

Stafford County Utilities Commission
Tuesday, April 13, 2021 - 7:00 p.m.
George L. Gordon, Jr. Government Center
1300 Courthouse Road
Stafford, VA 22554

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call
- III. Approval of Meeting Minutes
 - A. March 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- IV. Presentations by the Public
- V. Reports by Commission Members
- VI. Director's Report
- VII. Unfinished Business
 - A. Extension of Water/Sewer to the Brooke Road RR Station
- VIII. New Business
- IX. Public Hearing
 - A. Evaporation Credits
- X. Adjournment

Draft Minutes
March 9, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.
Utilities Commission Meeting

Mr. Chris Edwards called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Roll Call: The following members were present: Mr. Carson, Mr. Cox, Mr. Glazman, Ms. Kwiatkowski, Ms. Sullivan, and Mr. Tignor (Note: the Hartwood District seat is vacant).

Mr. Carson thanked everyone for attending the meeting and asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2021 virtual meeting.

Approval of the Minutes: Ms. Kwiatkowski motioned, seconded by Mr. Glazman, to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2021 virtual meeting. The motion passed by a vote of 6 – 0.

Presentations by the Public: There were no members of the public present.

Reports by Commission Members: Ms. Kwiatkowski spoke about Aquia District Supervisor, Ms. Cindy Shelton working hard to get water/sewer lines to the Brooke Road Railroad Station area and to eventually see affordable housing built in that locale, however it is not currently in the Urban Services Area (USA). Ms. Shelton spoke to developers who indicated a willingness to pay for the water/sewer line extension to a future development. Ms. Kwiatkowski said that Ms. Shelton requested an in-depth report on how to include this project into the Water/Sewer Master Plan and discussed this idea with the Board of Supervisors (BOS) at its last meeting. Mr. Towery said that the Brooke area used to be a targeted growth area (TGA) with a small pocket included in the USA and in the last version of the County's Comprehensive Plan, until an adjustment was made to the USA and that small pocket was removed, which also removed water/sewer extensions from the Master Plan as well. Mr. Towery said there could still be development there, just that no water/sewer extension would be tied to future development there. He said there were the mechanics in place to install infrastructure with the County's assistance and that Public Works would look into it and report back to the Utilities Commission at its next meeting. The Planning Commission is working on revisions to the County's Comprehensive Plan after which there could be adjustments to the County's Water/Sewer Master Plan (in the next year or two). Or, he noted, it could be done now, which was out of cycle, but not impossible.

Ms. Kwiatkowski said that Ms. Shelton was looking at it from the perspective of there being little to no affordable housing in Stafford County. She told Ms. Kwiatkowski that not a lot of people can afford to buy or build in the County anymore, which is why she was proposing a water/sewer extension and building affordable housing for this area of the County. Mr. Towery said he would reach out to the County's Master Plan consultant to do a short study on the possibilities. Mr. Edwards spoke about reaching out to the Department of Planning and Zoning to coordinate it with the Comprehensive Plan update and would bring back an update to the Utilities Commission's April 13, 2021 meeting.

Mr. Tignor suggested that Utilities Commissioners speak with their respective BOS and Planning Commission representatives. Mr. Glazman asked if they were aware of this proposal. Ms. Kwiatkowski said they were but it would show additional interested from members of the Utilities Commission. Mr. Towery said Public Works could apply for a Comprehensive Plan amendment and would bring a report back at the next meeting.

Ms. Kwiatkowski asked about the benchmarking study. Mr. Edwards replied that it would be discussed later in the meeting with the report on the proposed water/sewer user rate increases.

Mr. Carson said that the project list spreadsheet was much appreciated. Mr. Edwards noted that Mr. Bryon Counsell could not be at the meeting but was happy to answer any questions that the Commission may have about any of the projects on the spreadsheet via e-mail or phone call.

Unfinished Business: Mr. Carson introduced Mr. Jon Brindle who gave a presentation on the County's proposed Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG) program. Mr. Brindle stated that the program had been on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic but staff was prepared to move forward. In his presentation, Mr. Brindle shared that 50% of sanitary sewer overflows are caused by FOG; they damage infrastructure and private property, threaten the environment, are a health hazard, and are a priority for the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and they cost Stafford County over \$1.5 Million annually.

