



Sammy Rich, City Manager
Mike Hackett, Director
John Boyd, Assistant Director
WATER AND SEWER DIVISION
Customer Service Department
Bryan Parris, Director
Operations Department
Brandon M. Cook, Director
Water Reclamation Facilities
Jeff Hill, Director
Water Treatment Facilities
Wayne Stanley, Director

WATER AND SEWER COMMITTEE MEETING
City Hall, 601 Broad Street, Sam King Room
Thursday, April 6, 2023
9:00 AM

PRESENT: Chairperson Jim Bojo
Commissioner Craig McDaniel
Commissioner Elaina Beeman
Mr. Sammy Rich, City Manger
Mrs. Meredith Ulmer, Assistant City Manager
Mrs. Toni Rhinehart, Finance Director
Mr. Mike Hackett, Division Director
Mr. John Boyd, Assistant Division Director
Mr. Bryan Parris, Customer Service Director
Mr. Brandon Cook, Operations Director
Mr. Bryan Middleton, Operations Assistant Director
Mr. Doug Walker, Public Information Officer

VISITORS: David Crowder WRGA News
Citizens of Chulio Hills
Norma Reboredo, citizen

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jim Bojo welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

REVIEW OF THE MINUTES

No changes to the March 2, 2023, minutes were suggested. Commissioner McDaniel made the motion to approve, Commissioner Beeman seconded, motion approved.

Minutes prepared by: Bryan Parris, Customer Service Director
Water and Sewer Committee/ Commission Minutes, April 6, 2023

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mrs. Rhinehart reported Operating Revenues were up with water revenue up by around \$115,000.00 and sewer by about \$311,000.00. Total operating was up by approximately \$470,000.00. Rhinehart reported expenses were up as well, but most were well under budget. She stated the total cash balance is \$21,481,418.00 and reminded everyone we are setting aside \$500,000.000 per month for major future expenses.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Operations Update

Mr. Hackett began by introducing the department's new Assistant Director, Bryan Middleton, saying Middleton has been with the department for many years in other positions. He then turned things over to the Operations Director, Brandon Cook. Mr. Cook presented a list of 2022 projects and planned 2023 project.

Commissioner McDaniel asked if all the work on West 3rd was completed. Mr. Cook stated most of the work was completed but there were still a few loose ends to tie up which will be done soon. Commissioner McDaniel asked how many sewer taps were installed and Mr. Cook replied there were 25 sewer taps. Mr. Boyd stated the last draw on ARC of \$90,000.00 would be made soon.

Mr. Cook reported in the last year the department had 1225 sewer repairs, 480 water repairs, and responded to 2400 calls, 650 were after hours. He also reported an increase in recent sewer repair calls due to underground cable installations in the South Rome and Maple St area saying we have 18 to 20 damages that we know of right now.

Mr. Hackett said this increase in damages is a direct result of recent changes to locate laws. City Manager Sammy Rich asked what the changes were. Mr. Hackett explained sewer lines cannot be located but, in the past, we could inform contractors of the area of sewer mains and services and they would do things such as pot holing to find the line and we had some recourse for damages. With the changes, we do not, even in cases where it is evident of buried sewer infrastructure. Mr. Rich asked if other utilities were experiencing the same problem and if so, was anything being done. Mr. Hackett said with the changes being so recent we are all just beginning to experience issues so it could be a while before enough complaints come in to make it known that changes need to be made. He also suggested there might be some way to add something into the franchise agreement to help.

Mr. Cook continued with 2022 construction reporting 1200 linear feet of 12-inch water main was installed on West Butler, 4000 feet on Pollock and as part of the ARC project 5,000 feet of 12-inch water line and 600 feet of 8-inch sewer line were installed. Mr. Cook reported 2023 proposed construction would include 2,000 linear feet of 12-inch water line replacement from W 10th and N 2nd to Ave D and Iron St. 3,000 ft on N 5th Ave to Martha Berry. 7,700 LF of 8-inch water main on Blacks Bluff Rd. 1,300 LF of 12-inch on Martha Berry from Iron St to W9th St and Burwell Creek sewer main replacement, approximately 18,000 LF which will be contracted.

Mr. Hackett said we are in a way focusing on this area of redevelopment and the greatest need such a Burwell Creek sewer line. Mr. Rich asked how much was estimated for the Burwell Creek project, Mr. Hackett stated 4-5 million. Mr. Rich asked where this money would come from, Mr. Hackett stated it will come from our reserves. Mr. Rich pointed out to the commissioners that this is why it is so important for the Water Division to have these large

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reserves that have been such a hot topic recently. Explaining the Water Division is an enterprise fund and that means it is a business, it is not subsidized by tax dollars. So, our decisions are what drive our bottom line to make sure we are sustainable for the rate payers, and we are all the rate payers. Mr. Hackett agreed and added with the figures of up to 150 million for the RO system, we need these reserves to get the best bond rating possible and we have only been able to build these kinds of reserves right now because we just retired a large debt.

Commissioner McDaniel asked how much was in the last SPLOST for sewer and has that been spent. Mr. Boyd replied, we did receive 1.8 million for water improvements in Rosemont Park, but we did not receive any funding for sewer projects and added, we did include a lot of sewer projects including Burwell Creek, but none made the list. Mr. Hackett said at that time it was around a 2-million-dollar project and now we are closer to 5 million.

