

**Draft Minutes of December 9, 2024, Water Authority Meeting
Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority
1649 Route 12, Gales Ferry, CT**

This meeting was held virtually per Public Act No. 22-3, which permanently established the requirements for virtual public meetings in Connecticut.

Present

Authority: Chairman Harry Watson, Vice-Chair Alex Masse, Treasurer Paul Eccard, Nicholas Mullane, and Claudia Koerting.

Authority Staff: General Manager Josh Cansler

Call to Order

Chairman Watson called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

Public Comment on any Item on the Agenda – None

Approval of Prior Minutes

On a motion of Mr. Eccard, seconded by Mr. Mullane, the Authority approved the minutes of the November 18, 2024, Authority Meeting by a unanimous vote of all members present.

Correspondence – None

General Manager's Report

1. Oakdale Heights Subdivision (Montville)

In July 2023 SCWA and the Oakdale Heights Association, which represents the 219-home Oakdale Heights subdivision in Montville, signed a formal agreement for SCWA to take over ownership and operation of the Oakdale Heights water system. This agreement was submitted along with a formal Request for Transfer of Water Lands Application to the State Department of Public Health (DPH) in August 2023.

In February 2024 DPH informed SCWA and the Oakdale Heights Association that the transfer is subject to the consent of the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA), and in May PURA assigned a Docket Number (24-05-10). Over the next few months PURA has requested information from both parties, all of which has been submitted to PURA through their electronic filing portal.

General Manager Cansler stated that the previous week PURA had issued a new set of Interrogatory questions. These new interrogatories appeared to be based on responses from the original 62 interrogatories issued by PURA in August 2024. Both SCWA and Oakdale Heights submitted responses to those interrogatories in September. Mr. Cansler stated that in response to the latest round of interrogatories the Oakdale Heights Association was seeking legal guidance and was seriously considering resigning in mass. He said that the attorney for the Oakdale Heights Association was preparing a letter for PURA basically stating that PURA had all the information they needed to make an informed decision regarding this transfer. Mr. Cansler said he had reached out to our SCWA attorney concerning our legal status.

2. Capital Projects Update

a) Seven Oaks/Montville Interconnection Project

This project will complete the interconnection between Seven Oaks and Montville divisions. Earlier this year, SCWA awarded a contract to Richards Corporation after a public bidding process, but due to delays with issuance of the federal grant funds this project was put on hold temporarily. General Manager Cansler stated that based on guidance that SCWA would receive the funds by the end of the year, a Notice to Proceed was issued to Richards Corporation in late November. He said another preconstruction meeting had been held earlier that day, and that construction was underway already.

b) Grant-in-Aid for Upgrades at the SCWA Tower Pump Station (Ledyard)

Last year the State approved a grant-in-aid for the Tower Division to upgrade the pump station, add storage tanks, and upgrade security. This grant also includes an extension of the emergency connection up Christy Hill Road. The total amount allocated is \$3 million. General Manager Cansler stated that he has attended several meetings with the State Department of Health (DPH) over the past few months to discuss the requirements, schedule, and submitted a formal Bond Fund Application package for the grant-in-aid funding. Mr. Cansler said that in early December SCWA was informed that the Grant Contract was under review by the DPH Legal Office before being forwarded to the Office of the Attorney General to execute the contract.

c) Upgrades at the Spicer Hill Booster Station

This project includes installation of variable frequency drive (VFD) pumps at the Spicer Hill Booster Station, which is part of the Ledyard distribution system. This project also includes the elimination of the hydropneumatic pressure tanks, which is a top priority for DPH. General Manager Cansler said SCWA has completed the first phase of this project, which included external electrical upgrades. He said that SCWA finally received the new VFD pumps in October and the SCWA field crews plan had started the second phase of construction the previous week.

3. Lead Service Line Inventory

The National Primary Drinking Water Regulations for Lead and Copper, which went into effect in 2021, required all public water systems to develop a lead service line (LSL) inventory identifying all materials used to construct or repair all service lines connected to a public water distribution system. General Manager Cansler stated that SCWA had met the October 16, 2024, deadline for submission of the lead service line inventory, and had received acknowledgement of our submission by CT DPH a week later. However, he said in late November SCWA received notice from DPH that we are also responsible for submission of lead service line inventories for the public systems in Preston as well as the Board of Education facility in Groton. Although SCWA does not own these systems we have agreements to operate these systems for a fee. Mr. Cansler said SCWA staff are currently gathering information regarding these systems.

