Stafford County Utilities Commission
May 14, 2024

I. Call to Order– Mr. Edwards, Utilities Director, called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

II. Roll Call – Those present at the meeting were; Mr. Greg Cox; Ms. Tiffany Epple; Mr. Alan Glazman; Mr. Nathan Reese; Ms. Nancy Sullivan; and Mr. Greg Cox. Mr. Floyd Bundrant; and Mr. Ben Litchfield was absent. Staff members present were Mr. Chris Edwards, Utilities Director; Mark Gundersen, Assistant Director; Charles Grant, Utilities Data Manager; Jon, Brindle, Environmental Compliance Manager; and Ms. Tyler Girsham, Administrative Specialist. Guest speaker present was Mr. Erin McCormick from NV5.

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes – Ms. Epple motioned, seconded by Mr. Reese, to approve the minutes from the March 28, 2024 meeting as presented. The motion passed 5 – 0.

IV. Presentations by the Public – Mr. Jeff Geyer from 428 Hartwood Rd represented South Ridge Church, located at 2012 International Parkway. Mr. Geyer presented his case about the pro rata increase from the Spring of 2023 and the process of bond termination. Mr. Geyer requested that the Utilities Commission to consider a reimbursement of the increase of their plan approval from December 2021 and the completion of their building in January 2023, when they received their TCO. From the date of the approved plans, the pro rata fees were $33,897.25, and the total amount of fees due now are $39,243.50. He explained that even though their TCO was received before the increase approved by the Board of Supervisors, their Deed of Easement, which they started in November 2022, was held up and not completed until April 2024. He summarizes their goal as seeking reimbursement for the $5,346.25 difference in pro rata fees and also exempting them from the one-year warranty on the as builds, which will allow them to terminate their water sewer bond effective immediately.

Ms. Epple asked if Mr. Edwards wanted to address any of what Mr. Geyer said. Mr. Edwards explained that there is no way for the Commission or even in the Board of Supervisors to waive availability or pro rata fees as they are a part of County Code. He also explained that as far as the bond goes, that it is standard policy; where after everything is received, the permanent meter goes in place and there is a one year warranty period for any defects. Mr. Edwards said that he is not sure if the church has gotten their permanent meter yet, but at the moment, he is only aware of a temporary meter being in place and the one year will not start until the permanent meter is set. He stated that both items are standard procedures in the County as they are both in County's Design Standard and within County Code.

Ms. Epple asked Mr. Edwards if he happened to know where in county code these items are listed. Mr. Edwards replied that it is somewhere early in the subdivision ordinance but does not know exactly at the moment. Mr. Geyer asked if the code section was 15.2119c. Mr. Edwards replied that he still is not sure without looking it up. Ms. Epple and Mr. Cox expressed interest in seeing the verbiage within County Code relating to these topics. Mr. Cox asked Mr. Geyer if the Commission could have a copy of the paperwork that he was presenting off of, so the Commission could review and provide follow up at a later date. Mr. Geyer gave it to Ms. Girsham. Mr. Glazman asked Mr. Geyer if the paperwork turned in explains why they are asking. Mr. Geyer replied yes and said that Mr. English has other documentation and emails as well. Mr. Geyer stated that they have had a little bit of tension with the County, not specifically with Mr. Edwards though. He said that he sometimes feels like the County has placed process over people. He also explained that within his paperwork, they clarify how other jurisdictions have partially exempt churches from being a commercial place and believes that code can be updated. Mr. Geyer mentioned that they did pay the bill as they want to be honest and upfront about it.

V. Reports by Commission Members – No reports by Commission members.

VI. Director's Report –

Mr. Edwards started this section of the meeting, by introducing Mr. Jon Brindle and explained that the Drought Management Plan will be a future public hearing coming to the Commission and the Board.

a. Drought Management Plan – Mr. Brindle started his presentation by explaining how the department runs two water plants that draw of our two reservoirs. Smith Lake is stream fed by Aquia Creek along with other small tributaries and Lake Mooney pumps from the Rappahannock river. Since both are freshwater reservoirs, they heavily rely on rainfall and river and/or stream flow to replenish resources. Mr. Brindle stated that even though Stafford County has a robust supply, it is still vulnerable to drought and there is potential for year-to-year changes in the water supply.