Mr. Cook concluded with the levee operations, saying that in 2022 the pumps were replaced at Wilson and Cotton flood stations and the overflow flood gate platform at Ave A was removed. 2023 planned projects include replacing Ave A pump shaft, painting Ave A flood station, and replacing overflow flood gate platform.

Connection Fee Update

Mr. Hackett presented a regional connection fee review. The review showed the department was in line for residential $\frac{3}{4}$ and 1 inch meter sizes but in larger sizes we are well below surrounding utilities in water and sewer connection fees. Mr. Hackett explained the connection fees were not a part of our past rate study and it would be something we need to start looking into.

Chulio Hill Sewer Project

Commissioner Beeman announced she had to recuse herself from this discussion because she owns property in Chulio Hills.

Chairperson Bojo began by welcoming the many citizens from Chulio Hills in attendance. He went on to state that in the previous night's commission meeting Chulio Hills Sewer Project was forwarded to the SPLOST Committee and therefore no decisions could be made by this committee but anyone present was welcome to speak and ask question but from this point forward they would need to work with the SPLOST Committee. Mr. Rich said this is good news for this project. Commissioner Bojo explained that division personnel showed the commission exactly how the sewer project works, and this was good news, but this meant the project was now out of this committee and the City Commissions hands and now in the hands of the SPLOST Committee. He also said he did not know exactly when it would be presented at the SPLOST Committee, but the first meeting will be May 4th and encouraged citizens to attend the meetings. Commissioner Bojo then asked Mr. Hackett and Mr. Boyd to explain how this project was presented to the Commission.

Chulio Hills resident Terry Shields said promises were made 25 to 30 years ago for sewer and sidewalks so why is it now being turned over to the SPLOST committee. Chairperson Bojo replied he had heard of these promises and asked who made them. Mr. Shield stated that Mr. Bennett and several city commissioners that were on the committee at that time. He stated that the only one who was still there at this time was Mr. Doss. Chairperson Bojo replied that he was not disputing what was said but that the city clerk had gone back through all the Water and Sewer Committee meetings to at least 1984 and found there was nothing on record stating that an agreement had been made. Mr. Shield replied that back then the minutes were done a little differently or maybe they were disposed of intentionally. Chairperson Bojo remarked that he did not agree with that. Resident Rodney Hudson said Ann Rigas came to the church in Chulio Hills and said these services would be a part of the community coming into the city and now the problem is that sewer is so close, and we can't get it and we need some help with someone writing a grant for

the city to get the funding for this. If it goes to SPLOST, it will be another 5 to 10 years and we need this now. Mr. Shield asked if other developments had to go to the SPLOST Committee for sewer extensions. Mr. Hackett replied that the city does not extend sewer and water services. Developers are required to install the service and tie into the City's existing infrastructure at the nearest point. Mr. Hackett then showed a map of the area and the closest point for the gravity fed sewer connection from Chulio Hills, which is on Hwy 411 at the bypass. Estimates for this are 3.2 million to service the existing Chulio Hills community and another \$700,000 to \$800,000 for the new Jewell Point development.

Commissioner McDaniel asked where the sewer line that services Walmart is located. Mr. Hackett stated that the line ran out of the back of Walmart and ties into our line at 411 and the bypass on the opposite side of the highway. He stated that this line was constructed in 1992 and was after this meeting occurred, so at that time the closest tie-in would have been on Dodd Blvd near Courtesy Ford.

Commissioner McDaniel asked if there would be a sewer main run along 411 to the new industrial park. Mr. Hackett stated yes but this line would be a force main and that you cannot tie into a force main. Mr. McDaniel then asked if a new developer wanted to build a residential development along 411 would that be possible. Mr. Hackett explained that they could break the force main and install another lift station or run a new force main.

Commissioner McDaniel asked who would pay for that and Mr. Hackett said that the developer would. Commissioner McDaniel said this is and has been consistent at least since he has been here, and Mr. Hackett stated that it had been this way for about the last 20 years. Resident Marsha Hudson commented that it looks like we are never going to get sewer. Commissioner Bojo replied no not at all. Mr. Hackett pointed to the drawing presented and explained what was shown in red must be installed at a cost of about 3.2 million dollars. Rodney Hudson asked if there was any grant money out there. Mr. Hackett stated that there is grant money out there, but his guess is that there isn't one that would cover the full amount. Mr. Boyd pointed out that grants would also increase the cost because of the criteria required with grant funding.

Mr. Boyd asked why sewer was not included in the 2006 Jewell Point development. Mr. Hackett said that it was determined to be cost prohibited by the developer and so the lots were made larger to accommodate for the septic systems.

Commissioner McDaniel asked how many potential sewer customers would be in the community. Mr. Hackett stated there are potentially 67 but not all would be able to connect.

Chairperson Bojo and Doug Walker encouraged the community representative in attendance to attend all SPLOST committee meetings possible, saying their presence would go a long way.

OTHER

Resident Norma Reboredo asked is there a way to charge these contractors who are damaging the sewer lines. Mr. Boyd stated there are some ways to bill back some of the damage.

Commissioner McDaniel stated that at the last NWGA Regional Commission meeting a representative from GEFA discussed an EPA requirement about replacing the galvanized piping coming from the home to the city connection point saying there are loans and grants available. He asked Mr. Hackett what he knew about this. Mr. Hackett stated that it is a new regulation coming out and that we were working with a group called 120 Water, making sure we will be in compliance. It is not clear yet, it is evolving as it is being planned.

Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted.

Mike Hackett, Director
Rome Water and Sewer Division