Businesses impacted by the FOG program are those with high potential kitchen that cook meat from raw, fry/oil, have a grease collection device (GCD) and will be required to be permitted. Businesses with low potential are daycare facilities, motels, 7/11 type stores that do heat and serve, but do no to low cooking and have no GCD. Facilities would be inspected annually, with a 12-month grace period for installation; the annual permit fee is \$100 and the permit itself has been vetted through the County Attorney's Office. During inspections, the focus would be on education and reinspection with there being multiple steps and opportunities for correction of the problem before a notice of violation would be issued. Staff hopes to hold a public hearing at an upcoming Utilities Commission meeting.

Ms. Kwiatkowski asked how many permits would be issued. Mr. Brindle said there were 192 facilities with commercial kitchens and he was working on a survey when the pandemic hit. He has since gone back to reaffirm the numbers and they are relatively unchanged since pre-pandemic. Mr. Edwards said the purposed of the program was to reinforce industry standards, not to hassle local restaurants. Ms. Kwiatkowski asked how staff would know when a new restaurant opened. Mr. Brindle replied that the Customer Service team was keeping a list and he also worked with the Virginia Department of Health.

Mr. Tignor asked about school cafeterias. Mr. Brindle replied that only one still had a fryer and he was working with Schools' Facilities on that. Mr. Tignor asked about removal of the fats, oils, and grease and Mr. Brindle said most worked with a contracted company, Valley Proteins out of Winchester, VA who turned it into animal feed. Mr. Tignor reiterated that it did not go to the Landfill. Mr. Brindle said that the Landfill had recycling for oils.

Mr. Cox asked about installing an up-flow system like at most homes and treating it at the source. Mr. Edwards said that the GCD required at larger restaurants traps the fats, oils, and grease and has to be routinely emptied, almost like a septic pump-out. Using a smaller, up-flow system would require much more frequent emptying maybe even daily or hourly in some cases and it was not practical. Mr. Cox asked of the 192 identified, how many had GCDs. Mr. Brindle explained that GCSs were 10,000-gallon traps usually located under parking lots that were pumped out quarterly or bi-annually, he did not specify a number in response to Mr. Cox's question. Ms. Kwiatkowski asked what restaurants were considered larger. Mr. Brindle said McDonald's was an example of a larger facility and there are other restaurants with deep fryers where a GCD was usually installed at build-out; in smaller restaurants, some had under sink traps.

Mr. Glazman asked if the City of Fredericksburg or Spotsylvania County had a FOG program. Mr. Brindle replied that they did not but Stafford had been contacted and they were comparing notes. Prince William County and Culpeper are the two closest localities with current FOG programs and there were localities in northern Virginia that had more aggressive programs. Mr. Edwards said this would come back at the April meeting.

Director's Report: Mr. Edwards provided an overview of agenda items approved by the BOS at its meetings on January 19th, February 2nd, February 16th, and March 2nd and items going before the BOS on March 16th.

Mr. Edwards spoke about the CARES Act funds for delinquent utility bills, which has increased to over \$400,000. It is only good on active delinquent accounts, not closed accounts so it cannot be used for paying down the delinquent balance of \$701,887.28. Ms. Kwiatkowski commended the Customer Service Team for its diligence in working with citizens on this program and said how much work it involved. Mr. Tignor asked about eligibility factors to qualify. Mr. Edwards said there were no income requirements; just that accounts went into arrears between March and December 2020. Ms. Deidre Jett said the State form called for applicants to attest to their circumstances that led to being in arrears but that the County was not allowed to verify the reasons. Mr. Tignor asked if additional funding would come from the very recently passed legislation by the Biden administration. Ms. Jett said she had not heard about any additional funding for the program but if there were funds left over from the first go-round, citizens could apply a second time. Mr. Edwards said the County was looking for additional funding sources but had nothing to report yet.

The Director's Report also provided a Capital Construction update, an operations update, and an update on 3R projects in the County.

New Business: Mr. Edwards said this was being presented for information only but it would come back to the Utilities Commission at a later date as it was an ordinance amendment which necessitated a public hearing. His presentation detailed the purpose of the proposed Ordinance, which was to offer sanity sewer credit that only applied to non-residential evaporation, was based on water/sewer readings, and provided a reduction in the amount of monthly sewer usage billed.

It involved the installation of a subtraction meter, which would be used to negate the sewer charge for water used by the customer that does not enter the sanitary sewer system. The meter supplies water to a device or system that is not connected to a sewer. Ms. Kwiatkowski asked about car washes. Mr. Edwards replied that it applied only to evaporation and car washes typically had water recycling systems. Industries that would benefit from this would be things like hospitals, schools, and data centers so there was strong economic development interest. Currently there are 25-30 localities in Virginia allowing subtraction meters. The customer is responsible for the cost of the meter or metering system as well as maintenance and repair of the system. Mr. Tignor asked about estimated revenue loss. Mr. Edwards said with a company like Capital Textiles for example, it would amount to about \$500/month. For Stafford Hospital, it was estimated at \$50,000 annually and schools would save \$300-\$400/month for approximately \$10,000/annually but there is a savings to offset that amount in not dealing with sewer treatment. Ms. Kwiatkowski asked if calculating it was a manual process. Mr. Edwards said the billing system would be set up to do the calculations.

