Middle Chattahoochee Regional Water And Sewer Authority Meeting

September 9th, 2025 @ 7:00 PM
City of Union City- City Hall
5047 Union Street, Union City, GA 30291

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

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

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

The following members were absent:
The Honorable City Manager Tony Phillips and The Honorable Councilman Nathan Slaton

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

III. Approval of Water Authority Minutes:

Councilman Jones asked whether, in cases where a board member is absent but a representative attends on their behalf, should the regular board member still be marked as present. In this instance, Councilmember Slaton was absent, and Councilmember Arnold attended on his behalf.

Secretary Davis stated that the minutes reflect that Mr. Arnold attended the meeting as the representative for Councilman Slaton.

The motion to approve the August 12th, 2025, MCRWSA was made by Councilman Jones and seconded by Mayor Smith. **Vote: 5-0; Motion Carried**

Mayor Smith noted that the minutes have been arriving later than usual and expressed concern that receiving them only a day before the meeting poses a challenge for review. She asked whether it would be possible for the Board to receive the minutes earlier.

Secretary Davis responded by referencing her email to the Board dated September 8, 2025, which explained the packet distribution schedule. She reiterated that, moving forward, the digital meeting packet would be provided on the Friday before each meeting. However, if certain supporting documents, such as receipts, were not available by that time, the complete packet with all supporting materials would be distributed on the day of the meeting. Secretary Davis added that this schedule was implemented to ensure timely review while allowing adequate time for final documents to be completed.

Mayor Smith acknowledged that she missed the September 8th email and responded with "okay."

IV. Discussion & Approval

V. Reports:

1. **Authority Attorney-**

There was no report from the attorney's office at this time.

2. **Financial Manager**

Attorney Davenport presented Requisition #281 in the amount of $10,050.21 for approval.

The motion to approve requisition #281 was made by Mayor Williams and seconded by Councilmember Jones.

Vote: 5-0; Motion Carried

3. **Project Managers:**

A. **Water Loss Control Program and Water Conservation Report**

Project Managers Laura Benz and Andrea Gray reported that, as of August 15, all required reports for the Water Loss Control Program and Water Conservation Report had been submitted to EPD for this year. They explained that once those reports are submitted, EPD reviews and files them, confirming that the Board has met the necessary requirements to apply for program eligibility this year.

B. **GEFA Loan**

The project managers stated that a confirmation letter from GEFA was received on August 26, verifying that the Board's GEFA default obligations have been satisfied. A copy of this confirmation has already been provided to Secretary Davis for recordkeeping, and a copy will also be emailed to all Board members for their reference.

C. **Meeting with City of Atlanta**

The project managers noted that the team is still awaiting a response following the prior discussion held in August. They assured the Board that an update will be provided as soon as additional information is received.

Mayor Avery asked a question regarding the recent meeting with Atlanta, inquiring whether he had missed an invitation to attend.

Mayor Williams responded that no invitation had been missed. He explained that the team had been directed to move forward with arranging some type of meeting with the City of Atlanta. To initiate that process, he personally requested and attended a meeting with Mayor Dickens and his team, along with members of the project team, in order to open the door for future collaboration. Mayor Williams stated that once Atlanta responds following this productive initial meeting, it is his hope that the other mayors will join him in a subsequent meeting with Mayor Dickens. He emphasized that there was no intent to exclude anyone, but there had been discussion among the group about whether such a meeting was appropriate at this stage. He noted that Mr. Phillips believed it was, and he agreed that it was the right step to take. Mayor Williams concluded that the meeting was very positive, and the Board would be updated once Atlanta provides feedback or next steps.

The Project Managers added that the session was primarily an introductory meeting.

Mayor Avery responded that he understood and had no issue with that approach, expressing that he was glad progress was being made. However, he explained that his understanding from two months prior was that, based on comments from Mayor Williams, the focus was first on getting internal matters in order before engaging with Atlanta. He mentioned that he had, in fact, spoken with Mayor Dickens but deliberately avoided bringing up the topic out of respect for the Board. Mayor Avery requested that, moving forward, whenever future meetings of this nature are scheduled, all three mayors be included in attendance.

Mayor Williams stated that his intent was not to exclude or disrespect anyone but to ensure that an initial meeting was held to begin the process. He reiterated that the preliminary discussion was necessary to open the lines of communication with Atlanta.

