

**Middle Chattahoochee Regional Water  
And Sewer Authority Meeting**

January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026 @ 7:00 PM  
City of Fairburn- City Hall  
56 Malone Street S.W. Fairburn, GA 30213

- I.** Attorney Dennis Davenport called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Attorney Davenport noted that an unusual circumstance had occurred, as there was no incoming Chairperson or Vice Chairperson of the Board present to preside over the meeting. As legal counsel for the Authority, he assumed responsibility for facilitating the process to elect a new Chairperson. He explained that once elected, the newly appointed Chairperson would assume leadership of the meeting and continue with the remaining agenda items.

Mayor Vince Williams made a motion to appoint City Manager Tony Phillips as Chair. Councilman Brian Jones seconded the motion. **Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

- II.** Roll Call was taken by Secretary Jessica Davis with the following board members present:

The Honorable Chairman Tony Phillips	
The Honorable Councilmember Brian Jones	The Honorable Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith
The Honorable Mayor Vince Williams	The Honorable Councilwoman Jessica Wilbanks
The Honorable Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones	The Honorable City Manager Jamila Criss

The attendance of the board constituted a quorum, and the meeting proceeded.

- III. Approval of 2026 Elected Offices** Board members  
Mayor Vince Williams made a motion to appoint Councilmember Brian Jones as Vice Chair. Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones seconded the motion. **Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

Mayor Vince Williams made a motion to retain Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith as Secretary/Treasurer. Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones seconded the motion. **Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

- IV. Approval of Water Authority Minutes:**  
The motion to approve the December 2025 Water Authority meeting minutes was made by Mayor Vince Williams and Vice Chair Brian Jones seconded the motion. **Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

- V. Approval of 2026 Meeting Schedule:**  
The motion to approve the 2026 Water Authority meeting schedule was made by Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith and Mayor Vince Williams seconded the motion. **Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

- VI. Reports:**  
**1. Water Attorney Report**

Attorney Dennis Davenport followed up on his presentation from the previous meeting regarding member city contributions and the Authority's invoicing process. He noted that there appeared to be consensus among the Board to formalize procedures and implement a structured process to ensure clarity and accountability.

Attorney Davenport referenced a memorandum included in the meeting packet outlining the proposed implementation process for payments by member cities. He explained that questions had previously arisen regarding payment responsibilities and amounts due, and that the recommended procedures were intended to improve communication and transparency.

He stated that payment amounts are determined every six months based on each member city's water consumption as a percentage of the total aggregate consumption among all member cities. This percentage is applied to determine each city's share of the debt service obligation. Using the most recent recalculation from October 2025 as an example, the percentages were as follows:

- Union City — 55.86%
- Fairburn — 33.45%
- Palmetto — 10.69%

Attorney Davenport explained that the monthly amount required to satisfy debt service obligations, including interest payments due in June, is \$255,000. Each city's required contribution is based on its respective percentage of this monthly amount.

Attorney Davenport also addressed communication challenges resulting from personnel changes within member cities. He recommended that each city designate a primary point of contact responsible for receiving invoicing information and submitting payments. He further recommended that mayors be included in communications to ensure continuity and oversight. He noted that he would also be copied on correspondence to maintain oversight and provide monthly reporting to the Authority regarding water usage and payment activity.

He emphasized the importance of providing reliable water usage documentation, as it is essential to calculating consumption percentages. Two member cities obtain their water entirely from external sources and can provide supplier invoices via email to Post & Associates, which currently performs the calculations. These communications would also be shared with all member cities and the Authority's counsel to ensure transparency.

For Palmetto, which both purchases and produces water, Attorney Davenport explained that documentation should include invoices from Coweta County as well as meter readings reflecting water produced at its treatment plant. He stated that all water consumption whether purchased or produced, is included in determining each city's proportional share of debt service.

Attorney Davenport recommended that documentation be submitted in a timely manner and suggested the 15th of each month as a target deadline for submitting the prior month's usage data. He noted that this recommendation was intended to provide sufficient time for reporting while ensuring consistency, and he invited feedback from member cities if adjustments were necessary.

