

Augusta County Service Authority
Regular Board Meeting, Thursday, January 21, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.
Board Meeting Room

PRESENT: Andrew C. Middleton, Chairman, North River District
Garry R. Gordon, Vice Chairman, Middle River District
Harvey Almarode, South River District
Allen Dahl, Beverley Manor District, *via phone conference from his phone due to COVID precautions*
Matthew Egeli, Wayne District
Michael L. Shull, Riverheads District
Timothy Simmons, Pastures District
Phil Martin, Executive Director
Brent Canterbury, Board Treasurer
Jean Marshall, Board Secretary

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CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

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ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Staff asked for the Agenda to be revised to remove item # 9 – Presentation on New Hope Telephone Cooperative and Broadband.

Mr. Gordon moved, seconded by Mr. Simmons to adopt the Agenda with the revision.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas: Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Dahl, Egeli,
Shull, and Simmons
Nays: None

Motion approved.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Gordon moved, seconded by Mr. Almarode, to approve the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of December 17, 2020, which have been mailed to the members with no corrections made.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas: Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Dahl, Egeli,
Shull, and Simmons

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Nays: None

Motion approved.

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MATTERS PRESENTED BY THE PUBLIC

The following letter was received by Staff and will be submitted into the official Minutes of this meeting:

January 20, 2021

Mr. Martin and ACSA Board of Directors,

*I am sorry I cannot attend your board meeting in person, as I am currently recovering at home from COVID-19. Therefore, I am writing to confirm what I stated by earlier letter (Dec. 17, 2020) and then by phone with Mr. Martin on December 21, 2020. That is, to affirm our family's long-standing commitment to being good stewards of the land entrusted to us, as well as partnering with the county in planning for the future needs of Augusta County. We understand the county's need for comprehensive planning and the need for balance of county objectives and landowner objectives. Based on that understanding, our family (Martin Family Farm LLC) communicated to the county chief administrator, Tim Fitzgerald, the decision to withdraw one of our two land parcels from the original SUP for solar panels as part of a land-lease agreement for a larger solar energy project. This equates to approximately one half of our farm property, making it available for a viable industrial project, should such an entity be interested in a land purchase. We believe the parcel we are "setting aside" is the more attractive property of the two parcels for an industrial project and should complement county needs and objectives. Our strong desire is to keep the adjacent parcel, which is the 'home place' of our property, in our family. In addition, Gary and Dale Martin have spoken with Phil Martin and expressed the willingness and commitment to withdraw from the solar project all of their property north of the railroad tracks. This area is along Wayne Avenue and has easy access to the main ACSA trunk line installed in the late 1980s to service the McKee facility. As they have discussed in recent months with supervisors and with Phil Martin, the area south of the railroad has extremely limited industrial development potential for reasons related to topography and physical access that become very apparent on a site walk of the area. (See attached aerial map of our combined family's properties showing available parcels for development shaded in red, and parcels we wish to keep and use for our purposes outlined in yellow; it also shows the existing ACSA sewer lines in this area.) We will be candid in stating that we continue our hope to place solar panels on the parcels we desire to keep in our families. However, we want to be clear that this request for dialogue is not just about using our land to produce solar-related energy. **We did not decide to keep these lands in the family because of the solar project, but quite the opposite.** In our view, the ACSA has made some strong statements that have significantly influenced the Board of Supervisors, with impact on the potential use of land we deeply want to keep. We also believe the related statements have created an impression that the county needs 100% of our land to be available for customers who will use the county wastewater treatment plant. **Our understanding of the Comprehensive Plan is that the plan is supposed to balance the long term good and the needs of the county with the freedom and rights of individual land owners.** We are committed to finding that balance. We sincerely hope that the ACSA will also recognize and commit to that balance of goals and desires. Further, we believe it is critically important **that the Service Authority acknowledge publicly and in writing to the Augusta County Board of Supervisors, that it does not need 100% of our properties to achieve its stated mission,***

