

Augusta County Service Authority
Regular Board Meeting, Thursday, February 25, 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
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

ABSENT: Brent Canterbury, Board Treasurer

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CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

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ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Mr. Shull moved, seconded by Mr. Egeli to adopt the Agenda as presented.

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. Shull moved, seconded by Mr. Gordon, to approve the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of January 21, 2021, which have been mailed to the members with no corrections made.

Vote was as follows:

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

Motion approved.

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MATTERS PRESENTED BY THE PUBLIC

Rodney Martin of 563 Hall School Road, Waynesboro stated he was representing three different farms in the Martin family. He reminded the Board the Martin family wishes to clarify the parcels they want to keep for the family and to re-establish which parcels the Service Authority would see as being important for meeting its needs and objectives. One concern is the Service Authority was declaring publicly they needed all of the Martin land for infrastructure.

Eric Martin of 18 Laurel St., Harrisonburg stated he wanted to clarify the desire to keep land in the family is not just for solar development, although they are interested in solar development on some of the land, they want to keep a portion of the land for their own use. During the earlier Special Use Permit process, it seemed the Service Authority was indicating to the Augusta County Board of Supervisors all the farm land was needed for the Service Authority’s infrastructure purposes. The family is asking the Board at this meeting to clarify the amount of land needed. The family feels the proposal they submitted at the January meeting was reasonable and would supply the county with what is needed to meet the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Egeli asked what led the Martin’s to conclude the Service Authority needs all the land.

Eric Martin stated the Service Authority engineer submitted a quote of \$25M to the Board of Supervisors during the earlier Special Use Permit process. The quote gave the Martin’s the impression the Service Authority needed all the land for infrastructure. He referred to a map presented to the Board at the January meeting outlining the Martins’ property. He reminded the Board the property shown in red is the property the family is willing to sell for industrial use.

Rodney Martin asked if the land uses signified on the aforementioned map are agreeable to the Board.

Mr. Dahl asked if the Martin’s are asking for a formal agreement.

Rodney Martin stated they are not asking for a formal agreement. The comments made by the Service Authority during the Special Use Permit process were based on the Augusta County Comprehensive Plan. They are asking if the Board would consider the land they have indicated on the map as industrial use a viable option for the Service Authority’s use. The family is requesting the Board make a public statement or at least state clearly to the Board of Supervisors the land indicated on the aforementioned map as industrial use will meet the Service Authority’s needs.

After discussion, Dr. Middleton stated the matter will be referred to the Service Authority Legal Committee for review, and the Committee will give a report at the March meeting.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S HIGHLIGHTS

WIP III Update

Staff reminded the Board the Governor and Secretary of Natural Resources had proposed and were intent on putting a floating waste load allocation on authorities’ treatment plants. During the Legislative Session, Senator Hanger sponsored the Certainty Bill, in an effort to eliminate WIP III requirements. The Certainty Bill will guarantee requirements for nutrient allocations will be met without enforcing the WIP III requirements. The Senate and House of Delegates have passed the bill, which is now awaiting the Governor’s signature.

Weyers Cave

On February 23 a meeting was held with representatives from Augusta County Service Authority, County of Augusta, Weyers Cave Regional Airport, and other business leaders to discuss the possibility of the Service Authority purchasing property near the airport for the purpose of constructing a water storage tank. There is money budgeted in FY2021 for the purchase of the land. Construction of the tank is included in the 10-year plan.

Landfill and Middle River Waste Water Treatment Plant Meetings

Greg Thomasson, Director of the Landfill and Tim Castillo, Director of Treatment Operations presented the 2022 budgets to their respective committees. The committee’s asked what the employee pay increase will be, if any, in 2022 for Service Authority employees. Staff explained there have not been any discussions with the Personnel Committee to determine any employee pay increases. Both the Landfill Management Committee and the MRWWTP Management Committee declined to approve the budgets until Staff can meet with the Personnel Committee.

Training

Caleb Taylor, Executive Director with New River Valley Water Authority, contacted Staff to see if there is interest in Service Authority personnel assisting Virginia Tech and VDH in water treatment and water distribution systems training. Staff confirmed with Mr. Taylor some Service Authority personnel are interested in assisting with the training. The training will take place at Virginia Tech and will be offered virtually.

