



Henry County Water Authority

MINUTES

BOARD MEETING

March 14, 2024 @ 8:30 a.m.

A meeting of the Henry County Water Authority Board, duly advertised, was held on Thursday, March 14, 2024, at the Authority's Administrative offices (Engineering Building) located at 100 Westridge Industrial Blvd., McDonough, GA. The following Board members were present: Warren Holder, Chair; Sandra Rozier, Vice Chair; Myra Lott, Secretary/Treasurer; Bruce B. Holmes, Member; Fred Mays, Member-At-Large and Lindsey McGarity, Member.

HCWA Attendance: Administration - Tony V. Carnell, General Manager; Karen Lake-Thompson, Clerk; Dave Peterson, CFO. Directors: Tamara Woodie, HR, Dan Newcombe, IT, Tara Brown, Strategic Planning. Division Managers: Pat Hembree, Scott Sage, Allen Rape. Staff: Travis Jackson, Strategic Coordinator; Patrick Kelley, Sr. Water Resources Engineer; Ken Presley, Reservoir Manager and Allan Branan, Construction Manager.

Counsel: Andrew Welch, III (Smith, Welch, Webb & White, LLC)

Visitors: Commissioner Dee Anglyn III, Judge Arch W. McGarity, Kathy Carter, Jake Carter, Jennifer Carter, Holly Cobb, Carmen Brannan, Chase Beasley, Clayton Carte, and Don Veum,

Sustainable Water Planning and Engineering, LLC (SWP&E): Kim Shorter, Director of Strategic Planning

- **CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME VISITORS**

The meeting was delayed due to unprecedented traffic congestion, caused by accident in the area.

Mr. Holder called the meeting to order at 8:47AM and welcomed all in attendance.

- **INVOCATION**

Mr. Mays gave the invocation, due to Pastor Stone's delayed arrival caused by the traffic congestion.

- **ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA**

Mr. Holder asked that the agenda be amended to allow for flexibility with the order of agenda items, due to the traffic and late arrivals. Motion to accept the amended agenda was made by Mr. Holmes and seconded by Mrs. Rozier. The motion carried (5/0/1). *Mr. McGarity was not present due to traffic delay.*

- **PUBLIC COMMENT** None

- **SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

Honoring of the late Mr. Jimmy Carter

Mr. Holder presented Mrs. Carter and family with a plaque honoring Mr. Carter and read "For 19 Years of Visionary Guidance, Exceptional Leadership and Unconditional Commitment Serving as a Member of the

Henry County Water Authority Board". Mrs. Carter was also presented with flowers and she thanked HCWA for the recognition and said that Mr. Carter cared deeply about HCWA and it was his heart.

Resolution 2024-03: Naming of HCWA Board Room in Honor of Mr. Jimmy Carter

Mr. Holder presented resolution 2024-03: Naming of HCWA Board Room in Honor of Mr. Jimmy Carter. Motion to accept resolution 2024-03 was made by Mrs. Rozier and seconded by Mr. Holmes. The motion carried (5/0/1). *Mr. McGarity was not present due to traffic delay.*

Mr. Holder also stated that the Carter family would be invited back for the official naming ceremony, once the Board room renovations are complete.

Mr. McGarity entered the meeting at 8:53AM

- **ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE**

Mr. Holder welcomed Mr. Lindsey McGarity to the Board, followed by introductions from each Board member. The Honorable Judge Arch W. McGarity administered the Oath of Office to Mr. McGarity, Board Member who was appointed by District 3 Commissioner Dee Anglyn III.

- **REPORT OF ATTORNEY**

Resolution 2024-04: GEFA Loan Acceptance – Walnut Creek Expansion

Mr. Welch addressed the Board regarding the GEFA loan renewal and acceptance of the next phase of loans for \$25M which will be applied to the Walnut Creek Expansion.

Motion to accept resolution 2024-04 as presented was made by Mrs. Rozier and seconded by Mr. Mays. The motion carried (6/0).