He concluded by emphasizing that greater certainty and structure in the process would reduce confusion, improve transparency, and benefit all member cities.

Board members requested clarification regarding what each member city would be required to provide to the Authority by the 15th of each month.

Attorney Davenport explained that cities obtaining water from external sources should submit copies of supplier invoices reflecting the volume of water purchased. For cities producing their own water, documentation should include metered records showing the amount of water leaving the treatment plant. He emphasized that submissions should consist of verifiable documentation reflecting the prior 30 days of usage and should be provided by the 15th

of the following month. The intent is to ensure the use of reliable, traceable records rather than informal reporting methods.

Attorney Davenport further explained that member cities currently receive recalculated contribution invoices every six months, prepared by Post & Associates. These documents outline updated payment percentages and include historical data. He noted that payment obligations may fluctuate with each recalculation and stated that the Authority intends to improve transparency by communicating contribution amounts monthly so that member cities remain informed of any changes.

He also addressed the remittance of debt service payments and recommended establishing a consistent payment deadline. He proposed that, following mid-month communication of contribution amounts, payments be remitted by the first day of the subsequent month to ensure timely and reliable servicing of the Authority's debt obligations. He emphasized the critical importance of maintaining consistent and timely payments for the continued operation of the Authority.

Attorney Davenport concluded by requesting formal confirmation from the Board regarding several process items outlined in his memorandum. He specifically requested confirmation that each member city designate a point of contact, with mayors included in communications and the Authority's counsel copied, and noted that Board action in the form of a motion would be required if the Authority agreed to implement this structure.

Chair Tony Phillips presented the first process item outlined by Attorney Davenport for Board consideration.

#### **Item #1 — Point of Contact Structure**

Confirmation that each member city designate a point of contact, include its Mayor in communications, and include Authority counsel as part of the communication group.

Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith made a motion to approve Item #1. Mayor Vince Williams seconded the motion.

**Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

#### **Item #2 — Submission of Contact Information**

Chair Phillips presented the second item for consideration, which required each member city to identify and submit the name, telephone number, and email address of its designated point of contact. He requested that this information be submitted within one week, no later than Tuesday, January 20, to allow coordination of communications going forward.

During discussion, Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith requested that the process documentation be drafted and shared with City Administrators and City Managers so they could assist with implementation and remain informed.

Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith made a motion to approve Item #2, requiring submission of contact information by the stated deadline. Vice Chair Brian Jones seconded the motion.

**Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

#### **Item #3 — Monthly Documentation Submission Date**

Chair Phillips presented Item #3 for consideration, which proposed confirming the 15th of each month as the submission deadline for required documentation.

During discussion, Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith expressed concern about committing staff without consultation, noting that the 15th is typically a high-volume financial processing day. She requested additional time to consult with staff before confirming the date.

Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith made a motion to table Item #3 for further review. Mayor Vince Williams seconded the motion. **Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

Additional discussion followed regarding the possibility of establishing a grace period. Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones inquired whether a five-day grace period would be workable. Attorney Davenport indicated that flexibility could be considered and suggested that a grace period extending to the 22nd of the month could be evaluated and brought back for consideration at the February meeting.

The motion to table Item #3 carried.

Chair Tony Phillips stated that the remainder of the month would provide an opportunity for member cities to assess when information is received from stakeholders and determine whether the proposed submission timeline is feasible. He noted that testing the process would help determine if adjustments were needed.

Attorney Davenport added that the Board's action would presume the process workable for all parties and that any issues identified could be addressed at the following month's meeting. He emphasized that the goal was improved compliance and clarity, not punitive enforcement.

#### **Item #4 — Payment Remittance Deadline**

Attorney Davenport presented Item #4 for consideration, confirming that each member city remit its financial obligation to the Authority by the first day of the following calendar month. He clarified that, for example, a January 2026 payment obligation would be due no later than February 1, 2026. Early payment would be acceptable, but payments should not be made after the deadline.