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and that based on the compromise we have proposed, there is more than ample land in this area of the county for economic development. *We sincerely hope that the Augusta County Service Authority Board understands our family wishes and goals for our land, along with our commitment to balance and compromise. My father and two uncles all contributed the land that enabled the county to extend and widen Mt. Vernon Rd. to Wayne Ave. and agreed to 'Agriculture/Future Industry' zoning of their farmland. Over the years, we have consistently partnered with the county in agreeing to plans that are mutually beneficial. We hope you will appreciate our desire to continue partnering with the county in balancing the interests and needs of our broader community in a way that allows us to achieve our long-term goals, as well. We appreciate your attention and consideration to this communication and will appreciate your responses.*

Sincerely,

Eric Martin, Manager, Martin Family Farm, LLC

Rodney Martin of 563 Hall School Road, Waynesboro, VA joined the meeting via Zoom. He stated he is representing the Martin family, with the purpose of sharing the family's perspective and hearing the Board's perspective regarding their land; to clarify the parcels of land they wish to keep in the family; and to re-establish the land available to the County, which may help meet both the objectives of the County and the Service Authority. All the land is zoned agriculture except for one small parcel directly across from McKee zoned for industrial use. The land is designated in Augusta County's Comprehensive Plan as an Urban Service Area. The family is willing to work with the County to help meet the objects of this designation. Mr. Martin referred to an aerial map, which was provided to Board members before the meeting. The land shown in yellow on the map is land the family would like to keep for various reasons. The land shown in red is in the Urban Service Area and has potential for industrial development or however the County may choose to use it. The Martin's would like the Board and Staff to recognize there is more than enough land for the County and the Service Authority to meet their goals and objectives, while allowing the family to retain some of their land for their own goals. Mr. Martin expressed the desire of the family is to partner with the County and the Service Authority in hopes of reaching a compromise to meet most of the objectives of all parties.

After discussion, the Board agreed to defer the matter at least until the February meeting.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S HIGHLIGHTS

Waste Load Allocation Bill

Staff stated VAMWA has proposed a new bill to replace the concept of having the floating waste load allocation. VAMWA has worked with Senator Hanger on this bill to support and sponsor the bill. Staff is hopeful the bill will receive support and offer a better solution for nutrient allocations than WIP III.

Rapidan Service Authority

Staff explained a bill is being proposed to allow Greene County to withdraw their membership from Rapidan Service Authority. Currently, the Authorities Act states a majority of the members within an authority must be in favor of the request in order for the withdraw to be approved. The remaining two members under Rapidan Service Authority voted against the

request. The proposed bill will allow any member of Rapidan to leave at any time without a majority vote. Staff has forwarded the information to Augusta County Service Authority's legal counsel for review.

Broadband Support

Staff stated the Service Authority owns the cell tower located at the White Hill water tank property and has received an unsolicited offer to purchase the tower. Staff has been in discussions with representatives of MGW regarding the tower. MGW has indicated they are interested in installing equipment on the tower, which would allow them to provide internet service to a substantial amount of Augusta County residents. Staff suggested the Land and Water Committee meet with Staff to consider selling and leasing options.

Dr. Middleton stated Staff should solicit feedback from the Broadband Committee regarding the sale or lease of the tower. Staff will contact the Broadband Committee for their input.

Staff explained if the Service Authority retains ownership of the tower, there may be liability and maintenance issues to consider; if the tower is sold, it is possible the purchaser could limit the equipment placed on the tower. The Land and Water Committee would need to determine if leasing the tower or selling the tower would be in the best interest of the rate payers.

Dr. Middleton stated given the demand for broadband internet connections the Board needs to thoughtfully consider all options.

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PROGRESS REPORT

The Progress Report for December is on file in the Secretary's office and was reviewed with the Board.

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

No reports were given by the committees.

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ACSA EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Staff stated the Service Authority developed the Excellence Awards program in 2018. These honors are awarded twice a year covering multiple categories and include a monetary award, recognition to this Board, and inclusion in the ACSA bi-monthly newsletter. For the last half of 2020, numerous nominations were received and departmental Directors selected the recipients.