Resolution 2024-05: Authorizing HCWA to Accept the Proposal from Vertical Bridge, LLC for Lease of HCWA Property and Facilities for Cell Tower Usage

Mr. Welch provided an overview of the resolution, stating that only one (1) bid was received from Vertical Bridge, LLC (VB) after conducting a sealed bid. In response to the Board's authorization back in November 2023, HCWA renegotiated a better lease agreement in the amount of \$1800 per month, in comparison to the initial agreement. Additionally, the lease term was negotiated down from 50 years to 30 years. With these terms agreed upon, HCWA can proceed with finalizing the approval.

VB will proceed with a property survey and soil testing to determine the optimal location for the cell tower. Mr. Rape added that VB plans to invest \$1M in building the tower. The \$1800 per month lease is at the higher end of researched amounts for such leases and will include a 2% annual increase. Mr. Rape stated that if VB did not have to construct their own tower and was able to place their equipment on one of HCWA's water towers, then the lease amount would have been substantially more.

Mrs. Rozier expressed concern about the integrity of the company due to their three (3) separate submissions. Mr. Rape clarified it was because VB did not receive a timely response from HCWA staff, due to staff diligence of wanting to be thorough with this new project. Mr. Welch highlighted that VB is obligated to reserve space on the tower for HCWA's Advanced Metering Infrastructure at no cost, making it a mutually beneficial agreement.

Mrs. Rozier clarified that there would be no automatic renewals after 30 years without renegotiation, which Mr. Rape confirmed. Mr. Holder added that the agreement is advantageous to HCWA as well. Mr. Carnell noted that the area was unsuitable for other purposes.

There being no further discussion, motion to accept resolution 2024-05 as presented was made by Mr. Mays and seconded by Mrs. Lott. The motion carried (6/0).

- **REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER**

Resolution 2024-06: Butler's Bridge Park Waterline Extension

Mr. Carnell provided an overview of the resolution showing the map location, requesting to extend the waterline to a new County-owned Butler's Bridge Park. Mr. Rape explained Butler Bridge Park's proximity to the Walnut Creek Reclamation Facility. Mr. Carnell explained the initial and ongoing partnership of the project with Henry County. He noted that the initial construction estimate obtained by the County for the project was lower, but it has since risen to \$3M. Due to this increase, Henry County has requested that HCWA consider expanding its contribution in the form of a waterline extension at a value of \$228,202.34. Mr. Carnell noted that this was a good gesture being that the County continues working with HCWA on the relocation of SPLOST projects.

Mr. Holder stressed the importance of collaboration between HCWA and the County and stated for the record that the park will have two (2) miles of walking trails and canoeing and he has a concern for security. Mr. Mays concurred, suggesting that the County consider hiring law enforcement to monitor the parks and nature trails.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Rape asked the Board to support the resolution to install the waterline, noting that the estimated labor amount of \$70K would be performed by in-house staff. Motion to accept resolution 2024-06 as presented was made by Mrs. Rozier and seconded by Mr. McGarity. The motion carried 6/0.

Invocation – Pastor Stone

Mrs. Rozier acknowledged Pastor Bart Stone's arrival and asked that he come to the podium to address the Board. Pastor Stone apologized for the late arrival (*due to unprecedented traffic congestion, caused by accident in the area*) and gave the invocation. Mr. Holder thanked him on behalf of the Board.

Mr. Holder acknowledged Commissioner Anglyn's presence at the meeting and thanked him for the appointment of Mr. McGarity to the HCWA Board.

Update on the Oak Street Lift Station Sanitary Sewer Overflow

Mr. Sage provided an update regarding the Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO) that took place at the Oak Street lift station during the heavy rains that hit Henry County and the Metro area on February 12th. During this intense storm, the sanitary sewerage collections system took on excessive amounts of rain water and caused the Oak Street lift station to overflow. The origin of the SSO was from a nearby construction site. Spoil piles on the construction site were left in place by the utility contractor during the previous workday causing the embankment of the rainwater. Manholes on the site were left uncovered and took on the large amounts of water. The sewer lines had been plugged off in two different places in order to isolate the construction area, however, the pressure in the lines caused by the excess storm water caused the plugs to fail. Normally, two plugs in the sewer line would prevent infiltration (industry standard is one mechanical plug), however, both failed during this unexpected event. Mr. Sage explained that the utility contractor was very responsive, but their efforts were unsuccessful. Mrs. Rozier inquired about the potential cost levied by the EPD. Mr. Sage

highlighted how the HCWA Capacity, Management, Operation, and Maintenance (CMOM) program benefited HCWA in these situations.

