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Augusta County Service Authority
Regular Board Meeting, Thursday, December 17, 2020, 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
Timothy Simmons, Pastures District, *via teleconference from home; quarantining due to exposure to COVID*
Phil Martin, Executive Director
Brent Canterbury, Board Treasurer

ABSENT: Michael L. Shull, Riverheads District
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 in order to add the appointment of Tiina Solak as *Secretary Pro Tem* as Item # 3A, Discussion of the Proposed Strata Solar Project as Item # 9, and Testing of Wastewater for COVID-19 as Item #10, and the remaining items following subsequently.

Mr. Gordon moved, seconded by Mr. Almarode to adopt the Agenda with revisions.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas: Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Dahl, Egeli, 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 Called Board Meeting of November 19, 2020, which have been mailed to the members with no corrections made.

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Vote was as follows:

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

Motion approved.

Mr. Gordon moved, seconded by Mr. Egeli, to approve the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of November 19, 2020, which have been mailed to the members with no corrections made.

Vote was as follows:

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

Motion approved.

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MATTERS PRESENTED BY THE PUBLIC

No members of the public were in attendance to make comments and no public comments were brought forth by Staff.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S HIGHLIGHTS

COVID-19 UPDATE

Staff stated on December 11 the Service Authority submitted all required paperwork to the state to apply for funding through the CARES Act to cover the total delinquent amount due for accounts more than 30 days in arrears. On December 15, notification was received from Misty Cook, Augusta County Finance Director, the funds had been received by Augusta County, who has been appointed to act as the fiscal agent of the funds. The total amount of funding requested by the Service Authority was \$111,463.51; the total received was \$42,678.65. Letters were sent to customers with delinquent accounts on December 17 encouraging them to apply no later than January 15, in order to be considered for funding. Once applications are received, determination will be made as to the customers who will receive funding and the amount they will receive. The funding process needs to be completed by January 21. The budget language mandates all unused money is to be back in the state’s hands by January 29. Any unused money will be wired to Augusta County no later than January 22, allowing them time to return the unused portion to the state. Tracy Pyles has been contacted to submit an article in his column at The News Virginian highlighting the availability of funds and encouraging customers to promptly apply.

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PROGRESS REPORT

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

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Mr. Simmons stated a report from the Personnel Committee will be presented in Closed Session.

FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

Mr. Gordon reported the Finance and Audit Committee received and reviewed the audit report from PBMares. The report was unmodified, which means the Authority’s financial statements were well prepared and complied with account standards. The Committee commended Brent Canterbury and his staff on a job well done.

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STRATA SOLAR PROJECT

Staff explained Strata Solar has submitted a request for a Special Use Permit to install solar panels on a number of properties in the Round Hill area. The bulk of the properties are located in an Agricultural Conservation Area, where no utilities are available or planned. Three parcels being considered are near the intersection of White Hill Road and Guthrie Road and are located in a Community Development Area. Two of the three properties currently have water service available. Another area being considered crosses a portion of property fronting on Tinkling Spring Road and is also designated as a Community Development Area. There are several streams and existing structures on the property and the property is questionable for development in the future. While Strata Solar has made a proposal for a solar project to Augusta County, they have not contacted the Service Authority regarding potential impact of the project on Service Authority infrastructure and future development.

The two properties on White Hill Road and Guthrie Road have potential for 36 building lots. Staff is concerned about the possible loss of revenue, if a solar project is granted through a Special Use Permit on the properties.

Mr. Dahl asked if the Service Authority would incur any expenses in the development of lots on White Hill Road.

Staff stated because water lines are existing, it would be the responsibility of the developer to incur the costs of any needed line extensions. Only water service is available in this area; sewer service is not available or planned.

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After discussion, the Board directed the Executive Director to address the Planning Commission on January 12 and to compose a memorandum to the Augusta County Board of Supervisors explaining the potential economic impact a solar project would have on the Service Authority's revenue and to prepare an economic impact analysis to accompany the memorandum. The memorandum should also ask for the Board of Supervisors to consider the economic impact of a solar project on the Service Authority when negotiating proffers.

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TESTING OF WASTEWATER FOR COVID-19

Staff referred to an article published in The News Virginian by Tracy Pyles regarding testing of wastewater in order to get an early indicator of COVID-19 spikes. According to the article, the information gained from testing would be beneficial in making decisions about the re-opening of public schools. The article encouraged school superintendents to ask for testing of wastewater, for regulatory boards and councils to approve funding for testing, and for utilities to move forward with testing.

Staff explained there are localities who have hired companies to conduct wastewater testing and have found it to be a costly service. Some localities are working together with the Virginia Department of Health to put testing programs into place. Staff will contact Dr. Bond, Augusta County Schools Superintendent, to inquire of any interest in a program to test wastewater for determining school openings. If Dr. Bond is interested in a testing program, Staff is willing to facilitate and coordinate with the Health Department on getting a program started. However, Staff does not feel it is the role of the Service Authority to conduct testing in order to make decisions regarding school openings or to fund such testing.