Chair Phillips noted that the timing of payments appeared related to documentation submission timelines. Attorney Davenport clarified that payment obligations are based on established six-month calculations and therefore remain consistent regardless of submission timing.

Vice Chair Brian Jones made a motion to approve Item #4. The motion was seconded by City Administrator Jamila Criss. **Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

#### **Item #5 — Implementation Start Date**

Attorney Davenport introduced Item #5 to confirm that the new process would commence using January 2026 water usage data. Following discussion, it was agreed that Item #5 would not be brought forward for action at this meeting and would instead be placed on the February meeting agenda for further discussion.

#### **Financial Activity Report**

Attorney Davenport reported that he had previously provided an analysis of deposits, invoices, and running balances and would continue to provide this information monthly. He distributed updated hard copies and explained that the report reflected beginning balances, invoiced amounts, deposits received, and resulting running balances. He noted that while January deposits were not yet reflected, January invoice amounts were included, and the objective is to maintain balances at zero throughout the year.

Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith inquired why Palmetto continued to reflect a negative balance, noting that payment had been made.

Attorney Davenport reported that he had requested bank statements from Post & Associates four days prior and that the financial information presented was accurate as of the most recent statement received. He clarified that the

report provided was not a formal financial statement, but rather an informational update intended to keep the Board informed of current balances, invoices, and payment status.

He noted that, based on the report, the City of Fairburn had sufficient credit on account and would not be required to make payments for the current or following month. Attorney Davenport emphasized that the monthly reporting process is intended to ensure transparency and allow member cities to address discrepancies promptly. He offered to follow up with the bank regarding any payments not reflected on the statement if concerns were raised.

Attorney Davenport further reported that there were several outstanding checks on record, including three issued to Nathan Slaton and one issued to Verizon from November. He asked Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith to confirm with her finance team whether replacement of the Verizon check was necessary. Mayor Thomas-Smith agreed to review the matter, and Attorney Davenport stated he would follow up at the February meeting.

Attorney Davenport advised that, with the election of new officers (Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer), updated bank signature authorizations were required. He requested that the Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer visit the bank to execute electronic signature cards and confirm completion so check distribution could proceed.

Councilmember Jessica Wilbanks made a motion to authorize the Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer to execute signature cards to become authorized signatories for the Authority. Mayor Vince Williams seconded the motion. **Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

## **2. Financial Manager**

Attorney Davenport presented Requisition #286 in the amount of \$15,324.19.

The motion to approve requisition #286 was made by Mayor Williams and seconded by Vice Chair Jones.

**Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

## **3. Project Managers:**

The Project Manager reported that the meeting packet materials had been distributed electronically on Friday and resent by Jessica prior to the meeting, with hard copies also provided. The packet included several documents: a regular memorandum, a condensed summary of key events in recent history attached to the memorandum, scopes of work related to the Georgia Tech case program, and a comprehensive project timeline.

The Project Manager noted that the purpose of the presentation was to brief new Board members on project background and to prepare the Board for upcoming decision points related to the Georgia Tech program scopes. It was stated that the full timeline over 30 pages in length and originally developed for the Authority retreat in 2024 had been updated through January of the current year. Rather than reviewing the entire timeline, the Project Manager provided a synopsis highlighting major issues reflected in the document.

The condensed summary addressed recurring questions raised by Board members, including the transition from the reservoir project to the direct withdrawal project, financial considerations such as loan and bond timing, and the evolution of purchase options.

Regarding the transition in project direction, the Project Managers reported that they were engaged in August 2015, at which time the reservoir permit was withdrawn to reevaluate certification requirements with the Environmental Protection Division (EPD). In 2017, updates to the ACF Water Control Manual established that Fulton County's regional water needs, including those of the Authority's member cities, could be met through withdrawals from the

Chattahoochee River. As a result, development of the reservoir project was no longer feasible, and the Authority pivoted to pursuing direct withdrawal permits.

