

**Draft Minutes of November 18, 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.

Authority Staff: General Manager Josh Cansler

Call to Order

Vice-Chairman Masse called the meeting to order at 5:17 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 September 9, 2024, Authority Meeting by a unanimous vote of all members present.

On a motion of Mr. Eccard, seconded by Mr. Masse, the Authority approved the minutes of the October 21, 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 SCWA is still waiting for PURA to schedule a hearing.

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, after a public bid process, the Authority approved a motion to award a contract for this project to Richards Corporation, pending approval by the State DPH DWSRF. In August SCWA awarded a contract to Richards Corporation and a preconstruction meeting was held in September. During this meeting the contractor was informed that a Notice to Proceed would be sent once SCWA receives the funds from the State Treasurer's office.

General Manager Cansler stated that in mid-August SCWA was informed by the State that SCWA would require a Federal Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to receive Federal Infrastructure grant, which makes up 50% of the funding for this project. He said SCWA finally received a UEI number in late October after eight weeks of going back and forth with the federal office which assigns UEI numbers.

Mr. Cansler stated that around the same time the DPH DWSRF office informed SCWA there was delay obtaining the federal funds and the earliest they thought the funds would be available to SCWA would be late December 2024. SCWA and our consulting engineer, Haley-Ward reached out to Richards Corporation who indicated they would like to start work in October, and if they did, they would be submitting invoices starting the end of October. After some discussion Richards Corp agreed to delay the start of construction.

b) Cedar Ridge Upgrades

General Manager Cansler stated that in early September the hydropneumatic pressure tank at Cedar Ridge started leaking and that instead of replacing the pressure tank, SCWA installed new variable frequency drive (VFD) pumps in mid-September. He said that unfortunately one of the new pipes installed in the system failed in late October, however SCWA crews were able to keep the system operational until emergency repairs could be completed in the last week in October.

c) 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 stated that during the last meeting the Grant Office indicated that there is a good chance that SCWA will receive authorization to start engineering/design for the project as early as December.

d) 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 they had hoped to complete the rest of the project in October, but that unfortunately the SCWA field crews had to divert their efforts to Cedar Ridge to complete the repairs mentioned previously in this report. Mr. Cansler added that SCWA plans to start the final phase of this project later this 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 did meet the deadline for submission of the lead service line inventory, which was October 16, 2024. He added that in late October SCWA received an acknowledgment from the CT DPH which stated they were in the process of reviewing our LSL inventories.

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: The construction of this 10-unit Mobile Home development along Kings Highway in Ledyard is underway. SCWA installed a service line to the development in August. Once the individual units are completed and connected, they will receive water from the SCWA Tower Division distribution system.

c) Fees for Providing Estimates: General Manager Cansler stated that over the past few years various developers have approached SCWA about connecting proposed multi-home developments to SCWA water systems. He said that in some instances developers have reached out several times for updated estimates, and that depending on various factors SCWA spends anywhere from 6-12 manhours preparing the estimates. He added that in most cases we never hear from the developers again. SCWA also has homeowners with wells request estimates for connecting to our water mains, and again in most cases they never do.

As a result, General Manager Cansler said he is recommending SCWA charge a small fee for the estimates. He said that he is proposing a \$500 fee for estimates for multi-home developments and \$100 for individual homeowners. After some discussion the Authority decided it would be more appropriate 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 preparing the old maps and blueprints to send to Ziptility so that they can input the locations of water mains, service lines, valves, hydrants into their system.

7. Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Audit

General Manager Cansler stated that Hoyt, Filippetti & Malaghan, LLC conducted their annual audit visit of SCWA in August, and they presented their audit findings to the Representative Advisory Board (RAB) Finance Committee and the Authority at the October 2024 RAB meeting. He said SCWA received the final approved audit on November 5th, and that it was submitted to the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) the same day.

8. Personnel

Mr. Cansler said that in July of 2023 one of SCWA's four certified operators retired. At that time, he and the Foreman had decided to experiment with only a three-person field crew. He said that after over a year of operating with a three-person field crew they 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 although it is unlikely SCWA will be able to find an experienced licensed operator, they decided to advertise for one initially. He said that if there are not any qualified applicants SCWA will advertise for a laborer and train them to be an operator. He added that an unlicensed operator can take the certification exams after one year of experience in a water utility.

9. Regional Considerations

a) Drought Update: General Manager Cansler stated that on November 9, 2024, 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. He said that Stage 2 is the second of five stages of drought defined in the Connecticut Drought Response and Preparedness Plan. Residents and businesses are encouraged to voluntarily conserve water.

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. Watson, the Authority voted to adjourn the meeting at approximately 5:41 p.m. It was noted that the next Authority meeting is scheduled to occur on December 9, 2024, at 5:15 pm.

Josh Cansler
Secretary