

Middle Chattahoochee Regional Water And Sewer Authority Meeting

May 13th, 2025 @ 7:00 PM
City of Palmetto- Palmetto Community Center
595 Main Street, Palmetto, GA 30268

- I.** Chairwoman Sonja Fillingame called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.
- II.** Roll Call was taken by Ms. Cherrita Lugo with the following board members present:

The Honorable Chairwoman Sonja Fillingame
The Honorable Mayor Vince Williams The Honorable Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith
The Honorable Vice-Chair Mario Avery The Honorable Councilman Brian Jones

The following board members were absent:
The Honorable Councilman Nathan Slaton- City Manager Sylvia Redic attended on his behalf
The Honorable City Manager Tony Phillips

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

III. Approval of Water Authority Minutes:

A motion to approve the April 8th 2025 minutes was made by Mayor Williams and seconded by Mayor Avery.

Mayor Smith expressed concerns that a previous discussion about the forensic audit, including details about a potential auditor, was not reflected in the minutes. She noted that important information had been shared and questioned whether the omission should be addressed now or postponed, especially in the absence of Attorney Davenport. She requested that the omitted conversation be added to the official record, referencing recorded materials that could support its inclusion.

Mayor Williams commented that the authority does not produce verbatim minutes. He added that the item could be tabled and discussed when the attorney and secretary are present at the next meeting.

Councilmember Jones made a substitute motion to table the April 8th minutes and Mayor Williams seconded the substitute motion to table the minutes. **Vote: 6-0; Motion Carried**

IV. Discussion & Approval

V. Reports:

1. Authority Attorney

Mr. Patrick, presenting on behalf of Attorney Davenport, requested an executive session to discuss matters related to real estate.

Mayor Smith questioned the process, asking whether advance notice is required before holding an executive session. The body confirmed that prior public notice is not required in this case.

2. Financial Manager

Mr. Patrick presented Requisition #276 in the amount of \$14,050.55 for approval.

The motion to approve requisition #276 was made by Mayor Williams and seconded by Mayor Avery.

Vote: 6-0; Motion Carried

Chairwoman Fillingame acknowledged the motion and opened the floor for discussion. Mayor Smith raised questions regarding the invoice details and the entities mentioned in the supporting documentation.

Mayor Smith inquired about the stakeholders and potential partners referenced in Project Manager Gray's invoice.

Project Manager Gray clarified that those details are intended for executive session discussion due to confidentiality and were therefore stated generally in the invoice.

Mayor Smith then addressed Project Manager Benz, referencing her mention of "prospective partner packages."

Project Manager Benz explained that this referred to materials being prepared to inform interested parties about the authority's objectives, a topic discussed in a previous meeting.

Mayor Smith expressed concern that these packages had not yet been shared and also raised a question about correspondence with Kwanza Hall.

Project Manager Benz clarified that the correspondence involved outreach from the Fulton County Development Authority regarding potential collaboration on water supply initiatives in South Fulton.

Mayor Smith directed a question to GM Farmer regarding a line item in his invoice about exploring options for potential entities interested in the authority's assets and permits. She expressed concern, referencing previous discussions that suggested dissolution was not under consideration.

GM Farmer responded that the authority is not being dissolved, but rather exploring all potential options and future directions.

3. Project Managers:

Project Manager Gray reminded the board that the annual Water Loss Control Program progress reports are due on July 27th. A simple reporting template is used each year, and reminders will be sent to the cities in advance.

Project Manager Benz noted that this year marks the first deadline for the Water Conservation Progress Report, which is required every five years. Coordination with the cities will ensure timely submission.

USGS Gauge and EPD Correspondence:

Project Manager Gray shared that the City of Palmetto received a notice regarding the USGS gauge installation. The gauge location was previously approved by EPD following correspondence sent on November 2, 2021. The gauge has since been installed and is maintained through annual payments by the authority.

Mayor Smith requested that clarification be provided to those unfamiliar with the background of the gauge installation and the related communication.

