

Water and Sewer Committee Meeting
December 7, 2012
10:00 am

The following were in attendance:

Bill Houston (teleconference), Ray Johnson, Charlie Kerekes and David Lybrand. Bob Doub and Iris Hill, ex officio. Ray Archibald was absent.

Ray Johnson called the meeting to order and agendas were distributed. He asked if he could add some questions about the design of the RO system. A conference call was made to Mike Beckman of URS. DHEC states wells cannot be run more than 16 hours a day. Ray is concerned that we will only be at 33% capacity in the beginning. Administrator Hill cautioned we need to consider the future when making decisions.

Approval of Minutes

Bill Houston moved that the minutes of August 8, November 8 and November 27, 2012 be approved. Charlie Kerekes seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Public Relations

Dean Foster, CEO of Foster and Associates and DrinkTap addressed the committee. His public relations director, Allison Foster, was also present. Mr. Foster has been consulting on water projects for 15 years. He worked with the Town of Mt. Pleasant for 10 years and is familiar with RO systems and how to talk to the public about them. He presented a timeline that begins with acceptance of direction of the rate study. Since that has already been done, the next step would be to begin a public education campaign that would engage the customer. Mr. Foster suggested a post card direct mail to inform customers of specific upcoming public meetings and give them an address for an on-line survey. The survey would cut down on the postage costs and be more cost efficient. A follow up post card could be sent and the online survey would need to be monitored. The next step should be to develop focus groups and have small group meetings or "key stakeholder" meetings. The feedback generated from these meetings should be used to educate the public. The suggested method is a public meeting, not a public hearing. AT the meeting, Mr. Foster suggested having five or six stations where experts can give information and answer questions. At the last station it would be beneficial to have comment cards available. Using the information from these cards, along with feedback, the Committee could refine the information and have a second public meeting. Then we could release online survey results and get ready for the referendum. The timeline should take place within a brief time span of 6 months or less. Ray Johnson asked Mr. Foster what if 200/300 people show up, how should that be handled? Mr. Foster said the public meetings should be scheduled like a drop in, and relayed that the Highway Department had started using this format. We would be focusing on the education and outreach aspects.

Consumption Data

Administrator Hill referenced a graph she sent that the Committee asked for. Mr. Johnson noted that 80% of the bills fall in the first two usage ranges. The irrigation factor was brought up, with Ms. Hill explaining that even though the irrigation users do not pay sewage, they are charged a higher rate once they reach a certain number of gallons. Sewer rates from nearby communities were discussed and Administrator Hill distributed additional information on area rates. Information had been gathered from local providers as to how many whole house RO systems had been installed (95) and the number of under sink systems (1380) there were.

Corrected Building Rendering

The Committee agreed that the new images that included the water tank looked good.

Fire Protection

Two previous studies focused on fire protection, and Administrator Hill felt that would again be an issue. She said it is pertinent to remember that at the time of the last study, water pressure on the north end of the beach was an issue. Two years ago, booster pumps were replaced at the wellfield and that the pressure is not an issue any more.

Comparison between American, Earthtech and URS studies

Value engineering was discussed. Ray Johnson said he would like to have a scope of proposed work. Administrator Hill said she had asked for that information. Mr. Kerekes asked what the next step was. Ms. Hill said that the Committee was on the Agenda for the upcoming Town Council Meeting. No one from the Committee was available to speak to Council. Mr. Johnson suggested having the summary proposal done prior to the meeting, which Administrator Hill said was not feasible. She also said that Council is going to want to know what the Committee's recommendations are for the project. The Committee decided that the summary proposal from URS would serve as a recommendation to Council.

Bob Sandifer of the Edisto Beach Property Owner's Association said that their independent contractor was in the process of looking at the URS study and reiterated their position to support "the most viable, most cost efficient" solution to the water issue.

Administrator Hill has been in touch with Hilton Head's contact person to get a third party to look at the two studies and give an opinion as to which avenue was better. She should have more information next week.

Charlie Kerekes made a motion that Administrator Hill prepare an outline for Council, which will be sent to the Committee for comment prior to her presenting it to Council. In the outline, she will inform the Council of the Committee's progress and answer cursory questions Council might have. If needed, a Work Session for Council and the Water and Sewer Committee will be scheduled. David Lybrand seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The Committee thanked Administrator Hill and Utilities Director Bob Doub for all their efforts on behalf of the Committee. David Lybrand made the motion that the meeting be adjourned. Ray Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

The media/public was duly notified of the date, time and place of the meeting on Friday, December 1, 2012.