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Outstanding Customer Service: Sandy Fauber was nominated by Casey McCracken. On Saturday, July 18th Sandy was working the scale at the Landfill. After helping a customer, she noticed an envelope sitting on the scale. After retrieving the envelope and finding it contained several hundred dollars in cash, she quickly looked through the scale camera footage to determine the vehicle from which the envelope had been dropped and had another employee flag the person down at the public use site. The customer was very appreciative to have their money returned.

Outstanding Effort: John “Buck” Thornton, Joe Manor and Jeff Harris were nominated by Tim Castillo. During the installation of a replacement skimmer system for the number two clarifier at Middle River Wastewater Treatment Plant, the three of them caught several issues and made multiple recommendations for improvements before construction began. The result was during the startup of the clarifier, Lakeside Equipment did not have to make any adjustments or corrections to the equipment. Jim Snyder, Lakeside Equipment Project Engineer was very complimentary of the three employees, stating he wished all commercial contractors paid the same attention to detail as our team did in making real improvements to the installation.

Interdepartmental Cooperation: Multiple people nominated Sallie Trimble and Jean Marshall. Upon reviewing the nomination, it was deemed prudent to include Megan McConnell and Kristina McClung in the award. Due to COVID, our entire Customer Service group had to be out of the office from November 3rd through the 11th. Even though we provide two extra weeks of emergency sick pay for quarantine, Megan and Kristina were willing to work remotely to keep operations running. Also, during this period Sallie and Jean stepped forward to help by answering calls, waiting on customers, and processing payments. Between them, at least 85 customer service calls were answered and 122 payments were processed. This was all in addition to their normal duties. All four of these employees went beyond their normal duties and worked together across departments to maintain great service to our customers.

Innovation/Cost Savings: Casey McCracken was nominated by Tim Castillo. In prior years ACSA maintained four different chemical purchase contracts with different time periods, making it cumbersome to maintain. Casey proposed consolidating these contracts and on October 23rd, an Invitation to Bid was issued. In addition to making this more efficient, the streamlined pricing came in with lower unit prices than the previous split contracts. Depending on how much we actually buy, we have the potential to see annual savings of approximately \$25,000.

Can-Do Attitude: Billy “Buck” Roadcap and Jason Wheeler were nominated by Todd Knicely. When the COVID pandemic began to impact the area in March of 2020, ACSA voluntarily suspended disconnection of customers for non-payment. Naturally, as Meter Technicians, this made Buck and Jason’s jobs easier, temporarily. But beginning August 1st, we resumed our normal policies. After accumulating several months’ worth of delinquent accounts, these two employees had to keep up their normal duties while working through this backlog. When you add to the increased workload the fact that turning off customers is not a very popular duty, knowing that these employees remained calm and positive with customers speaks volumes. They continued with their duties while being sensitive to the explanations of our customers, doing so without complaint and with a consistently positive attitude.

Dr. Middleton extended his appreciation to the award recipients and to all employees of the Service Authority for their hard work.

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PRESENTATION OF FINAL STRATEGIC PLAN

At the November 19, 2020 ACSA Board Retreat, the 2020 Draft Strategic Plan was presented. Board members made comments to the draft plan and those have been incorporated into the final plan.

Staff brought to the attention of the Board additional items added to the Plan since the November meeting. A High School Internship Program has been added to the Community Outreach Goals and Continuation of the I & I Program, and Identify and Minimize Unaccounted-for Water have been added to the Resource Management Goals.

Once approved, the Plan will be published on the ACSA website. The progress of the goals within the Plan will be assessed frequently and needed revision made periodically. It is anticipated the plan will be revisited in the summer of 2022 and all prudent updates and revisions will be made at that time.

There were no questions or comments by the Board.

