

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS WORK SESSION

GOVERNMENT CENTER BOARD ROOM

DECEMBER 13, 2011 - 4 P.M.

A. Call to Order

B. Roll Call

C. Board Discussion(s)

1. Work Session with Utilities Companies ([Memorandum](#))

D. Break

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 13, 2011
TO: The Board of Supervisors
FROM: Robert C. Middaugh, County Administrator
SUBJECT: Work Session with Utility Companies

In the aftermath of Hurricane Irene, the Board requested a work session with the utility companies serving James City County. At your work session, representatives of Dominion Virginia Power (DVP), Cox Communications, and Verizon will be present.

It should be noted that Hurricane Irene was not the first significant storm to cause considerable disruption of utility services. The goal of the work session is for the County and the utility companies to better understand the others' concerns and develop solutions for improving response to future natural disasters.

The following is a list of concerns that each company has been asked to address during the work session:

- Communication – The County is generally unaware of the plans that utility companies are making before, during, and after an event. Post event, all utility companies need to have communication with local jurisdictions. During Hurricane Irene, the communication that was received, both by County officials and individual citizens, was often inaccurate or nonexistent. The utility companies need to be able to give an accurate evaluation of the scope of the problem and the timetable for restoration.
 - Can the utility companies provide a representative in the County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during an event?
 - Will the utility companies conduct a regular conference call, either with the County individually or as part of a regional conference call?
 - What will utility companies do to improve availability and accuracy of information provided to the public?
- Speed of Response – It seemed to take too long to assess the damage after Hurricane Irene before any work was done to restore service. Specific to Irene, Dominion Virginia Power (DVP) did not have a handle on damage assessment until Tuesday, following the Friday storm. Damage assessment is key to resource allocation for repairs.
 - What is the plan to address both the assessment of damage and the restoration response more promptly?
 - What improvements are the utility companies planning to make as a result of lessons learned from Hurricane Irene to minimize disruptions and respond more quickly when disruptions do occur?
 - What can the County do to help the utility companies improve their response?

- Condition of Infrastructure – The County seems to suffer extensive and lengthy disruptions, even with storms that don't reach hurricane status. This causes concern that the infrastructure may be substandard, or that it does not receive enough maintenance. In the case of Hurricane Irene, eight transmission lines were downed for a less than a Category 1 storm.
 - Will the utility companies provide the County with an assessment of their infrastructure?
 - What are plans to upgrade the infrastructure?

Specific to DVP, the following questions will be addressed:

- How will DVP address routine maintenance and storm hardening? It was observed post Hurricane Irene that many of the wooden support poles had not simply broken, they virtually exploded.
- How does DVP coordinate with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)?
- What is the relationship between DVP and contractors and what is the process for giving a contractor approval to ground downed lines? Is this process different for DVP staff?
- What is the plan for trees currently leaning in easements?
- What types of business assistance are available?

Staff is willing to meet with utility companies on an ongoing basis to help the companies better understand the County, the County's growth in recent years, and the relative lack of density. Staff will also work more closely with the companies to ensure they better understand the County's priorities for restoration of service.

If you have additional question or concerns you wish to be addressed during the work session, please let me know as soon as possible so that I can communicate them to the utility companies and they can be prepared to respond.

Robert C. Middaugh

RCM/nb
WSUtilityCo_mem

Attachment