Mr. Carnell added that HCWA utilizes smart covers in the collection system to identify unusual rises, and plans to incorporate additional smart covers throughout the system, along with the possibility of using aerial drone footage inspections immediately after heavy rain events, now that HCWA has a licensed drone pilot on-staff, in hopes of facilitating faster response times. Mr. Sage shared pictures of the site and Mr. Carnell clarified that the contractor was not working on behalf of HCWA, but for a developer.

Mr. Branan explained he is now requesting for more mechanical plugs beyond the current two as a failsafe in the collection system. Mrs. Rozier inquired about any potential negative implications for HCWA. Mr. Carnell replied that the likelihood for negative implications was extremely low due to HCWA's history of very few spills. Mr. Welch asked about GEFA loan discounts and if HCWA's reputation of very few spills would influence the EPD's decision on the overflow. Mr. Carnell explained that he thought that HCWA's reputation should have a positive impact with EPD and shared how HCWA's Water First designation contributes to a 1% discount for GEFA loans. Mr. Mays inquired about the EPD's expectations, to which Mr. Carnell shared that if we were assessed any fines for the overflow, they would be passed on to the contractor responsible for the event.

2023 GA EPD Water Loss Audit

Mr. Kelley provided an overview of the EPD Water Loss Audit. He also shared an in-depth review of the 2010 Georgia Stewardship Act, which mandates systems with 3,300 or more customers regularly report and monitor water usage data to evaluate compliance with water conservation measures and pinpoint areas for enhancement. Mr. Kelley also noted that Georgia was the first State to adopt water loss policies and are still ahead in the nation.

Mr. Kelley clarified the two types of water loss: real (occurring in the system) and apparent (at the resident level). He highlighted that Georgia is at the forefront of water loss management nationally. Although HCWA has been submitting audits since 2008, Georgia state submissions only commenced in 2011. Mr. Kelley provided a breakdown of the audit process, including a worksheet for calculations, interactive data grading for reliability assessment, a water worksheet for calculations, interactive data grading for reliability assessment, a water balance and dashboard, and a comments section. He commended HCWA for excelling in the Water Audit Data Validity Tier system, achieving the highest tier 5. He outlined HCWA's score progression, starting from a score of 71 in 2011, increasing to 80 in 2014 (the introduction of in-house meter testing), 84 in 2015 (meter change-out to AMI and the establishment of a Water Use Compliance Coordinator), 85 in 2017 (initiation of large meter testing via contractor), and reaching 96 in 2023 (the commencement of drawdown testing at Tussahaw Water Treatment Plant's production meter).

Looking ahead, Mr. Kelley mentioned future plans, including the recent addition of a Qualified Water Loss Auditor (QWLA) to aid in tracking real and apparent water loss. Mrs. Rozier inquired if Mr. Kelley is training the new auditor, he replied that he is and that the new QWLA will assist him in future water loss audits. Mrs. Rozier inquired, if HCWA can monitor water loss in residential use, to which Mr. Kelley affirmed, citing the utilization of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) and Smart Meter technology.

Mr. Holder commented on the effectiveness of AMI in providing notifications.

Master Plan for Springdale & Cubihatcha Properties

Mr. Carnell stated HCWA is exploring options on how to fully utilize both properties in the future. Mrs. Brown provided an overview of the master plan for the Springdale and Cubihatcha properties, stating that

developers have been inquiring about HCWA's interest in selling the properties. Mrs. Brown introduced Ms. Shorter with SWP&E who shared the conceptual results from the study.