Project Manager Benz explained that she and Ms. Gray quickly reviewed the document upon arrival at the meeting. Based on initial review, it appears the authority did coordinate with EPD and received proper approval. Documentation of that approval will be provided. Further review of the notice is still needed to fully address any remaining issues.

Councilmember Jones inquired whether the communication received was new. Mayor Smith confirmed it was and added that Chris Frazier from Palmetto's Water Department was identified by EPD as the point of contact. Mr. Frazier was unaware of this designation and did not know his license had been used in connection with any filings.

The Project Managers clarified that all filings using licensing or credentials were approved by the board. They noted that no individual's water treatment license was submitted without authorization and suggested the issue might stem from a conflict between the cities' existing permits and the authority's permitting process.

Chairwoman Fillingame advised that since the EPD notice had just been received, the board should proceed cautiously and allow time to gather the facts. The Project Managers agreed to meet with Mr. Frazier the following day to help resolve the issue.

EPD Coordination on Water Withdrawals:

The Project Managers shared insights from recent coordination with EPD staff, including Mr. Wayne and regional hydrologists. They emphasized that EPD cannot provide a general capacity estimate for the Chattahoochee River. Instead, they require a specific withdrawal amount to be submitted (e.g., 10 million gallons/day), after which they will run modeling scenarios to determine the feasibility of the request based on acceptable flow levels and environmental impact.

EPD remains supportive, but the authority must approach them with clear partner commitments and defined water needs before modeling can be conducted.

4. General Manager:

General Manager Farmer reported that the audit with Mauldin & Jenkins is progressing and expected to be completed on time, likely by November.

He then shared his concerns about the future direction of the Authority, noting that while he was brought on to help build structure and provide strategic focus, he is now uncertain about the long-term vision. He acknowledged the positive momentum following the board's retreat and noted some progress, such as transitioning to a new engineering firm, but expressed doubts about the Authority's current trajectory.

Mr. Farmer emphasized that, with close proximity to a major international airport, the region's water uncertainty is troubling. He voiced concern about the long-term water security for the cities served by the Authority, particularly highlighting vulnerabilities in Palmetto's dual water sources—its aging water plant and reliance on Coweta County.

He stressed the need for cities to plan ahead for emergencies or service disruptions, stating that without a reliable backup supply, water and fire protection services could be compromised. He added that, although he does not intend to be critical, he feels his ability to contribute meaningfully may have come to an end, especially if the Authority continues to operate without clear direction or forward movement.

Chairwoman Fillingame acknowledged Mr. Farmer's concerns, noting they are shared by the board and that the situation is complex and challenging, with many moving parts. She emphasized the board's ongoing commitment to leadership despite the difficulties.

City Manager Redic appreciated Mr. Farmer's candid remarks, adding that Palmetto shares those same concerns, especially with the costs of sustaining leadership during a period of operational pause. She noted that the Authority may need to re-evaluate whether external support remains necessary at this stage.

Mr. Farmer reiterated his belief that while he enjoyed working with the Authority and wished more progress had been made, the rising costs of infrastructure and unresolved debt make strategic decisions increasingly urgent. He

cautioned that without resolution, the cities themselves may bear the financial burden of the Authority's obligations. He will have a conversation with Attorney Davenport regarding his resignation.

Chairwoman Fillingame thanked Mr. Farmer for his service, recognizing that his contributions came during a difficult season. She affirmed the board's intention to continue navigating these challenges with commitment and leadership.

The motion to enter executive session was made by Mayor Avery and seconded by Mayor Williams.

Vote: 6-0; Motion Carried

The motion to exit the executive session was made by Councilmember Jones and seconded by Mayor Williams

Vote: 6-0; Motion Carried

- VI.** The motion to adjourn the Middle Chattahoochee Regional Water & Sewer Authority Meeting was made by Mayor Williams and seconded by Councilmember Jones.

Vote: 6-0; Motion Carried



Sonja Fillingame, Chair



J. Davis
Jessica Davis, Secretary