Mr. Egeli moved, seconded by Mr. Simmons to adopt the Strategic Plan as presented.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas:	Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Dahl, Egeli, Shull, and Simmons
Nays:	None

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REPORT ON FUTURE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT WEBINAR

Tiina Solak, Director of Human Resources, Administration, Safety, and Training gave a report on the Workforce Development webinar she attended, which was hosted by the EPA and related to technology adoption. A key point noted in the webinar was AWWA anticipates the industry losing more than 60% of skilled water and wastewater operators within the next 10 years to retirement.

Two speakers attending the Webinar shared their plans for workforce development. Water Tower, based in Georgia stated they have a campus dedicated to water innovation. Their focus is on workforce training and public engagement. The speaker encouraged attendees to focus on development of training, enhancing operator’s training, field and study classes, internships, and apprenticeships for current and new employees. Minnesota Council, based in the Twin Cities and St. Paul areas shared information about a virtual training program they have put into place. Replicas of their treatment plants, vehicles, and heavy equipment were designed allowing new hires to begin training virtually and allowing existing employees to continue

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their work with more advanced processes, instead of spending essential time training new employees. A step-by-step video on pH testing was also created. Both the virtual training and the step-by-step video allows the new employee the benefit of repetition training. Minnesota Council shared challenges they face with workforce development, such as wi-fi connectivity, costs, security, and transitioning to virtual training.

Ms. Solak shared workforce development programs in place at the Service Authority. A career development program providing advancement opportunities is currently being implemented in Field Operations, as well as with Maintenance Department staff. Treatment Operations offers advancement opportunities through licensing. Training materials and classes are provided to obtain licenses, as well as short school training. An apprenticeship program is in place through Valley Vocational Technical Center providing training opportunities to employees and allowing employees to receive certifications in any field in alignment with Service Authority work, such as electrical, utility maintenance, and fleet maintenance. Once employees have completed the curriculums through Valley Vo Tech, there is opportunity for advancement, as well as a monetary award.

Dr. Middleton asked how many licensed operators the Service Authority has.

Staff stated approximately 75% of operators are licensed at various levels.

Ms. Solak stated it is explained to candidates interviewing for operator positions they will be expected to obtain required licenses, if they are hired.

Ms. Solak stated the Cities of Staunton and Waynesboro rank 10th in the country as the best places to work in manufacturing. After searching job boards, she found local manufacturers with open positions offering attractive salaries and benefits. It will be challenging to compete against other manufacturers in filling the Service Authority's open positions.

Mr. Simmons asked how many employees have left the Service Authority.

Ms. Solak stated the Service Authority has lost two employees just this month due to higher salary offers.

There was no further discussion or comments.

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BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Egeli stated clarification is needed from the Martin family as to what they are asking of the Service Authority. Assuming the Board is asked to take a position regarding the Martins' concerns, to what extent is the Service Authority limited according to the Augusta County's Comp Plan.

Mr. Almarode stated he is interested in the cell tower and the water tower at the White Hill property being valuable sources of income for the Service Authority.

Mr. Shull stated the Service Authority needs to look at the County Comp Plan in regard to the Martin property before the matter comes back to the Board at a future meeting.

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Mr. Simmons suggested there be a separate committee formed to deal with internet companies making proposals to the Service Authority to purchase or lease cell towers or water tanks for placement of their broadband equipment.

Dr. Middleton stated a temporary broadband committee would be beneficial to assist in getting broadband throughout Augusta County. He appointed Mr. Almarode as Chairman and Mr. Simmons as Vice-chairman of the temporary Broadband Committee.

Mr. Shull suggested Staff contact the County for an estimation of costs being paid for space they lease from cell tower companies for ECC equipment. He also mentioned the possibility of increased traffic at the White Hill tank property, should the Service Authority decide to sell the tower located there.

Staff stated the income currently being generated from leasing the Harriston water tank for cellular equipment would be a way to determine an estimation of possible income, should the Service Authority decide to lease the tower at the White Hill property.

Dr. Middleton commented on the great advances made in the water and wastewater industry. He complimented the Service Authority employees for the important work they do every day towards the advancement of innovative processes.

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There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:51 p.m.

Board Secretary

Chairman