Public Hearing: The subject of the public hearing was consideration of increased water/sewer user fees.

Mr. Edwards gave a presentation that began with a detail of FY2020's numbers and the impact that COVID-19 had on the FY2020 Five-Year Plan. He said that Utilities maintained revenue stability in FY2020 with commercial decline that was offset by an increase in residential usage. Five requested positions were delayed by the BOS for future years and there were impacts to the timing of capital projects.

Mr. Edwards said that the Five-Year Plan, presented to the BOS at its meeting on 11/19/2020, indicated the need for a 3% rate increase in FY2022. It focused on 3R needs and the need for additional personnel to further develop the County's 3R (Renew/Replace/Rebuild) and asset management programs, and to meet the needs of continued growth in the system as well as to fill in the gaps in the benchmark study. Regarding peer localities, Stafford is within its peer locality average including the proposed rate increase. Summarizing his presentation, Mr. Edwards said there was a need to reinvest in the Utility System; that rate increases consider the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and that staff recommends approval of the proposed changes to water/sewer user fee rates. If the Utilities Commission considers the recommendation favorably, the rate increase will be considered by the BOS on April 6, 2021.

Ms. Kwiatkowski asked where the new personnel would be housed. Mr. Edwards replied that the County Attorney position would be in the office with the other County attorneys; the other positions would be located where space in the Public Works divisions could be made available. She asked about retirement eligibility and Mr. Edwards said that according to the benchmarking study, Public Works has 25 to 30% of its staff eligible for retirement in the near future. Asset management works to capture the historical knowledge of these people before they retire. Referring to Mr. Brindle's earlier presentation on the FOG program, one of the positions to be filled is a pre-treatment inspector, without whom the FOG program would not be able to be implemented or sustainable. Another position desperately needed is a safety officer, to which Ms. Kwiatkowski agreed.

Mr. Tignor said there was great wisdom in making smaller incremental increases rather than one large increase as had been done in the past. Ms. Kwiatkowski commented about the rates charged in King George County. Mr. Edwards noted that each locality has differing ways of calculating its rates for water and/or sewer charges.

Mr. Carson opened the public hearing. Seeing no one wishing to address the Commission, Mr. Carson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Tignor thanked Mr. Edwards and staff for the good presentation and said the County had a lot to be proud of with its Utilities Department. Mr. Tignor motioned, seconded by Ms. Kwiatkowski to recommend a 3% water/sewer user fee rate increase in FY2022 to the BOS. The motion passed 6 – 0.

Adjournment: With no further business to discuss, Mr. Carson adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m. and thanked everyone for their time and hard work. The next meeting is scheduled for April 13, 2021 in the George L. Gordon, Jr. Government Center, beginning at 7:00 p.m.

/mh

Director's Report April 13, 2021

The following items were approved by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) at its meetings on March 16, 2021 and April 6, 2021.

3/16/2021 Finance-Audit-Budget Committee: Chris Edwards presented the proposed Water/Sewer User Fee 3% increase. **Members of the FAB Committee voted to send it to the full BOS. Authorization to hold a public hearing was given on March 16, 2021 and the Public Hearing was scheduled for April 6, 2021.**

3/16/2021 BOS Regular Meeting: Appropriate Utilities Funds for Design and Construction Services related to the Lake Mooney Sludge Thickener Project. **The Board voted to approve this request for appropriation in the amount of \$108,600 in the Utilities Fund for the design, bid and contract administration services related to the installation of a second thickener at the Lake Mooney Water Treatment Facility. Project Code BHC041.**

Appropriate Funds for the 342-06 Water Transmission Main Project. The Board voted to approve this request **for changes in a Utilities Capital Improvement Plan line item to reduce an appropriation hold on the 342-06 24-inch water transmission main project (BHC026). The project will require funds beyond those currently appropriated to complete the project planning, design, and easement acquisition phase services of the project.**

