

MINUTES
JAMES CITY SERVICE AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
County Government Center Board Room
101 Mounts Bay Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185
November 24, 2020
4:00 PM

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. ROLL CALL

Michael J. Hipple, Powhatan District
Ruth M. Larson, Vice Chairman, Berkeley District
John J. McGlennon, Roberts District
James O. Icenhour, Jr., Jamestown District
P. Sue Sadler, Chairman, Stonehouse District

Scott A. Stevens, Secretary to the Board
Adam R. Kinsman, County Attorney
M. Douglas Powell, General Manager

ADOPTED

JAN 12 2021

Board of Directors
James City County, VA

C. PRESENTATIONS

None.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

E. CONSENT CALENDAR

I. Minutes Adoption - October 27, 2020, Regular Meeting

A motion to Approve was made by Michael Hipple, the motion result was Passed.
AYES: 5 NAYS: 0 ABSTAIN: 0 ABSENT: 0
Ayes: Hipple, Icenhour Jr, Larson, McGlennon, Sadler

F. PUBLIC HEARING(S)

None.

G. BOARD CONSIDERATION(S)

I. Closed Session: Discussion or consideration of the acquisition of a sewer easement near North Lake Loring where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body pursuant to Va. Code § 2.2-3711(A)(3); and consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by the JCSA regarding options for the acquisition of a sewer easement near North Lake Loring requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel pursuant to Va. Code § 2.2-3711(A)(8).

A motion to Enter a Closed Session was made by Ruth Larson, the motion result was Passed.
AYES: 5 NAYS: 0 ABSTAIN: 0 ABSENT: 0
Ayes: Hipple, Icenhour Jr, Larson, McGlennon, Sadler

A motion to Certify the Board only spoke about those items indicated that it would speak about in Closed Session was made by John McGlennon, the motion result was Passed.
AYES: 5 NAYS: 0 ABSTAIN: 0 ABSENT: 0
Ayes: Hipple, Icenhour Jr, Larson, McGlennon, Sadler

At approximately 5:05 p.m., the Board entered Closed Session.

At approximately 5:11 p.m., the Board re-entered Open Session.

H. BOARD REQUESTS AND DIRECTIVES

Mr. Powell stated that the previous week he notified the Board about some technological issues with Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD), who handles billing for the James City Service Authority (JCSA). He explained that JCSA had sent HRSD the information it required for the upcoming JCSA billing process right before the HRSD systems went down. He further explained that due to the HRSD systems being down, JCSA has been unable to send out its billing through this vendor and has no foreseeable date of when the bills will go out. He discussed his waiting to communicate any public outreach efforts, in order to obtain information on when the bills would be distributed, noting that information is still not available. He stated efforts to communicate with JCSA customers that their bills will be late had been made through the use of social media/email and emphasized that no date has yet been determined. He noted keeping the Board as well as JCSA customers informed as information becomes available.

Ms. Larson inquired about a scenario if the issues were not cleared up by February 2021.

Mr. Powell responded if that were to happen, JCSA would probably explore options of doing its own billing.

Ms. Sadler referenced communication through social media/email, and inquired what percent of the customer base participated in email.

Mr. Powell replied he could obtain that information as his computer has the email list.

Ms. Sadler delighted in the ability to get information out to customers quickly.

Ms. Larson mentioned current communication efforts funneled via Zoom, social media, and email.

Mr. McGlennon inquired what HRSD had communicated.

Mr. Powell replied HRSD released a press release stating it had been the victim of a ransomware attack. He explained HRSD reassured its customers that the wastewater treatment had not been impacted, it was simply unable to perform customer service functions and asked for customers' patience as well as apologized for any inconvenience.

Mr. Hipple inquired if there were any effects on the Sustainable Water Initiative for Tomorrow Program.

Mr. Powell replied he was not aware of any effects and wished he had more information to offer; however, that was the nature of such an event.