4. Ongoing and Proposed New Developments

a) Hillcrest (Montville): Millwood is part of the adjacent SCWA Hillcrest subdivision in Montville. Construction of this 55 and over community started in 2021 and so far, 32 homes have been constructed and sold. Forty-six individual modular homes are proposed for this development.

b) Tower Division: General Manager Cansler said that the construction of this 10-unit Mobile Home development along Kings Highway in Ledyard is underway. He said SCWA installed the service line to the development in August, however construction was delayed temporarily this fall after the Town of Ledyard claimed that this construction site was in their Exclusive Service Area (ESA). Apparently the Town informed the developer he had to connect to the Groton Utilities systems. Mr. Cansler stated that by using existing maps, available to all via the State WUCC website, he was able to show that the construction site is well within our ESA.

c) Fees for Providing Estimates: General Manager Cansler reminded the Authority that at the last meeting he had proposed charging a small fee for estimates requested by developers and residents interested in connecting to an SCWA water system. He said the reason for the proposed fee is because SCWA spends between 6-12 manhours preparing the estimates, and in most cases, we never hear from the developer or resident again. In some instances, developers have reached out several times for updated estimates. After some discussion the Authority decided to consider this fee proposal as part of the next annual budget cycle next spring.

5. PFAS (Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances)

General Manager Cansler stated that in April 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized a National Primary Drinking Water Regulation establishing Maximum Contaminant Levels for six PFAS in drinking water. The new regulations require all water systems to complete the initial monitoring requirements for each PFAS within 3 years, and when warranted, take steps to ensure compliance within 5 years. Mr. Cansler said SCWA plans to sample twice in 2025, in accordance with the new regulations.

6. Digitalization of Blueprints and Drawings Project

SCWA is currently working with Ziptility, Inc. to begin the process of digitizing our old paper blueprints; specifically the locations of water mains, service lines, valves, hydrants, etc. Digitalization of our drawings and blueprints is a project that has been on the capital projects list for years. In August Ziptility input the addresses and areas served by SCWA into their database. General Manager Cansler said that SCWA is currently holding off on submittal of the old maps and blueprints to Ziptility until after the new year due to time constraints.

7. Personnel

Mr. Cansler said that in July of 2023 one of SCWA's four certified operators retired and at that time the General Manager and Foreman decided to experiment with only a three-person field crew. He said after over a year of operating with a three-person field crew we have decided the fourth person is necessary for the field crews, especially since the number of customers that SCWA services has increased by over 10% in the past two years.

Mr. Cansler stated that SCWA had advertised for an experienced and/or licensed operator, however none of the applicants met the qualifications, so they were going to re-advertise for less skilled applicants who have demonstrated an aptitude to learn the trade and eventually become a certified operator. He said an unlicensed operator can take the certification exams after one year of experience in a water utility.

8. Regional Considerations

a) Drought Update: General Manager Cansler stated that in November Governor Lamont declared a Stage 2 drought advisory for all eight counties in Connecticut due to far below normal precipitation levels and ongoing fire danger levels statewide. Stage 2 is the second of five stages of drought defined in the Connecticut Drought Response and Preparedness Plan. Residents are encouraged to voluntarily conserve water. Mr. Cansler said that at their December Meeting the State Interagency Drought Workgroup recommended continuation of the Stage 2 drought advisory.

b) Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC): The Eastern Connecticut Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC) and the Statewide WUCC both last met in November 2022.

c) SCWA Interaction with the WPC, CWWA, and AWWA: The General Manager represents SCWA as a member of the Connecticut Water Planning Council Advisory Group (WPCAG), which meets monthly. Mr. Cansler is also a member of the Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA) Legislative Affairs Committee, which generally meets monthly between October and June.

Other Business – None

Report from Chairman – None

Report from Authority Members – None

Public Comment – None

Adjourn

On a motion of Mr. Eccard, seconded by Mr. Mullane, the Authority voted to adjourn the meeting at approximately 5:35 p.m. It was noted that the next Authority meeting is scheduled to occur on January 13, 2025, at 5:15 pm.

Josh Cansler
Secretary