Middle Chattahoochee Regional Water And Sewer Authority Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 11th, 2024
Union City-City Hall
5047 Union Street, Union City, GA 30291

I. Chairwoman Sonja Fillingame called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

II. Roll Call was taken by Ms. Cherrita Lugo with the following board members present:

The Honorable Chairwoman Sonja Fillingame
The Honorable Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith
The Honorable Councilman Brian Jones
The Honorable Vice-Chair Mario Avery
The Honorable Board Member J. Clark Boddie
The Honorable City Manager Tony Phillips

The following board members were absent during roll call:
The Honorable Mayor Vince Williams

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

III. Approval of Water Authority Minutes:

The motion to approve the May 14th 2024 MCRW&SA Meeting Minutes was made by Board member Boddie and seconded by Vice-Chair Avery. **Vote: 6-0; Motion Carried**

IV. New Business:

V. Discussion and Approval:

- **Additional details for the upcoming strategic planning retreat**

  The August 10th Authority Retreat will be held at the Georgia Municipal Association building located at 201 Pryor Street, S.W. Atlanta, GA 30303. Breakfast, lunch, and snacks will be served.

  Vice-Chair Avery asked General Manager Farmer if the projected timeline for water delivery in 2026 was feasible. General Manager Farmer responded, stating they had met with Coweta to work on the MOU and technical aspects, emphasizing ongoing progress.

  Concerning the water treatment plant, Vice-Chair Avery inquired whether the Authority would contribute and what the associated costs might entail. General Manager Farmer noted that discussions had addressed these topics, highlighting the need to transport water to Coweta's facility.

  City Manager Phillips raised questions about potential financial contributions to Coweta's infrastructure plans, considering their capital projects. General Manager Farmer suggested that without proper planning, future costs might fall to the Authority, given their significant projected water usage.

  Vice-Chair Avery referenced Fairburn's current water rates. The Chairwoman added that these questions were part of ongoing exploratory discussions with Coweta, aimed at preparing for the Strategic Planning Retreat.

City Manager Phillips sought clarity on the deliverables expected by the retreat, querying Krebs about their progress in assessing infrastructure needs and costs. Krebs outlined plans to present route options and cost estimates for water main routes and storage tanks.

Board member Boddie expressed concerns about Atlanta's potential influence and the Authority's long-term infrastructure plans. Krebs clarified the distance and logistics involved in extending water lines to Union City.

Regarding engagement with Coweta at the retreat, City Manager Phillips suggested inviting representatives for direct dialogue. Chairwoman Fillingame emphasized the need to maximize the retreat's value by focusing on informed decision-making and comprehensive discussions.

Due to decisions affecting Fairburn, City Manager Phillips mentioned the need for timely engagement with Coweta. Board member Boddie and Mayor Smith discussed past dealings with engineers and regulatory agencies, highlighting ongoing challenges and potential federal assistance.

Chairwoman Fillingame noted upcoming audits and grant opportunities, suggesting further discussions on funding sources. Mayor Smith mentioned plans for a meeting with Mayor Dickens to discuss collaborative opportunities among cities.

Councilman Jones asked about the relevance of ongoing discussions with Atlanta amidst recent developments, prompting considerations about maintaining open communication channels.

Chairwoman Fillingame emphasized the need to evaluate all viable options and maintain focus during discussions, particularly regarding significant capital projects impacted by current decisions.

A. Financial Report-

Attorney Davenport informed the board that the MOU with Coweta has been executed and our files are ready to proceed. He emphasized the importance of characterizing it accurately, noting that the MOU allows two authorities with common interests to collaborate effectively. The initial step involves amending the MOU with an action plan, aligning with previous discussions from a working group session.

He emphasized the need to address design and infrastructure costs with Coweta, especially considering the capital investments that will be affected by our collaboration. He stressed the long-term value of the relationship and the need to strategize cost-sharing arrangements at this critical juncture, as decisions on capital costs will impact water rates.

Attorney Davenport highlighted the importance of ongoing dialogue with Coweta and the involvement of engineers from both authorities to negotiate fair cost allocations. He expressed optimism about the progress made and anticipated presenting the first amendment to the MOU soon.