Permit applications reflecting this shift were submitted shortly thereafter, requiring extensive studies and documentation. The withdrawal permit was issued in 2020, representing the first permit of its kind issued for the Chattahoochee River in approximately twenty years. Following issuance, the Authority engaged KREBS Engineering to complete preliminary engineering studies, which were subsequently reviewed by EPD. Additional permit conditions were fulfilled, including installation of a USGS gauge in 2021.

In 2022, Gresham Smith Partners was engaged as Owner's Engineer. The Project Manager reported that project progress slowed following updated cost estimate reviews and that revised estimates ultimately led to suspension of advancement on the project in 2024.

Chair Tony Phillips requested clarification for newer Board members regarding the suspension of project activities and asked the Project Manager to restate the cost estimate that contributed to halting progress.

The Project Manager provided additional detail regarding cost estimates associated with the direct withdrawal project. The project scope included construction of an intake on the Chattahoochee River, installation of a transmission pipeline from the river to a water treatment plant, development of a treatment facility with a capacity of approximately 6 million gallons per day, and construction of distribution lines connecting the plant to each member city.

Initial project cost estimates were approximately \$70 million and formed the basis of the Preliminary Engineering Report. Upon engagement of Gresham Smith Partners, updated estimates increased to approximately \$118 million, resulting in a pause in project advancement in 2024 due to cost concerns. At that time, the Authority revisited alternative options, including potential water purchase arrangements through the City of Atlanta or Coweta County.

During the Authority retreat held in August 2024, presentations were delivered by Project Managers, legal counsel, engineers, and financial analysts reviewing project history, rate impacts, and strategic considerations. Following the retreat, the Board expressed renewed interest in advancing the direct withdrawal project and initiated steps to re-engage engineering services.

However, in early 2025, revised cost projections increased to approximately \$167 million, prompting further reconsideration. In March, the Board authorized Project Managers to explore partnership opportunities to offset project costs. Outreach was conducted with neighboring jurisdictions including Carroll County, Coweta County, Douglas County, and Fulton County, as well as a data center representative, to determine potential interest in joint participation. The Project Manager reported that no entities expressed interest in partnering at that time due to their existing project commitments and financial obligations.

Chair Tony Phillips sought clarification regarding the relationship between increased project costs and potential rate impacts on member cities. Financial Consultant Tom Owens confirmed that servicing debt associated with a project cost in the range of \$167 million would likely require water rates more than double current purchase rates from the City of Atlanta. He explained that projected wholesale costs could exceed \$10 per thousand gallons compared to current rates of approximately \$5 per thousand gallons, reflecting the additional debt service required to finance the project.

Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith noted the financial complexity of balancing production costs with existing purchase obligations, acknowledging the additional considerations involved in funding both Authority and external water supply expenses.

Financial Consultant Tom Owens reminded the Board that under the Authority's original bond documents, once the Authority is able to produce water, member cities would be required to purchase their water from the Authority.

Chair Tony Phillips clarified that the intent of the agreement was exclusivity, once a water treatment facility associated with the approximately \$170 million project became operational, Palmetto, Fairburn, and Union City would purchase all of their water solely from the Authority.

Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith acknowledged this understanding but expressed concern that previous documentation suggested the Palmetto water treatment facility was intended as a short-term solution, yet it has remained in operation for more than two decades. She stated that this history caused some hesitation in fully relying on assumptions that certain arrangements would remain short term.

Chair Phillips explained that the \$170 million project was designed as a long-term, permanent solution intended to replace all other water sources. He stated that the project was envisioned as a 50-year water supply investment, meaning that once operational, all other water sources, including Coweta County, the Palmetto plant, and the City of Atlanta, would sunset, and all three cities would rely exclusively on the Authority's system.

Vice Chair Brian Jones noted that upgrades had previously been made to the Palmetto treatment facility after deadlines associated with financing and regulatory requirements could not be met, allowing the facility to continue operating beyond its originally anticipated lifespan.

Attorney Davenport explained that one condition of the water withdrawal permit requires the Palmetto water treatment plant to be taken offline once the Authority's treatment plant becomes operational. He further noted that existing water purchase agreements with outside suppliers were intentionally structured as short-term arrangements, typically in five-year increments, to avoid conflicts with the Authority's exclusivity requirements.