Mayor Smith expressed concern regarding earlier discussions that appeared to involve Union City and Fairburn but seemed to leave Palmetto out of the conversation. She recalled mentioning this concern at the last meeting, noting that it appeared there had been tentative discussions between Union City and Fairburn about a potential arrangement or workaround that did not include Palmetto. Mayor Smith clarified that her understanding was that those cities might have been planning to work out a deal first and then bring Palmetto in afterward.

The Project Managers explained that the meeting with Atlanta was extremely preliminary. They shared that during the previous discussions, they had gathered a group to meet with Atlanta to explore potential options. At that time, however, the financial aspects did not work out, leading the Authority to consider pursuing its own intake again. After those efforts stalled due to funding limitations, this recent meeting was intended to reopen conversations with Atlanta, especially now that new leadership was in place on Atlanta's side. The Project Managers emphasized that no details or commitments were discussed; rather, the meeting served as an initial conversation to gauge Atlanta's interest in continuing discussions. Atlanta's representatives stated that they would brief the new water commissioner and follow up once he was up to speed. The Project Managers confirmed that the Board is currently awaiting Atlanta's response.

Councilman Jones clarified that the discussion Mayor Smith referenced was related to a proposal previously presented by Tom Owens. He stated that Mr. Owens's idea was separate from the ongoing conversations with Atlanta and was not part of the Atlanta meeting or agenda.

Mayor Smith responded that the situation had been confusing to her because Mr. Owens presented his idea in a way that made it seem connected to the discussions involving Atlanta.

Chairwoman Fillingame stated that the meeting with Atlanta was indeed preliminary and primarily served as an introduction. She explained that her understanding from the meeting was that the next step would be to return to the Authority and the member cities to provide an update and determine whether future meetings might be beneficial. Chairwoman Fillingame added that she did not leave the meeting with the impression that there was a concrete plan or agreement in place. She acknowledged that Mr. Owens does have ideas for potential collaboration but emphasized that the main takeaway from the meeting was to explore whether there could be a possible working relationship between the Authority and Atlanta. She concluded by noting that the Authority is awaiting further communication to determine if additional discussions will move forward.

Mayor Smith stated that she understood Mr. Owens had clarified his position, but she wanted to emphasize her belief that no conversations or meetings should take place without the inclusion of all three cities. She explained that there should be no scenario where one or more cities are excluded from discussions. Mayor Smith added that since all three cities share responsibility for the debt and other obligations, they should likewise be included in any potential solutions.

Mayor Williams explained that his purpose in attending the meeting with Atlanta was to represent all three cities collectively. He stated that this was clearly communicated during the meeting, and that no city was left out or overlooked. Mayor Williams noted that the discussions centered around the Water Authority and the collaboration among the tri-cities involved in the project.

The Project Managers shared that they provided Atlanta's representatives with detailed information about the reservoir site, the intake system, and the overall project. They clarified that the meeting went beyond what Mr. Owens had presented and served as an opportunity to give Atlanta a complete overview of the project. They added that Atlanta's team appeared genuinely interested, particularly the new commissioner, who recognized the potential benefits of the project given the available land, permits, and resources. The

Project Managers stated that they were encouraged by the meeting and reiterated, in response to Mayor Avery's earlier comments, that this was part of a "top-down" approach. They explained that they had experienced difficulty scheduling direct conversations with the commissioner due to his busy schedule, and this meeting served as an important first step in establishing that connection.

Mayor Williams agreed with the Project Managers' comments and stated that Commissioner Earley had reached out to him directly. He noted that this outreach presented a prime opportunity for the Authority to engage in discussion and begin reestablishing communication with Atlanta.

VI. Other Business

Mayor Williams stated that he wanted to bring up a few items for discussion. He noted that there had been ongoing conversations about the possibility of adjusting the meeting schedule and suggested that, since October is approaching, it may be time to consider transitioning to quarterly meetings. Mayor Williams expressed that quarterly meetings would be appropriate at this stage, given the current workload and pending updates from Atlanta. Under this proposal, the Board would meet next month, with the following meeting scheduled for January. He explained that meeting simply for the sake of meeting would not be productive and that the Board should decide on how to proceed. Mayor Williams also mentioned that if meetings are not held, members would not receive stipends, as payments are tied to meeting attendance. However, he assured the Board that all vendors and bills would continue to be paid, and that officers must maintain their PNC signature cards to ensure business operations continue smoothly. Any outstanding matters could then be addressed at the next scheduled meeting.