City Manager Phillips responded, acknowledging the division of responsibilities between staff and decision-makers. He expressed interest in understanding the timeline for further developments.

Attorney Davenport presented requisition #262 in the amount of $37,884.72.

Motion to approve Req #262 in the amount of $37,884.72 was made by Councilman Jones and seconded by City Manager Phillips. **Vote: 6-0; Motion Carried**

Attorney Davenport presented requisition #263 (Interest payments-BNY) in the amount of $469,987.50.

Motion to approve Req #263 in the amount of $469,987.50 was made by Councilman Jones and seconded by Vice-Chair Avery. **Vote: 6-0; Motion Carried**

Mayor Smith informed the board that she had received an email from BNY Mellon that appeared to be spam and was highly encrypted. She expressed her intention to share it with someone for further review. Mayor Smith then asked board member Boddie if he used to receive emails from the company. Board member Boddie replied, mentioning he received numerous communications during his tenure as mayor.

Attorney Davenport requested Mayor Smith to forward the email to him for investigation.

B. Project Managers-

- **Annual Water Loss Control Program Progress Report-** The deadline is July 27th.

- **GEFA-** GEFA (Georgia Environmental Finance Authority) recently contacted the project managers. They communicated with Amanda Carol, and the new Director. Their outreach pertained to contacting clients about outstanding loans, and clarified that the authority was not specifically targeted, but rather part of their routine due diligence. This communication follows a similar contact last month regarding another project.

  In 2013, the authority secured a $10.5 million loan from GEFA with a 2.4% interest rate and a 30-year term. Originally designated for a reservoir project, the loan terms have since been amended and deadlines extended to encompass projects involving direct withdrawal or interconnection, including the Coweta project.

  Under the most recent loan amendment, the authority was required to complete construction by December 2024 and draw down all funds by April 2025. A draw of just over $9,000 was made in 2018 to cover road water testing, ensuring the loan's preservation for the authority until 2025, as outlined in the agreement.

  GEFA's recent inquiry aimed to verify the status of the authority's projects. They also indicated that under current terms, a new loan would have a maximum amount of $10 million, an interest rate of 3.35%, and a maximum term of 20 years.

  GEFA requested that the project managers provide an update regarding the upcoming authority retreat.

C. General Manager-

- **Coweta-** We met with Coweta and the individual cities. We're moving forward.

D. Krebs Engineering-

- **Project Management**: We are currently evaluating several proposed routes for the water mains connecting to Coweta to determine the most cost-effective and least disruptive options for the cities. We will finalize take-offs to estimate costs for each proposed route and present them at the upcoming retreat.

- **Hydraulic Model Development**: We are in the process of developing a hydraulic model for the authority's water system.

- **Information Gathering**: We have gathered substantial information from Fairburn and Union City but are still seeking information from Palmetto. Krebs has offered assistance in this regard.

- **Project Schedule**: The board was provided with a list of items that will be presented at the retreat.

- **Water Quality & Permit Requirements**: Once connections are established and the authority's water system is operational, necessary improvements will include elevated storage tanks, transmission mains, and a booster pumping station. Cost estimates for each project will be presented along with preliminary project schedules based on hydraulic model results.

  Councilman Jones asked Attorney Davenport about the authority's ability to leverage existing water line contracts from other cities or counties within the state to expedite timelines. Attorney Davenport cautioned against "piggybacking" on contracts due to potential violations of state guidelines, despite previous legislative attempts to raise the public works threshold.

  Board member Boddie inquired about the authority's permit and the decommissioning of the Palmetto water treatment plant once the withdrawal permit from the Chattahoochee River is activated. Attorney Davenport clarified that the decommissioning condition is tied to the withdrawal permit, not the Coweta project. Boddie raised the question of whether the plant, though owned by the authority, should continue to be used as a water source or decommissioned. Attorney Davenport will investigate it.

VI. Other Business:

VII. The motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 pm was made by Board member Boddie and seconded by Councilman Jones. **Vote: 6-0; Motion Carried**

Sonja Fillingame, Chair

Jessica Davis, Secretary