Springdale: Ms. Shorter stated the facility's closure after the opening of the Walnut Creek Water Reclamation Facility and that it on 374 acres. The active treatment pond on the property was outlined, and photos were shared of the site. Ms. Shorter emphasized careful consideration to preserve and protect the site's natural aspects, sharing conceptual plans that included aquaponics, tenant farming, natural walking trails, recycling bio-solids on the farmland, passive-use trails suitable for cross-country activities, open/closed event pavilions, and community garden space. Renderings of a modeled site in New Jersey were also shared. Finally, the next steps were listed, including recommending a new 501c3 structure for HCWA Recreational, Education Facilities & Programming, which could be helpful when applying for grant funding for trail systems, creating long-term lease agreements for tenant farming, and investigating funding sources such as SPLOST, grants, and donations. The construction costs are estimated between \$12M -\$15M. Mr. Carnell stated that the intentions are for the Authority to only maintain ownership of the land, and handle any day-to-maintenance or management of the land it was to develop.

Cubihatcha: Mr. Carnell stated that Cubihatcha staff has increased, and HCWA is exploring options for current and future growth. Ms. Shorter showed an aerial map of the location and identified areas for the proposed buildings. Current photos of Cubihatcha were shared, and Ms. Shorter assured everyone that the proposal would integrate seamlessly with the existing activities at Cubihatcha and provide a suitable home for the return of HCWA artifacts that were found during construction of the HCWA reservoir system.

The proposal started with the idea of utilizing revenue-generating activities to offset the overall cost. The conceptual plans include creating areas for archery skill learning, Tree Top Quest for outdoor adventure activities (run via a partnership with a third-party vendor), horseback riding facility or equestrian center, fish hatcheries for release into the reservoir, and the addition of visual points of interest every half mile along the existing 8-mile trail. The location of a potential building site was identified, along with conceptual designs, which were inspired by the Indigenous Creeks who once inhabited the area. Many Creek artifacts have been found at Cubihatcha.

Mrs. Rozier inquired whether any demographic studies had been conducted for the proposal to assess if the average Henry County student could support equestrian activities. Ms. Shorter confirmed that no such study had been conducted, but third-party vendors could assist with financial needs. Mrs. Rozier also asked about other options that would complement the demographics of Henry County. Mr. Carnell responded that HCWA is open to exploring grant opportunities and all other options.

Ms. Shorter concluded with potential next steps for the proposal including finalizing a conceptual building design, applying for Outdoor Stewardship grants, land preparation in the storm-damaged area, in addition to budgeting, planning & enhancing the existing trail. Mrs. Rozier inquired whether anyone had reached out to 4H. Mrs. Brown shared that 4H had been approached regarding archery, trails, and farming and agreed these were good ideas.

Mrs. Rozier mentioned a visit to a villa rental in Tennessee and asked if such an idea was being considered. Mrs. Brown confirmed that the idea had not been considered but shared HCWA's concerns about security issues and management responsibilities. It was noted that these were all concepts to initiate discussion. Mrs. Brown reflected on a Henry County Parks and Recreation Master Planning poll that listed Natural Parks, Unpaved Trails, and Nature Planning as top citizen concerns. Most importantly, Henry County does not currently have enough park property to meet the minimum size recommended for a county of its size and population, which opens the door for potential partnerships to meet this standard. With the addition of HCWA properties, the County is much closer in meeting the standard.

Mr. Carnell stated the immediate need for the Reservoir Management staff is for office space and HCWA would like to have discussions and share with the County staff and Commissioners, as needed, regarding conceptual plans for both areas and a multiuse facility/museum. Additionally, he noted that the new building could include offices and an event center, and the partnership could assist with this endeavor.

Site Selection for Operations, Maintenance, & Inventory Building

Mrs. Brown provided an overview of the research conducted to determine a site for a much-needed Operations Campus, to be shared with the Water Loss Department, Water & Sewer Line Maintenance Departments, as well as Inventory. A new site will open up space at the main administrative campus as well as providing a secure location and future growth for each department.

1. Some of the current challenges for Sewer Line Maintenance at the existing Camp Creek site location include lack of space for future growth and a portion of the property being located in a growing floodplain.
2. The Springdale site raised concerns about heavy traffic patterns for heavy equipment and its distance from the main office location.
3. The evaluation of the Administration campus site included concerns around future growth, size limitations to accompany Water & Sewer Line Maintenance, and unfavorable traffic patterns for heavy equipment.
4. A conceptual layout was presented for the Pullin Road site. The Pullin Road site seemed to offer the most benefits for a multi-department campus due to its close proximity to the Administration campus, size of the site (60 acres compared to 24 acres at the Administration campus), and it is already owned by the HCWA. This location would be designed for future staffing projections and equipment.