Mr. Dahl asked how difficult it is to collect wastewater samples.

Staff stated it depends on where samples are collected and if the collection location receives wastewater from one area or multiple areas. Testing certain facilities, such as schools, where attendance is inconsistent, would not produce accurate results. The Health Department needs to be consulted for guidance on the best way to conduct testing.

Mr. Dahl stated testing would be a good indicator of the presence of COVID-19, but it seems all wastewater would need to be tested, which is not a feasible option.

Staff stated a baseline would need to be established and continual testing done in order to get accurate results.

Mr. Egeli stated the benefit of testing is questionable. He is concerned the Service Authority and rate payers would be expected to fund the costs of any testing. Monitoring waste to predict COVID-19 spikes goes beyond the scope and purpose of the Service Authority.

Staff reminded the Board the article by Mr. Pyles encouraged the funding be provided by counties and cities, with utilities providing the results. The Service Authority does not have the ability to test wastewater for COVID-19.

Dr. Middleton stated the testing initiative needs to be led by the school systems and Health Department. He would be open to the possibility of the Service Authority assisting in the initiative. The Service Authority can contribute to the initiative by allowing employed lab technicians to collect samples of wastewater; however, funding for testing is out of the Service Authority’s jurisdiction.

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LANDFILL AGREEMENT

Staff stated the Augusta Regional Landfill is jointly owned by Augusta County and the Cities of Staunton and Waynesboro. The Service Authority contractually operates and serves as the fiscal agent for the landfill under the Augusta Regional Landfill Management Agreement. The most recent Landfill Management Agreement was entered into on December 31, 2015, with several automatic renewal terms of one year. The current Agreement expires on December 31, 2020.

The proposed Agreement has been reviewed by ACSA, including legal counsel, and all three owner localities. There were no significant revisions to the Agreement. A copy of the proposed Agreement was included with the Board packets for members to review.

Mr. Gordon moved, seconded by Mr. Almarode to approve the Augusta Regional Landfill Management Agreement as presented.

Vote was as follows:

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

Abstained: Simmons

Motion approved.

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DISCUSSION OF PRIVATE SERVICE LINE WARRANTY AND LEAK ADJUSTMENT INSURANCE

Staff referred to the presentation made at the November 19, 2020 Called Meeting by representatives of HomeServe regarding service line warranty and leak adjustment insurance programs. Staff asked for direction from the Board as to whether the Service Authority should move forward with an RFP to obtain proposals in order to provide one or both of the programs to customers.

After discussion, Board members agreed not to move forward with an RFP to obtain proposals for either program through HomeServ. Board members suggested the Service Authority inform customers about the availability of warranty and insurance programs for water and sewer lines through private companies, allowing the customer to search for and obtain services through the company of their choice. Mr. Simmons stated since the water meters are automated, the Service Authority is able to notify customers (at no cost to the customer) when there is a spike

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in their water usage. Staff stated the Service Authority is able to identify leaks more efficiently with the automated meters and customers are being notified when their water usage is significantly increased.

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CLOSED SESSION

Mr. Gordon moved, seconded by Mr. Egeli to convene in closed session pursuant to Virginia Code §2.2-3711(A)(1), to discuss and consider appointment, assignment, and salary of employees of a public body for the purposes of appointing a Director of Information Technology, assigning duties to the Director of IT and other personnel positions affected by the appointment, and determining salaries for the Director of IT and other personnel positions affected by the appointment.

Vote was as follows:

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

Motion approved.

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Mr. Almarode moved, seconded by Mr. Egeli to come out of closed session.

Vote was as follows:

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

Motion approved.

Board members were requested to certify only matters pursuant to Virginia Code §2.2-3711(A)(1) were discussed. Members certifying were Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Dahl, Egeli, and Simmons.

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APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Egeli moved, seconded by Mr. Gordon to create a Director of Information Technology position, to appoint Casey McCracken as director of the newly formed IT Department, to pay Mr. McCracken the base salary of a Grade 11 employee, to assign Mr. McCracken with all the duties and responsibilities given to him by the Executive Director, and to authorize the Executive Director to make other personnel and salary changes affected by the appointment.

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

Motion approved.

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BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Almarode stated he feels it is important for the Service Authority to offer educational information to customers regarding meter reading, the operation of the landfill and treatment plants, and water and sewer line insurance options. Customers should also be informed costs for repairs of water and sewer lines from the meter to the home are not covered by the Service Authority.

Mr. Gordon wished Board members and Staff a happy holiday season.

Dr. Middleton extended condolences on behalf of the Board to Mr. Shull on the loss of his mother.

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There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

Board Secretary

Chairman