



## **Customer Advisory Council (CAC) Meeting**

Minutes of the March 29, 2022 Virtual Meeting

### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Barbara Ausiello - Avon  
Lois Timms-Ferrara – Ellington  
Jim McGrath – Naugatuck

### Connecticut Water Staff in Attendance:

Amanda Deming, Rich Hanratty, Dan Meaney, Art O’Neill, Craig Patla, and Michelle Williams

### Welcome and Introduction:

Mr. Meaney opened the meeting at 6 p.m. and welcomed Ms. Ausiello who is representing the Town of Avon to the Customer Advisory Council.

### Minutes of the October 5, 2021 and January 4, 2022 meetings:

The minutes of both meetings were approved as drafted.

### Purpose of the Customer Advisory Council:

Mr. Patla explained that the Customer Advisory Council (CAC) provides an opportunity for the company to update customer representatives about projects, policies and procedures that may affect water quality or service, and for us to receive feedback from the council members. This will help improve communication, learn about the needs and priorities of customers and better serve the community.

### Brief Overview of Connecticut Water:

Mr. Patla gave a brief overview of the company’s service area and water systems -- serving about 106,000 customers in 60 Connecticut communities through more than 60 non-interconnected water systems.

### Water Related Legislation:

Mr. Hanratty discussed bills that were under consideration by the Connecticut General Assembly related to drinking water or that would have an impact on Connecticut Water. Bills mentioned included:

- Require the testing of private wells. This bill would not directly affect Connecticut Water as its sources are tested as required by the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH). However, it would have an impact on the communities we serve and Connecticut Water may be considered as a possible solution for contaminated private wells.
- Ban the use of sodium chloride used in treating roads for snow and ice.
- Reinstatement of a sales tax exemption for private and investor-owned water utilities. Taxes are a pass through cost to Connecticut Water customers. Municipal and quasi-governmental agencies do not pay sales tax to same degree, if at all, which places an unfair burden on the customers of private and investor-owned water utilities.
- Amend the Highway Use Tax or allow an exemption so that it does not apply to water utilities.

## Customer Service Update:

Mr. O'Neill updated the CAC on customer service related matters, including:

- PURA has authorized Connecticut Water to resume shut-offs for non-payment. Mr. O'Neill says the company will focus on customers who have not made a payment since 2020 and have not contacted Connecticut Water to discuss assistance options.
- Connecticut Water has many assistance options that are available to customers experiencing one-time or ongoing hardships. Details are at [www.ctwater.com/H2O](http://www.ctwater.com/H2O).

Mr. O'Neill also discussed cyber security at Connecticut Water and how the company is working to protect customer, employee and operational data.

He also stated that PURA had authorized a Water Revenue Adjustment (WRA) of 2.85% for water and wastewater beginning on April 1. He explained that WRA 'true up' actual revenue collected to the revenue authorized by PURA. WRA is adjusted annually in April based on the prior year's revenues. If revenue is higher than authorized in the last general rate case, the WRA is a credit applied to customer bills to refund the difference. If revenue is under collected, the WRA is a charge to make up the difference between actual and authorized.

Mr. O'Neill also informed the CAC that Connecticut Water was participating in a joint proceeding with PURA and DPH regarding a possible acquisition of the Miami Beach Water Company in Old Lyme. It is a small system with significant infrastructure needs.

## Infrastructure Investment:

Mr. Patla updated the committee on the company's infrastructure investment plans for 2022, including the Water Infrastructure and Conservation Adjustment (WICA) program.

- \$61.4 million budgeted in 2022 for infrastructure investment.
- More than half is for water main replacements through WICA and he highlighted some of the key WICA and non-WICA projects.
- He stated that supply chain issues are causing delays in receiving pipe and other materials, which require longer lead times for projects, but that the company is working through the issues and expects to complete the projects planned for 2022.

Mr. Patla added that Connecticut Water is working with local communities that have applied for federal funding infrastructure funding available through the state Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. He noted there is much more need than there are funds allocated.

He also stated that Connecticut Water works collaboratively with local communities on the scheduling of WICA projects, and coordinates projects with town road and sewer projects to the greatest extent possible.

## Water Supply Status

Mr. Patla reported that Connecticut Water's water supplies were full or nearly full. He added that the company continues to encourage customers to use water wisely to protect this valuable resource. Mr. Patla specifically noted that PURA had approved a water conservation rate of \$1.00 more per thousand gallons, which will apply to the bills of customers that use an average of more than 200 gallons per day. PURA also authorized the company to levy a fee of up to \$200 on customers who do not comply with mandatory water conservation requests. The fee will be assessed only after customers were notified that a mandatory conservation request is in effect. There are no mandatory conservation requests in place at the current time.

### Support for the Environment and Community Outreach:

Ms. Williams updated the CAC on a few of Connecticut Water's environmental initiatives, including:

- Plans to preserve six parcels of land as protected open space. The land is not needed for water supply purposes.
- The construction of bird nesting boxes on Connecticut Water watershed land.
- The recent creation of pollinator pathways in Clinton and Naugatuck.

Ms. Williams noted that the company has launched its 2022 rain barrel sales program. The program offers a \$10 bill credit to the first 250 customers to purchase a rain barrel. She also highlighted the Water Drop Watcher classroom education program for third-graders, the grants issued to local firefighters for training and equipment, and grants to local schools for touchless water bottle fill stations.

### Top Workplaces Award:

Mr. Meaney reported that Connecticut Water was one of just 1,100 companies across the country recognized with USA Top Workplaces Award. The award was based on employee responses to an anonymous survey. The award reflects the company's culture of service, commitment to workforce development, employee safety, and employee satisfaction and engagement.

### Recreation Update:

Mr. Meaney reported that the Shenipsit Lake Recreation Program was opening for 2022, as scheduled. Online registration for boat storage slots is being used since it was well received last year. All features of the company-funded recreation program will be open again including hiking, shoreline fishing, and fishing from boats. He also reported that the company's Killingworth hiking trail is scheduled to reopen in 2022. The trail has been closed for a couple of years following the washout of a bridge on the trail. A new bridge will be in place in 2022.

### Other Business:

None.

### Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for June 21, 2022.

### Adjournment:

The meeting ended at 6:50 p.m.