Mayor Smith shared a differing opinion. She expressed concern about reducing the meeting frequency given the upcoming election cycle and potential changes in leadership. She noted that at least one mayor had not sought re-election, meaning a new representative would soon be seated, and there was also the possibility of additional changes among the Board. Mayor Smith emphasized that, given this transitional phase, it would be important to continue meeting monthly until the new Board members are officially seated and brought up to speed in January. She explained that when she first joined the Authority, the learning curve was steep, and had meetings held quarterly at that time, she might have struggled to stay informed. She therefore recommended continuing monthly meetings through the end of the year to ensure stability, proper onboarding, and continuity of operations.

Mayor Williams responded that while Mayor Avery has announced his decision not to seek re-election, that change would not take effect until the end of the year, as with his own upcoming election. He explained that it would not be appropriate to involve or educate new individuals before they are officially elected and seated. Mayor Williams added that the election of new officers traditionally occurs during the January meeting, and therefore, waiting until then to begin the transition would not result in any meaningful loss of continuity. He concluded that the Board could revisit this discussion at that time.

Mayor Avery stated that he respectfully disagreed with Mayor Williams's position. He expressed concern that reducing the frequency of meetings could lead to important matters being overlooked or delayed. Mayor Avery noted that holding regular meetings helps ensure accountability among Board members and allows for consistent oversight of Authority operations. He suggested that, instead of moving to quarterly meetings, the Board consider meeting every other month as a reasonable compromise.

Mayor Smith added that she believed any individuals running for upcoming mayoral or council seats should be encouraged to attend the Authority's meetings, as participation in the Water Authority plays a critical role in how each city is led. She stated that understanding the Authority's structure and ongoing projects is vital to city governance. Mayor Smith further explained that it would be premature to make a permanent change to the meeting schedule before the newly seated Board begins its term in January. She concluded by expressing that once the new Board is established, the members can revisit and decide whether monthly meetings remain necessary or if a different schedule would be more appropriate.

The motion to move to quarterly meetings was made by Mayor Williams and seconded by Councilman Jones. **Motion Carried: 3-2**

***Mayor Smith and Mayor Avery were in opposition*.**

Attorney Davenport reminded the Board that, based on their most recent vote, members of the Authority are currently paid on a monthly basis regardless of whether a meeting is held. He asked whether it remains the Board's desire to continue with that payment structure or to revise it so that compensation is only provided when meetings occur. Attorney Davenport noted that this matter does not require immediate action but should be addressed at the October meeting. He advised members to consider their preference so that, if necessary, a formal vote could be taken to amend the current policy.

Mayor Williams stated that all members should be present to share their input and have their voices heard on the matter.

Attorney Davenport continued, addressing a second issue related to vendor payments. He explained that under the Authority's current policy, vendors are paid only after the Board votes to approve their requisitions. He cautioned that if meetings are held quarterly, the Board should establish a process allowing authorized signatories to approve monthly invoices for work already authorized by the Authority. These payments could then be ratified by the full Board at the next scheduled meeting. Without such a process, vendors would be forced to wait for quarterly meetings to receive payment for completed work. Attorney Davenport recommended that both the member compensation policy and vendor payment procedures be placed on the October agenda for discussion.

Mayor Williams stated that this was the reason he raised those items earlier in the discussion. He said he trusted that the officers could handle necessary monthly payments and that such payments could be ratified at the next quarterly meeting. He agreed that both topics should be discussed further at the October meeting.

Mayor Smith then asked for clarification regarding the Authority's financial advisor. She noted that Mr. Davenport had previously confirmed that Dan Post was no longer serving in that capacity but questioned why his name continued to appear on financial reports. She also asked whether an RFP had been issued for a new financial advisor or if the Authority was in the process of identifying a replacement.

Mayor Williams responded that discussions had been held regarding the financial advisor position, but no new arrangements had yet been finalized.

Mayor Avery then asked whether City Manager Phillips had brought forth a recommendation. Mayor Williams stated that no recommendation had been presented. Mayor Avery assured the Board that a recommendation would be provided at the next meeting.

VII. Adjournment

The motion to adjourn the Middle Chattahoochee Regional Water & Sewer Authority Meeting at 7:25 p.m. was made by Mayor Williams and seconded by Councilman Jones. **Vote: 5-0; Motion Carried**

Sonja Fillingame, Chair

Jessica Davis, Secretary