   Mr. Brindle explained that one of the reasons this plan is getting updated now is due to the new Lake Mooney Permit that was issued in 2023. He furthered explained that within this new permit the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) required the County to create a drought management plan and that it will also allow for more frequent withdrawals from the river, which should help increase the water supply moving forward. Mr. Brindle said that in 2023, DEQ did declare two separate drought watch advisories to Stafford County and neighboring jurisdictions. He also mentioned that the Rappahannock River experienced historically low flows during that time as well.

   Next, Mr. Brindle went over that most of what is in the plan is fairly similar to what is currently in County code. He explained that the main difference is we needed to implement trigger mechanisms for when we would have to go into the different stages. He mentioned that even with the historical lows with the Rappahannock in 2023, based on the current plan, no restrictions on the County would have been needed. Mr. Brindle went over the different response stages in sequence order; Commercial Voluntary Restrictions, Residential Voluntary Reductions, Mandatory Commercial Restrictions, Mandatory Residential Restrictions and Drought Emergency – Essential uses only.

Mr. Glazman asked if the County has experienced this is the last 30 years. Mr. Brindle replied that in the last 3-4 years not incidents, but about 6 years ago, some voluntary restrictions were implemented. He also said that he is unaware of any time where the County has hit an emergency condition. Next, Mr. Reese asked is the public notified about the responsive stages. Mr. Brindle explained that when we bring this back as public hearing that the Commission will receive a full copy of the plan. He further explained that in the plan there are notification templates and anyone that has used over 10,000 gallons would receive a direct notification and anything outside of that would be public service announcements. He said we would use all available communication resources to notify the public including billboards, social media, temporary road signs, etc. but we would notify high users directly. Lastly, Mr. Brindle went over what the next steps are for implementing the plan. He said that the plan has been submitted to DEQ and it was approved. Now, we need to adopt the plan, but it will require some code changes. These code changes will be brought back to Commission for a public hearing and if Commission recommends, then we would hold a public hearing with the Board for approval.

Mr. Cox asked Abel Lake and its usage. Mr. Edwards explained that the long-term goal is the interconnect pipeline from Abel Lake to the Lake Mooney Plant or the reservoir and that project is a part of our 10-year plan to get it constructed. Mr. Brindle reassured that we have plenty of water supply and this is plan is meant for extreme drought situations.

Before Mr. McCormick began his presentation, Mr. Edwards introduced Mr. Grant and explained a little bit on some of things that Charles has been working on, such as the Utility Network. Mr. Edwards then introduced Mr. McCormick and explained one of handouts that was given to the Commission members.

b. Utility Network Presentation – Mr. McCormick started his presentation by explain what a utility network is and what abilities are you are to do with having the network in place. Next, he explained some of the benefits of a utility network; one being that it will be compatible with the new software that is getting implemented in 2026 and what is currently used will no longer be supported as of 2026. He also mentioned that it is an 18-month process to migrate everything over to the new software for the utility network. He highlighted that the ability to trace and show the connectively for all the different customers would be one of the most beneficial features that the County will use. Next, a video was played that showed a demonstration on how tracing would work with the Utility Network. After the video was completed, Mr. McCormick explained how customer information could be updated in the system and they could be notified if they are affected by a break, maintenance or even for boil water notices if needed. Mr. Edwards chimed in and said that even though this is a few years off from being complete, that it will be a great resource of communication to notify the public of outages and other related events.

Mr. Reese asked where the data will be stored. Mr. McCormick explained that they will be setting up servers on premise that will host the data and software from ArcGIS. Ms. Sullivan asked if there will be sufficient protections and security in place around the systems to protect against an attack or a hacker. Mr. McCormick explained that would be more of a question for IT. Mr. Grant chimed in and said that the County's cybersecurity teams will be monitoring the utility networks servers and protocols will be in place to prevent those security risk situations. Mr. Edwards added that in FY25, the department help fund a cybersecurity position in the IT department. Mr. Grant clarified that this is not going to be put out for public viewing, and it will behind our firewall.

Mr. McCormick continued with the presentation by going over the utility network implementation pathway and timeframe. Mr. Glazman asked when the network would go live. Mr. McCormick said roughly a year as they are currently about a third of the way through the implementation process. Mr. Reese asked how often we switch GIS mapping/software. Mr. Grant explained that this does not happen very often and what we are currently using is very basic. He also explained that ERSI has been around for about 50 years and the software we are currently using has probably been around for 15-20 years and the new software that we are upgrading to came out about 5 years ago. Mr. Grant mentioned that this new software and network is probably going to be an industry standard nationwide in a few years.