1. Project Code BHC026 – Initial WRA Engineering Task Order \$432,914
2. WRA Engineering Task Order Amendment #1 \$ 49,608
3. WRA Engineering Task Order Amendment #2 \$ 58,450
4. Total WRA Planning and Design Agreement \$540,972
5. Easement Compensation Payments \$ 55,000
6. Previously Appropriated Funds \$300,000
7. Requested release of Currently Held Appropriations \$295,972

Appropriate Funds and Authorize the County Administrator to Execute a Contract Amendment for Design Engineering Services for the Little Falls Run Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrade. **The Board voted to approve this amendment in the amount of \$539,939, which is necessary as additional areas within the plant are required to be rehabilitated and reconfigured in order to meet operational standards and regulatory requirements. The Facilities Assessment identified a number of structures and processes to be incorporated into the rehabilitation project as well as items to be constructed for regulatory compliance. The Preliminary Engineering Phase identified further challenges in configuring the necessary work within the available space at the plant.**

4/06/2021 BOS Regular Meeting: Authorize the County Administrator to Approve Expenditures for Pump, Gearbox, Blower Repairs, and Parts. **The Board approved this request. Utilities requires professional services for repair and maintenance of pumps, gearbox and blower repairs and parts. The County currently has a Rider Agreement with Best Repair Company Inc. #19-5030-CI027 for these services. These services are essential to maintain water and sewer treatment operations. The Board, at its August 18, 2020 meeting, approved \$400,000 to spend for these services for the remainder of the current contract term, ending August 29, 2021. The Department has expended \$382,621 during the current contract term for necessary repairs and expects to expend another \$400,000 for the remainder of the term.**

Authorize the County Administrator to Submit a Grant Application for the Water Quality Improvement Fund Program Provided by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

If awarded, the grant would be up to \$4,887,000 with a 100% match for the design and installation of nutrient removal technology at Little Falls Run WTF, scheduled to begin in FY2023.

Public Hearing: Consider a 3.0% Water/Sewer User Fee Rate Increase. **Following the public hearing, the Board deferred a vote on the rate increase. This item will be voted on by the Board at its meeting on April 20, 2021 as Unfinished Business.**

Customer Service Update – April 2021

Total Water Accounts	39,132
Meters Read	38,372
Total Sewer Accounts	21,186
Customer Service Calls In/Outbound	2,702
Walk-in Customers	165
E-mails	701
Live Chats	14
60-Day Extensions due to COVID-19	0
Payment Plans due to COVID-19	0
Total Delinquent Accounts (+ 31 Days)	4395
Final Delinquent Accounts Total Owed	\$691,576.38

COVID-19 Municipal Utility Relief Program (as of April 7, 2021)

On December 7, 2020, Stafford County received notification that it was awarded \$428,924 in CARES Act funds to help all eligible utilities customers with unpaid water and sewer bills. This funding is provided under CFDA21.019-8616. Assistance is available only for bills dated March 1, 2020 through December 30, 2020 and may not be used for past due amounts prior to or after this time period. The grant covers delinquent water and sewer charges but cannot be used to cover late fees or penalties. However, staff is looking for other potential funding sources to assist customers with these fees and penalties. On December 16, 2020, customers were able to submit application on-line or fill out an application in-person or over the phone. A direct mail was sent out to all delinquent customers notifying them of the program and a press release was sent out on December 16, 2020. In addition, there were notifications through social media and a webpage was created with more detailed information about the program including a dedicated e-mail for customers to ask questions or submit applications. The Department of Public Works also coordinated with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism to reach out to all non-residential customers. To date, Stafford County has received 979 applications totaling \$402,718.95.

Count		Residential	Percent Residential
30+ Days Eligible	116	105	91%
60+ Days Eligible	812	768	95%
Eligibility to be Determined	1		
Not Eligible	50		
TOTAL	979		
Value of Eligible	*COVID Eligible	* Total	Fees & Penalties
30+ Applications Received	\$7,089.49	\$1,6257.42	\$9,167.93
60+ Applications Received	\$359,629.46	\$510,088.57	\$114,459.11
TOTAL	\$402,718.95	\$526,345.99	\$123,627.04
Grant	\$428,924.20		
Applications	(\$402,718.95)		
Staff OT	(\$346.59)	Estimate	
Expenses	(\$4696.25)	Stafford Printing	
Remaining Grant	\$21,162.41	4.9%	