Unless there were any objections, Mr. Carnell informed the Board that staff would move forward with the procurement of an Architectural firm in anticipation of using the Design Build or Construction Manager at Risk method of procurement for Contractor Selection. Staff would report back to the Board at a later date (for Approval) once a preliminary plan and construction budget is developed.

Walnut Creek LAS Nitrates

Mr. Hembree provided an update of the ongoing Environmental Protection Division (EPD) response to LAS Nitrates at Walnut Creek. Since his last presentation to the Board on October 12th, 2023, the EPD has continued to express their desire to issue a consent order to HCWA until the nitrate levels can be brought into compliance. Mr. Hembree presented an aerial map of the land application area at the Walnut Creek Reclamation Facility, covering 1000 acres and containing 8,500 spray heads that need maintaining and monitoring. He also referenced an October 21, 2013, Water World article about nitrogen fertilizer remaining in soil for decades. Mr. Hembree suspects that legacy nitrates may be the source for certain monitoring wells exceeding the 10 mg/L limit. In 2018, the EPD transitioned to an online Net Discharge Monitoring Report (DMR) system.

HCWA received a Notice of Non-Compliance in 2018 which was followed by a Notice of Violation in October 2022, prompting HCWA to develop a Corrective Action Plan. Despite working with a consultant and creating an action plan, the EPD requested further information and a survey of all Walnut Creek land application monitoring wells, which was provided in November 2023. HCWA awaited a response from the EPD, but none was received. After a follow-up one year later, the EPD rejected HCWA's plan to conduct a study in an active spray field. A revised Corrective Action Plan is currently being prepared which will propose temporarily taking Zone 15 out of service for a period of several months in order to allow a pilot study to be conducted. Once completed, HCWA staff will schedule an in-person meeting with EPD representatives to seek approval of this new plan.

Announcements

Mr. Carnell announced upcoming HCWA events such as Customer Appreciation Fix-A-Leak Week during March 18th to 24th, the closing of HCWA offices on Friday, March 29th in observance of Good Friday, as well as Employee Fishing Day on April 6th.

Mr. Rape shared that during Fix-A-Leak week, customers will be given gift bags while supplies last, as well as information promoting paperless billing, autopay, smart metering system and increasing CAP (Charitable Assistance Program) contributions.

Mr. Carnell also announced the Council for Quality Growth State of Henry County being held on April 10, 2024 and the Board Strategic Planning Session planned for May 16th with his preference of the meeting taking place at the Walnut Creek facility to allow for Board Members to see the progress.

Special presentation in honor of Women's Month

Mrs. Rozier and Mrs. Lott were presented with flowers by Mr. Jackson and thanked by Mr. Carnell on behalf of HCWA for their service and continued dedication to the Board.

• PROJECTS and ADJUSTMENTS

Mr. Sage addressed the Board concerning the new projects and budget adjustments, showing map locations for each. He also noted that the budget adjustment is for \$50K and not \$100K as listed on the project sheet.

- New Projects: EXT2082 Bridge Road Waterline Ext
 EXT3919 Jodeco Road Sewer Lift Station and FM Ext
- Budget Adjustment: EXT3687 Hwy 81 W Water Main Ext

Motion to approve the projects and budget adjustment of \$50K was made by Mr. Holmes and seconded by Mr. Mays. The motion carried 5/0/1. *Mr. McGarity recused himself from the vote and floor due to a potential conflict of interest in the Jodeco Road Sewer Lift Station and FM Ext project.*

• APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve the February 8, 2024 Regular Meeting minutes was made by Mr. Mays and seconded by Mrs. Lott. The motion carried (6/0).

• ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:21AM was made by Mr. McGarity and seconded by Mrs. Lott. The motion carried (6/0).



Warren Holder, Chairman

Minutes recorded by:
Karen Lake-Thompson