



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
D.C. Water and Sewer Authority
Board of Directors
Customer and Community Services Committee**

**Tuesday, January 19, 2010
11:00 a.m.**

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Alan J. Roth
Brenda Richardson

Staff Present

Avis M. Russell, General Counsel
Charles Kiely, Ass't GM, Customer Services
Lauren Preston, Customer Service Director
Alan Heymann, Public Affairs Director
Linda R. Manley, Board Secretary

Call to Order

Mr. Roth called the meeting to order at approximately 11:08 a.m.

Customer Service Update

▪ **Close-out report on AMR Project**

Mr. Kiely provided the Committee with a report on the Automated Meter Reading (AMR) project and gave the Committee a brief overview on the project's final report. He noted that the AMR project was implemented in March 2002 with a lifetime budget of \$43.3 million. The project came in under budget by \$2.3 million. To date, 99.5% of the District's meters have been completed with 15 large meters (predominantly federal meters) and 618 small meters remaining. He also noted that WASA has collected over 300 million meter readings to date, which is remarkable for a utility with a customer base of 123,500.

The initial focus of the AMR project was on realigning business process, organization redesign, meter replacement, infrastructure improvements and improved technology. The new technology resulted in reduced estimated bills, increased revenue, an opportunity to realign the meter operations, reduced cost-of-service, and improved customer satisfaction. The success of the AMR project has also enhanced WASA's call center performance and meter maintenance and has made WASA a leader in the water industry in advanced meter infrastructure.

Today WASA's pump/sold delta is 22% and declining, retail revenue initially increased over 5%, 90-day receivables are \$5.1 million (down from \$25.1 million in 2002), preventive maintenance is in full force, and there are reduced meter reading costs and customer calls.

Mr. Roth asked staff to provide the Committee with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation and to give the Committee an opportunity to read through the final report prior to the AMR project being closed out.

Mr. Kiely introduced the new Customer Service Director, Ms. Lauren Preston, and thanked Ms. Donna Lewis for stepping into the role while WASA recruited a new director.

- **Update on MOU negotiations with the Mayor's Office**

Ms. Russell reported that the MOU on solicitation of donations for the SPLASH program has been signed by both the General Manager and the Mayor's Office but that she was unsure who will be delegated to implement the program. She noted that the Mayor's Office agreed on a \$750,000 cap, with individuals permitted to make donations up to \$500 per quarter and corporations/businesses permitted up to \$2,000.00 per quarter. The agreement is for one year, and following that WASA can negotiate for a longer period.

- **Delinquent account collection strategies**

Pursuant to the Committee's request, staff provided data on the top ten delinquent multi-family properties, which together represent more than \$900,000 due to WASA. Mr. Kiely noted that WASA has secured its assets on all the properties. One property is in receivership and several others have been referred to receivership. In response to whether the addresses can be published in the paper, staff noted that based on past experience there really is no benefit in doing so. There was additional discussion on strategies staff could implement to encourage management companies to pay outstanding bills. The Committee asked staff to provide a cost-effective strategy for collecting on the twenty largest condominium and cooperative delinquent accounts.

- **Pros and cons of additional rate classes**

This issue has been deferred to a future meeting because staff has some questions they need to have answered before undertaking an analysis.

Public Affairs Update

- **Introduction of new staff**

Mr. Roth introduced Mr. Alan Heymann, the new Public Affairs Director. Mr. Heymann provided the Committee with a brief overview of his background and noted that he was very pleased and excited to be working for WASA. He noted that last week the Public Affairs Office rolled out WASA's Facebook page and that WASA is already up to appropriately 200 fans. He also noted that there will be future discussions on Twitter, which is not only a messaging tool but also a two-way customer service tool, and that IT has already begun preparing a customer chat function that will be discussed as well.

- **Discussion of recent news coverage**

Mr. Heymann noted that like the story on the AMR project, the Office of Public Affairs will take the approach of reaching out to its "customers" in the press before they reach out to WASA. He noted that a reporter from the New York Times has contacted WASA and wants to shadow the General Manager for a day (tentatively scheduled for January 26th) to focus on the challenges faced by an urban water utility with an aging infrastructure.

- **Possibilities for use of social media in messaging**

Mr. Roth suggested to staff that in planning future messaging to the public, the importance of meeting all of WASA's customers "where they are" requires us to think more aggressively about how we use social media tools to build relationships. Ms. Richardson asked staff to present WASA's Face book page at the Committee's next meeting.

Other Business

Hearing no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12: 33 p.m.