goal would be that this program gives us additional information for that. So we're starting out ahead on that process every time we do it

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Mario:

Should provide the data that before was based on experience.

Tiffany:

Yes.

Mario:

Does that make sense?

Kevin:

Yes, it does. Thank you.

Sunny:

And I might add, Tiffany's the one that actually did the bill on the capital prioritization matrix.

Kevin:

Okay.

Sunny:

So she was at its founding, she's gotten it approved.

Mario:

Tiffany's not Ted. Presented by Ted, so.

Sunny:

But Tiffany's the one that actually, hands on the keyboard.

Kevin:

Gotcha. Thank you. Thank you Tiffany.

Tiffany:

No problem.

Kevin:

Thank you very much.

Mario:

Thanks, Tiff.

Tiffany:

Thank you, everyone.

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Mario:

Is there a motion to move out of the Environmental Health and Safety committee and into the regular Authority.

David:

I'll make it.

Mario:

Okay. That's fine.

Suzanne:

Second.

[ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING ADJOURNS AT 2:16 P.M.]