Before Mr. Edwards started his Reuse Update presentation, he talked about the efforts that Charles and his crew have made to make this all possible and they deserve to be recognized for all their hard work that many don't usually see on a day-to-day basis.

c. Utilities Water Reuse Update – Mr. Edwards started his presentation by recapping some of the topics that we have previously discussed about the data centers and desire to use reuse water as not only a revenue source for the department, but also as a cooling source for the data centers. Mr. Edwards went over briefly the Potomac Church rezoning amendment, Amazon Data Services (AWS) agreeing to construct a reuse water system at the Aquia Wastewater facility and build everything to the ultimate capacity of the plant. Amazon also agreed to limit the capacity of potable water they would use from now to the occupancy of the first building. Once the second building is occupied, AWS agreed to connect to reuse water and have reuse system constructed by the time they get to that point. AWS also agreed to submit a Water Services Agreement within 60 days, which they have done and now AWS and the County are working on finding a common agreement. Once the agreement is completed, we will take it to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

Next, Mr. Edwards explained that a new wrinkle was discovered as things started moving forwards. He mentioned that Mr. Brindle has been working with DEQ as we are required to amend our discharge permit. Mr. Edwards went over the two levels of treatment and explained that DEQ requested that we go to a level one reuse, which will require additional treatment steps to ensure quality. He mentioned that AWS agreed to construct all of the improvements needed to get to that level one treatment. Mr. Edwards explained that the department will be the ones to design it, AWS will reimburse for the design work and then turn around and construct the system. He noted that this new wrinkle could potentially delay the delivery of reuse water 6 to 12 months.

Mr. Edwards continued with his presentation by going over the various efforts in designing the proposed north reuse system. He also went over the list of items needed to be done with current and future infrastructure to make this reuse system possible. Next, Mr. Edwards went over potentially layout of the reuse system based on known interest and water availability. He also went over the proposed demands for those known interested parties, if they would be a good candidate for reuse or reclaimed water, and ways to maximize reuse water. Ms. Epple asked Mr. Edwards that if they will have to go with his recommendations or could they not go with it? Mr. Edwards explained he thinks they would follow it due to the amount of work and the cost associated with it that would need to be completed for the option that was not recommended.

Next, Mr. Edwards went over future STC rezonings. He explained that STC would need to extend water reuse to their site, construct needed master plan projects along with reuse waterline to their site and water storage. He said that the sewer flow or data center blow-down would be handle by the Potomac Creek pump station. Mr. Cox asked for the waterlines going back to the plant, who will obtain the right of ways. Mr. Edwards said that AWS would be responsible for obtaining the right of ways. He mentioned that they have done an alignment study, and it would be around 16 easements they would have to get. He explained that Dominion is allowing them to go on their easement for a majority of the path, but no metallic pipe can be used. Mr. Reese asked if it was going to be a closed loop. Mr. Edwards explained how the system will function. Mr. Edwards mentioned that STC may request to use limited potable water until the reuse facility is complete and that remote data centers will be recommended to be air-cooled.

Lastly, in Mr. Edwards's presentation, he went over some of the items that will need to be done to move forward; Water Services Agreement to the Board, design the level 1 improvements, water reuse masterplan, water reuse pro-rata, and reuse water rates. He mentioned that the goal is for the reuse system to go into service in 2027-2028. Mr. Reese asked how much money is AWS putting into this? Mr. Edwards replied roughly 200 million. Mr. Reece said that he assumes that AWS is expecting to get their money back. Mr. Edwards explained that a process like pro rata is a part of the Water Service agreement with AWS. Mr. Reece asked if AWS has high confidence that more data centers are coming to the area. Mr. Edwards explained how in some ways we don't measure up to other localities that AWS is looking at, but the County does have an advantage with having a well-established pro rata program and AWS was able to read the policy, understand it and see how we could extend it to reuse.

Mr. Cox thanked the department for their cleanup efforts on Mountain View Rd.

VII. Unfinished Business – there was no Unfinished Business Discussed

VIII. New Business – there was no New Business Discussed

IX. Adjournment – Mr. Reese motioned, seconded by Ms. Epple and approved unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 p.m.