Mr. Owens added that the \$170 million project cost did not include the additional infrastructure investments that each city would be required to make in order to connect to the Authority's system. He stated that those city-specific costs, likely requiring separate borrowing, would further impact on the rates passed on to residents and had not yet been fully quantified.

The Project Managers noted that earlier discussions regarding a potential GEFA loan of approximately \$50 million would have reduced the total bonding requirement and potentially altered debt service and rate impacts. They emphasized that multiple financial variables were being considered concurrently.

Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith stated that planning for water withdrawal and city-level infrastructure investments would need to occur in parallel so that cities could adequately prepare for their respective financial obligations.

The Project Managers noted that they had encouraged coordination with city engineers for many years to better plan for these requirements and had offered to facilitate such discussions.

Mr. Owens emphasized that lenders would require certainty regarding demand for the water being produced, stating that before advancing any project, it would be necessary to confirm that the water would be purchased.

The Project Managers summarized that repeated pauses in project advancement were driven primarily by financial concerns and projected rate increases. They reported that in July 2025, at the Board's direction, discussions resumed with the City of Atlanta to explore potential partnership or water purchase arrangements. They also noted that during this period the Board considered broader questions regarding the Authority's long-term operations, including meeting frequency and potential winding down scenarios.

The Project Managers then transitioned the discussion to alternative water purchase options. They reported that initial conversations with Coweta County resulted in short-term supply offers with limited volumes. When infrastructure costs and surcharges were factored in, those options were determined to be financially unfavorable.

Chair Tony Phillips asked for clarification regarding the current estimated water demand, measured in million gallons per day (MGD), for all three member cities.

The Project Managers reported that the most recent planning study projected total system demand of approximately 13.25 million gallons per day (MGD) based on a 50-year planning horizon. They noted that recent usage trends have fluctuated, with some cities showing decreased consumption levels.

Chair Tony Phillips confirmed that this represented estimated daily system demand. The Project Managers explained that the proposed treatment facility was designed to be constructed in phases, initially producing approximately 6 MGD, with peak production capability of 7.5 MGD, and expandable to the full 13.25 MGD as demand increased. This capacity level has been modeled with the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and serves as the planning allocation placeholder for the Authority. They further noted that future partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions could have increased permitted withdrawal volumes if additional demand were incorporated.

The Project Managers provided historical context regarding discussions with Coweta County, which at one time indicated willingness to supply up to 10 MGD under short-term arrangements. However, engineering verification delays and associated infrastructure cost considerations ultimately led the Authority to discontinue pursuit of that option.

Subsequent discussions with the City of Atlanta in 2023 included both in-person and virtual meetings exploring potential collaboration. While preliminary dialogue suggested possible partnership opportunities, uncertainties regarding cost-sharing responsibilities and reliance on unpermitted intake assumptions resulted in further pause. More recent conversations with new leadership at Atlanta Watershed Management were described as constructive, though follow-up direction from the Board had not yet been established.

## **Financial and Funding Overview**

The Project Managers provided a historical overview of project financing efforts, noting the following:

- In 2003, the Authority issued bonds totaling approximately \$41.63 million, primarily used for capitalized interest, land acquisition, mitigation credits, studies, and other project-related expenses.
- A rate and financial feasibility study was completed in 2013 in connection with reservoir planning.
- In October 2013, the Authority secured a \$10.5 million GEFA loan, which has since been paid off following modifications that allowed deferment of drawdown for several years.
- After approval of the Preliminary Engineering Report for the direct withdrawal project in 2021, the Authority applied for a \$25 million GEFA loan, with an anticipated additional \$25 million in subsequent funding. The application was ultimately withdrawn in 2023 due to the inability to provide required audits from all three member cities.
- Efforts to obtain ARPA funding were unsuccessful.
- Coordination with federal and state partners, including assistance facilitated through Senator Jon Ossoff's office, connected the Authority to an interagency funding forum prepared to assist with project financing once audits and defined project parameters are available.
- Potential eligibility for USDA funding and loan forgiveness opportunities was also identified; however, progress is contingent upon completion of member city audits.

Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith reported that Palmetto had engaged an outside firm to address outstanding audits for fiscal years 2022 through 2025 and expressed optimism regarding completion. She also noted, for the benefit of new Board members, that the Authority currently does not have a General Manager following the departure of Mr. Farmer.

Councilmember Jessica Wilbanks asked whether feasibility studies with the City of Atlanta would resume or whether the Authority would proceed independently. The Project Managers responded that direction from the Board would determine whether to pursue further coordination with Atlanta or focus on the Authority's direct withdrawal project, and noted that upcoming Georgia Tech case program work could inform that decision.

The Project Managers presented four proposed project scopes for participation in the Georgia Tech Case Program, a 10-week academic engagement assigning student teams to complete research-based deliverables. Each scope would involve approximately 50 hours of analytical work per team over the semester.

The first proposed scope, System Connectivity and Infrastructure Readiness Assessment, was described in detail. The assessment would:

- Inventory existing water infrastructure across the three cities
- Evaluate connectivity readiness for integration with the Authority system
- Digitize infrastructure documentation into mapping and database formats
- Produce gap analysis reports for each city
- Deliver a final summary presentation

The Project Managers clarified that the students' work would not replace professional engineering services and would exclude field inspections, certifications, or final construction cost estimates. Success of the program would depend on availability of city data, staff responsiveness, and access to existing records. The assessment was recommended as a foundational step to establish baseline understanding of infrastructure conditions and future connection requirements.

Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones asked whether the proposed Georgia Tech engagement would generate data necessary to define project scope for potential funding opportunities previously discussed through Senator Ossoff's office, or whether such scope was already known.

The Project Managers responded that the Authority has an established general scope for the direct withdrawal project; however, city-specific infrastructure requirements remain undefined. They explained that the Georgia Tech assessment would evaluate each city's readiness to connect to the Authority's system, including identifying infrastructure improvements necessary to distribute water to customers and generate revenue sufficient to service project debt.

Mayor Portis-Jones requested clarification regarding the potential use of federal funding discussed previously. The Project Managers clarified that no formal funding offer had been made, but that any potential funding would be directed toward the Authority's direct withdrawal project, which already has an approved scope, secured land, and permits in place. They noted that the primary gap remains funding for city-specific infrastructure components.

Chair Tony Phillips explained that the proposed Georgia Tech project would help identify infrastructure upgrades required within each member city. He noted that aging infrastructure in some jurisdictions would not support immediate system integration and that the assessment would provide baseline information to guide future engineering analysis.

The Project Managers clarified that the student work would not include construction cost estimates but would provide foundational data that could be utilized by city engineers, offering a cost-effective preliminary assessment. They noted that Board approval was required to submit the project to Georgia Tech by the end of the week to participate in the current semester program.

Chair Phillips asked what additional actions were required beyond approval. The Project Managers indicated that they would require:

1. A formal vote authorizing submission of the project scope to Georgia Tech; and
2. Identification by each member city of a staff contact to provide infrastructure data and coordinate with the student teams.

Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones expressed support for the initiative and emphasized the importance of obtaining information. She made a motion to submit the project scope to Georgia Tech. Mayor Vince Williams seconded the motion. **Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

The Project Managers then presented a second proposed scope, Affordability Analysis, identified as another critical-path item. They explained that concerns about projected water rates have driven decision pauses and that updated population and growth projections are needed to refine financial modeling.

The proposed analysis would include:

- Updated population projections for each member city
- Assessment of industrial and commercial growth impacts
- Evaluation of water demand and rate distribution scenarios
- Comparative regional benchmarking of water rates
- Preparation of a summary report and executive presentation

The Project Managers noted that the study would provide insight into how projected growth and demand could influence rate structures and whether anticipated rates align with regional trends for new water infrastructure development.

Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith requested that it be noted for the record that, as the Authority moves toward development of a formal operating budget, associated costs including the project managers fee for the Georgia Tech Project, should be considered.

City Manager Jamila Criss inquired about the timeline for student participation and whether member cities would have sufficient time to designate staff to provide required data. The Project Managers responded that project scopes were due by the end of the week, with student engagement expected to begin in February.

Vice Chair Brian Jones asked whether the Authority intended to pursue all four proposed project scopes. The Project Managers explained that the scopes had been prioritized into two critical-path items and two additional items that could be deferred to a later semester to avoid overextending staff and resource commitments.

Chair Tony Phillips offered a motion to proceed with submission of the first two critical-path projects only, allowing the Authority to evaluate outcomes before considering additional scopes in a future semester. Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith seconded the motion. **Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

The Project Managers provided brief descriptions of the remaining two scopes for future reference, noting that one involved development of public relations tools and the other focused on document organization systems to support grant responsiveness. They explained that these efforts would be more effective once foundational planning work from the first two scopes was completed.

Mayor Vince Williams reminded the Board that it had previously agreed that development of a formal Authority budget would be assigned to a financial professional once engaged. Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones asked for an update on that effort. Mayor Williams indicated that the task had been assigned to Mr. Slaton and that status was currently unknown. Chair Phillips stated the matter could be revisited under New Business.

Mayor Portis-Jones asked whether the Board intended to revisit discussions with the City of Atlanta regarding potential partnership opportunities. Chair Phillips responded that the matter was appropriate for Board discussion and noted that information developed through the Georgia Tech engagement could support future dialogue.

Mayor Vince Williams reported that he had communicated with a representative connected to Atlanta Watershed leadership and expressed the Authority's interest in continued engagement. He indicated that he anticipated follow-up communication regarding next steps.

Chair Phillips asked whether there was a motion to continue outreach efforts with the City of Atlanta. Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones made a motion to proceed with continued outreach. Mayor Vince Williams seconded the motion.

**Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**

Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones reiterated her support for continued dialogue with the City of Atlanta, emphasizing the importance of gaining specificity regarding potential collaboration opportunities. She stated that maintaining consistent communication would help clarify obligations, responsibilities, and potential gaps while ensuring that all member cities have input in shaping future discussions. She noted that previous conversations envisioned representation by all three mayors and the Chair in future meetings and expressed the importance of regional engagement, particularly given Atlanta's central role in regional water supply considerations.

The Project Managers reported that leadership within Atlanta Watershed Management had expressed enthusiasm during prior discussions, noting that the Authority possesses tangible project assets including permits and land rather than conceptual proposals, which generated interest.

Chair Tony Phillips highlighted the strategic value of the Authority's existing Environmental Protection Division permits, noting their rarity and potential leverage in future negotiations. The Project Managers also reminded the Board of the Authority's ownership of a reservoir site exceeding 400 acres, which could provide long-term flexibility should future supply demands exceed available withdrawal capacity from the Chattahoochee River.

The Project Managers requested direction regarding follow-up with Sustainability Partners, who had presented in December. They asked whether Board members had submitted questions or wished to outline next steps. Chair Phillips suggested deferring further discussion until all Board members had an opportunity to review the presentation recording.

Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith stated that cost considerations remain central to evaluating any partnership and that understanding projected water pricing would be necessary before advancing further engagement. The Project Managers responded that forthcoming data from the Georgia Tech engagement could provide useful information to support those determinations.

Chair Phillips discussed balancing communication with Sustainability Partners, noting the importance of maintaining engagement while allowing time for additional analysis. The Project Managers suggested that each city assess its current metering infrastructure as an initial step in evaluating compatibility with partnership opportunities.

Chair Phillips further noted that regional water rates are expected to rise regardless of project selection and emphasized the importance of understanding emerging rate norms when considering long-term planning. He stated that insights gained from the Georgia Tech analyses could assist the Authority in benchmarking expectations and identifying feasible engagement opportunities.

The Project Managers concluded that allowing additional time for analysis aligns with the long-term planning horizon typical of major water infrastructure projects and would not negatively impact partnership discussions.

Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones expressed interest in initiating dialogue with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) regarding regional water system collaboration and long-term planning. She suggested that inviting ARC representatives to present on regionalization, 50-year water planning, and broader system coordination could help orient newer Board members and provide context beyond the Authority's three-city focus.

The Project Managers noted that ARC staff have historically supported the Authority and remain engaged in regional planning discussions. They indicated that ARC representatives could be invited to present, and recommended clarifying the Authority's objectives and key questions in advance to ensure a productive discussion. They also stated that the Authority's project has been incorporated into regional planning documentation for more than a decade, reflecting its significance to South Fulton's long-term water strategy.

Mayor Portis-Jones emphasized the value of understanding how regionalization concepts apply specifically to the Authority's position within the broader metropolitan context.

Chair Tony Phillips agreed that a presentation would be beneficial and reported prior discussions with ARC leadership. He recommended inviting Mr. Danny Johnson to attend the next meeting, subject to Board concurrence, noting his expertise in regional water planning and leadership roles related to water resource management.

Councilmember Jessica Wilbanks suggested providing ARC with guiding questions in advance to allow preparation of a focused and comprehensive presentation. Mayor Portis-Jones agreed, recommending both submission of questions and a general informational overview to ensure foundational understanding.

Chair Phillips reiterated that ARC leadership possesses extensive regional knowledge and that engagement could generate valuable context and follow-up dialogue. Mayor Portis-Jones added that such engagement should be ongoing rather than limited to a single presentation, given the depth of expertise available.

## **VII. Other Business**

Mayor Vince Williams provided an update regarding the Authority's accounting services. He stated that the Authority is currently utilizing Dan Post, who has served as accountant for several years; however, the Authority may benefit from engaging a professional who can provide ongoing in-person support and assist in development of a formal operating budget and financial planning framework.

Attorney Davenport offered to consult with Antha Watkins and Dan Post prior to the next meeting to compile a list of accounting duties currently performed. He stated this information would assist the Board in defining expectations when evaluating potential firms and could be included in the next meeting packet for review.

Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith agreed this would be helpful and suggested that any future accounting scope include familiarity with reporting and financial analysis presented to the Board. Attorney Davenport indicated he preferred to maintain direct involvement in monthly reporting to ensure continuity, oversight, and communication across member cities, though he would defer to the Board's direction.

Mayor Thomas-Smith emphasized the importance of continuity planning and requested development of a documented process to ensure operational knowledge is preserved regardless of personnel changes. Attorney Davenport responded that the structured reporting and documentation procedures being implemented would support continuity by providing transparent monthly records accessible to Board members.

Councilmember Jessica Wilbanks asked for clarification regarding Authority financial obligations, including debt service and operating expenditures, and whether current financial data could provide a preliminary understanding of budget levels.

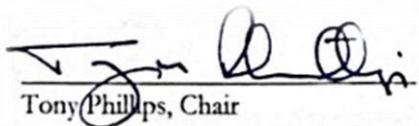
Attorney Davenport advised reviewing the financial package provided at the meeting, noting that current bank balances were reflected therein and explaining that debt service obligations are covered through monthly payments rather than directly reducing account balances. He referenced prior "burn rate" calculations performed by the Authority's accountant and indicated similar forward-looking financial projections would be needed to develop a formal budget.

Councilmember Wilbanks acknowledged the clarification and reiterated support for establishing a formal budget framework moving forward. Vice Chair Brian Jones noted that additional financial obligations, including bond-related payments, must also be considered in budgeting discussions. Attorney Davenport concluded that historical spending provides retrospective insight but emphasized the need for prospective planning to guide future expenditure limits.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

The motion to adjourn the Middle Chattahoochee Regional Water & Sewer Authority Meeting at 9:00 p.m. was made by Mayor Thomas Smith and seconded by City Manager Criss.

**Vote: 7-0; Motion Carried**



Tony Phillips, Chair



J. Davis  
Jessica Davis, Secretary