I. GENERAL MANAGER'S UPDATE

1. November Dashboard

Mr. Powell stated that he planned to bring forward a memorandum and resolution to the next meeting asking for approval of a two percent general wage increase for JCSA employees. He referenced a recently sent memorandum updating the Board on a program that was approved by the state known as the COVID-19 Municipal Utility Relief Program. He explained that under this program \$100 million is available to municipal public utilities to assist delinquent customers. He referenced plans of submitting an application to the State Corporation Commission on behalf of JCSA, due on Monday, November 30, 2020, and noted Board approval was not required for submitting an application. He explained that action from the Board of Directors would be necessary for accepting the funds and he intended to put something on the December 8, 2020, agenda. He further explained that the action will also require the Board of Directors to ask James City County to act as a fiscal agent for JCSA, as the JCSA cannot receive the money directly, but instead the money has to go to a county or a city. He stated it was unclear to him what amount of money JCSA would be eligible for; however, an application would be submitted. He further stated the program approved by the state prohibits disconnections and the Board of Directors approved a moratorium on disconnections in March 2020 as part of the Declaration of Emergency. Mr. Powell explained the program approved by the state allows utilities to exempt themselves from the moratorium on disconnections if the delinquency is one percent or greater than operating revenues. He commented that every utility he was aware of meets that criteria. He explained that HRSD was holding its Board meeting today and would be recommending to its Board that it remove the moratorium on disconnections in order to provide motivation for customers to apply for the COVID-relief funds available through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. He further explained as part of the process for a customer to be assisted by these funds, the customer has to self-certify that they have been affected by COVID-19. He emphasized the JCSA can receive the funds, but to be able to credit the customer's account requires affirmative action on the part of the customer. He surmised HRSD logic as threatening to cut-off will motivate more customers to seek assistance. He noted HRSD has offered to door tag customers for the utilities it bills and therefore is an option for JCSA. He asked for feedback from the Board regarding that service. He discussed his reluctance noting: 1) JCSAs delinquencies are lower than most other utilities; 2) he is not sure of the amount of money received from this and is not sure the effort is worth the benefit; 3) the reason the Board put the moratorium in place was because of the public health situation; and 4) under the current circumstances, individuals getting a disconnect notice between Thanksgiving and Christmas is not a great public relations move. He concluded that for these reasons he recommended not doing it, but would like feedback from the Board.

Mr. McGlennon inquired about the normal arrearage.

Mr. Powell referenced the Dashboard, noting it is on a 90-day basis; however, on the Dashboard the arrearage has basically doubled. He commented those numbers are relatively low compared to other utilities.

Mr. McGlennon agreed with Mr. Powell regarding not revoking the suspension to disconnect and noted there is an advantage to a homeowner of not getting disconnected but still having the bill going forward.

General discussion ensued regarding the funding representing assistance to the customer as well as revenue for the business.

Mr. Powell stated the relief program requires that utilities allow repayment programs for delinquent customers for at least six months, and up to 24 months, due to COVID-19.

Mr. Hipple inquired about getting the benefit of COVID-19 funding and keeping the

moratorium in place at the same time.

Mr. Powell replied yes. He noted the same amount of CARES Act money will be given regardless of whether we go forward with keeping the moratorium or lifting it, and questioned if more could be spent if the moratorium were to be lifted.

Mr. Hipple discussed two different scenarios whereby one was receiving funds to pay the current utility bill but be cut off in two months or perhaps having an avenue to pay off the debt and not get the utilities cut off.

Mr. McGlennon stated he would accept Mr. Powell's recommendation to apply for the funding but not revoke our suspension of disconnect and hope to convince people this is to their benefit.

Mr. Powell thanked the Board for its helpful feedback.

Ms. Larson inquired about a scenario where an account was in arrears prior to COVID-19 and remained delinquent.

Mr. Powell replied that if the delinquency was before March 2020, it was a different situation and emphasized this only applies to residential.

J. ADJOURNMENT


I. Adjourn until 5 p.m. on December 8, 2020 for the Regular Meeting

A motion to Adjourn was made by Ruth Larson, the motion result was Passed.

AYES: 5 NAYS: 0 ABSTAIN: 0 ABSENT: 0

Ayes: Hipple, Icenhour Jr, Larson, McGlennon, Sadler

At approximately 5:29 p.m., Ms. Sadler adjourned the Board of Directors.


Deputy Secretary