*Amounts based on H T E reported as of December 14, 2020

Capital Construction Update – April 2021

- The Falls Run Force Main design phase is 20% complete.
- The Falls Run Gravity Interceptor Phase 2 design phase is 90% complete; surveying and geotechnical are completed and right-of-way acquisition identification (10 properties) has begun; environmental permitting has begun.
- The Lower Accokeek Gravity, Sewers, Force Main and Pump Station construction phase is 80% complete. All sewer and force main have been installed and leak testing is underway. On site structures have been set and piping is being completed. Weather issues have caused time extensions to the project on both contracts.
- The preliminary engineering phase of the Little Falls Run Wastewater Treatment Plant Facility and Regulatory Upgrades is 100% complete. Site meetings continue and authorization for the final design has been given. Preliminary engineering report (30%) has been completed and approved. Design is advancing to the 60% phase
- The construction phase of the 342 Pressure Zone Upgrades (342-05) is substantially complete; the pipeline is in service; restoration works is ongoing.
- Design is 90% complete on the 342 Pressure zone upgrade (342-06). This project includes a crossing of I-95 and provides transmission main from Truslow Road to Enon Road. Completion of construction of this upgrade will be coordinated with the Enon Road elevated water storage tank. Preparing to start Easement acquisition process in the next month. Wetland permit and VDH construction applications were submitted .
- Design is 95% complete on the Enon Road elevated water storage tank. The site plan is in final review with the Planning Department; the permit application has been submitted to VDH; and the project is scheduled to coincide with the completion of the 342-06 pressure zone upgrade.
- Phase 1A of the Claiborne Run Parallel Force Main piping is complete; site restoration is incomplete. Surety is finalizing contract provisions using an independent contractor early this year.
- The design phase of Phase 1B of the Claiborne Run Parallel Force Main is 95% complete. Design alignment is complete. Easement acquisition is wrapping up with private property owners along Route 3 and George Washington Square. Staff is pursuing completion of the environmental impacts report; and a section of force main has been added to provide bypass of existing main on Cool Springs Road. Staff anticipates bidding within the next three months.
- The design of second Centrifuge and Sludge Thickener at Lake Mooney WTP stands at 90% design and has been submitted for County review.

Operations Update – April 2021

Finished Water Treated (MGD)	283.901
Wastewater Treated (MGD)	286.806
Water Main and Service Repairs	14
Sewer Backups	1
After Hour Calls	32
Permit Violations	0

3R Projects:

- Crews have started \$521,000 of sewer lining work in Ferry Farm in late March. Manhole rehabs will begin in June once lining work is complete.
- Additional manhole rehab work will start this summer in North Stafford and along Potomac Creek near Route 1.
- Argyle Height PS rehab is under way. Contractor is in the process of purchasing equipment.
- Aquia at the bridge PS proposal was submitted by the contractor and is in the process of board approval.
- The water storage tank modeling and inspections maintenance study is underway. This will help the department to prioritize the schedule of tank rehabilitations.
- Optimization projects for Lake Mooney are underway are expected to be completed by May of this year.
- Hydrant replacements have been delayed in the Thomas Jefferson Place neighborhood due to faulty valves.
- Final design underway for the aerial crossing at the end of Peyton Drive.
- Crews are back in Chatham Manor finishing up water main installation. Once complete, they will transition to Pratt Park to finish up final connections.
- I&I investigations are on-going.
- On-call contractor has submitting pricing for new water main installation along Braxton Lane and Custis Circle in the Ferry Farm Sub-division. Staff are reviewing proposals and developing plans moving forward.

Please insert the County logo and run on Tuesday, March 30th and Tuesday, April 6, 2021.

**PUBLIC HEARING
STAFFORD COUNTY UTILITIES COMMISSION**

The Stafford County Utilities Commission will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, April 13, 2021 beginning at 7:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard, in the Board of Supervisors Chambers, George L. Gordon, Jr., Government Center, 1300 Courthouse Road, Stafford, Virginia, on the item listed below:

Evaporation Credits - Proposed Ordinance O21-17 considers an amendment to Stafford County Code, Sec. 25-98, Sewer charges generally, to permit non-residential sewer customers whose entire volume of water used on their premises is not discharged into the County sanitary sewer system due to evaporation, may apply for a reduction of the charges imposed under Sec 25-98(c), if that customer provides evidence of the reduction in water volume as more fully set forth in O21-17.

The public hearing may be continued or adjourned. Copies of the above item and related materials are on file in the Department of Public Works, 1300 Courthouse Road, Stafford, VA and may be examined Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. All interested individuals are invited to attend and present oral or written comments. Persons in need of special accommodations in order to preview the information or to participate in the public hearing should contact the Department of Public Works, (540) 658-8650 so that reasonable accommodations can be provided.

BY ORDER OF THE STAFFORD COUNTY UTILITIES COMMISSION