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PROGRESS REPORT

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

Mr. Egeli noted the Landfill report stated there was 146,971 tons of solid waste landfilled in 2020. He asked if that amount was more or less than in previous years. Staff stated it was significantly more than in previous years.

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

Land and Water Committee

The Land and Water Committee is recommending the Service Authority not make any decisions at this time regarding selling or leasing the tower at the White Hill tank property. The Committee reported an offer had been made to purchase the tower; however, Augusta County Emergency Call Center (ECC) may be interested in placing radio equipment on the tower. Augusta County is currently in the process of having a study conducted to determine the needs of the ECC. The Committee is recommending any purchase offer be tabled until the study for Augusta County is complete.

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PRESENTATION ON NEW HOPE TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE AND BROADBAND

Larry Powell and Tim Harris, representatives of New Hope Telephone Cooperative located at 555 Battlefield Road, Fort Defiance, gave a presentation on the company’s broadband services. Mr. Powell stated New Hope Telephone’s coverage area is approximately 36 square miles. The broadband project began in 2015, which will provide services to over 1000 customers, once all phases of the project are complete. The project is 84% complete and is expected to be finished in July, with a total cost of approximately \$7M. Mr. Harris explained the high cost of materials is one reason for the delay in the expansion of broadband. For example, fiber alone costs \$30,000 per mile.

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PRESENTATION BY MGW/LINGO NETWORKS

Craig Smith and Robbie Huff, representatives of MGW/Lingo Networks located at 29 N. Central Ave., Staunton, gave a presentation on the company’s broadband services. The company was established in 1967 and began as a land line company and has since expanded their services to include fiber and wireless broadband. Mr. Huff explained the company is an incumbent local exchange carrier in Augusta County and also has a subsidiary, which allows them to operate outside of the incumbent boundary. Mr. Huff stated MGW’s coverage area is approximately 1200 square miles. Fiber is installed underground in most places, except in certain mountainous regions where underground fiber is not feasible from an economic standpoint. The company is working together with Augusta County on providing services to residents in the Morris Mill Road area, as well as Middlebrook and Deerfield areas.

MGW previously approached Staff regarding the possible sale of the communications tower located at the White Hill tank property. Staff explained to Mr. Smith and Mr. Huff the Land and Water Committee has recommended not to sell the tower at this time. Augusta County is currently conducting a study to determine if they will need space on the tower for equipment to support the County’s emergency call center. Staff asked Mr. Smith and Mr. Huff if they would consider the possibility of placing telecommunications equipment on the White Hill tank, if the tower isn’t available.

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Mr. Huff stated the tank may be a possible option. A structural analysis of the tank would be required by Augusta County Community Development Office to show the tank has the capacity to hold the equipment, before a co-location permit would be issued. The exact size, shape and weight of the equipment would need to be shown in the analysis.

Mr. Simmons expressed concerns about giving up potential income that could be made by leasing the tower, while waiting for the County to complete their study to determine if they will utilize the tower at all.

Mr. Dahl suggested a list be obtained from the County on the equipment they will need for the tower, in order to determine if there would also be enough space for MGW’s equipment.

Mr. Huff stated if MGW considers leasing the tower, the terms of the lease would need to be disclosed to determine costs. It would be helpful to have that information before incurring any costs for a structural analysis. Mr. Huff mentioned the possibility of the Service Authority sharing the costs of the initial structural analysis.

After discussion, Mr. Simmons moved, seconded by Mr. Almarode to authorize Staff to enter into non-binding negotiations with MGW regarding a lease agreement and structural analysis for the tower. Staff is directed to gather information from Augusta County officials about the specific tower equipment they may need for ECC purposes at the White Hill tank property and to obtain an estimated date the County’s consultant will complete the study of the tower.

Vote was as follows:

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

Motion approved.

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BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Almarode stated being on the Broadband Committee, Staff has given him access to the database of all the Service Authority properties. He sorted the information on the database by type, elevation, name, and location of all the properties and offered to provide a copy of the information to any Board member who may be interested in seeing it. The document is to be marked “confidential – not for release” and is to be shared only with Augusta County Service Authority Board members.

Dr. Middleton urged the Personnel Committee to carefully look at the compensation structure of the Service Authority.

Dr. Middleton asked the Broadband Committee to think through the assets the Service Authority has and to investigate, along with the Land and Water Committee, what the opportunities are for leasing those assets.

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There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:21p.m.

Board Secretary

Chairman