

**WEIRTON AREA WATER BOARD
REGULAR SESSION- 2025 AGENDA**

February 13, 2025

A regular session of the Weirton Area Water Board was called to order at 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 13, 2025, in Room 201 of the City Building, by James Shockley, Chairman.

Members in attendance were George Ash; Ron Jones; Jim Shockley; Rocky Bragg; Don Gianni, Jr.; and Bill Visnic, ex-officio member.

WAWB Staff present were Butch Mastrantoni; Jasen Havens; Lori Veltri; Brian Kuntz; Chuck Tenaglio; Jeff Bertha; and Dan Guida.

Also attending were Jesse Alden and Chuck Kelly of Thrasher Engineering; Ben Erste and Carlo Fabian of the BHJ; Mark Miller; City Manager Michael Adams; and Craig Howell of the Weirton Daily Times.

MINUTES

Mr. Ash made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 16, 2025, Board meeting. Mr. Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS

Administrative Report -With no discussion from Board members regarding the Administrative Report, the report was approved as submitted.

Finance Report: Mr. Kuntz reviewed the finance report, which was included in the Board packet. Mr. Ash made a motion to reimburse the General Fund for our shared expense in the amount of \$3,749.00 for the month of February 2025. Mr. Bragg seconded. The motion passed unanimously. We did not receive an invoice for the Smart Bill.

Delinquent Report: There was no delinquent report this month. The distribution staff were not in attendance because they were out in the field trying to locate line breaks.

Citizens Comments and Communications: Mr. Shockley recognized Karen Mentzer of 153 Clay St., who was in attendance to address the Water Board. Ms. Mentzer said that the biggest thing she is having an issue with, besides low to no pressure, is communications. She never knew there was an alert system. She learned that through Facebook. She signed up for them. Sometimes she gets them via email, and sometimes she gets them by phone. Yesterday, as there was a line break on Colliers Way, she didn't get any of them. She isn't

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sure what the issue is. On her side, she deleted all the alerts, then put them back on, but she still doesn't get them all the time. She was accused of posting false information on Facebook yesterday because a lady on Colliers Way wanted to know what was going on. At the time Ms. Mentzer was on the system, there was nothing posted for Colliers Way. But after she got out of it, there was a boil order posted. It's just very sporadic. It would be nice to get that taken care of. She was very disappointed because of what has happened, at no point in time, especially when it got very, very critical, in her opinion, there was never a state of the water meeting held or even additional information on the website. She knows everyone is busy, but residents have to know what is going on. The biggest complaint from everybody right now is when they are going to get a credit on their water bill because they haven't had water. And they know that's not going to happen. The road closure on Penco Road - no alert about that. Traffic is horrendous. You go up to the light at the top of Cove Hill, you try to turn left, the light is at least ten minutes long. People have been running the red light. One thing for sure. Nobody, including her, ever questioned the work of the guys out there on the breaks. There are not enough compliments, there's not enough gratitude that can be paid to them. The problem is city officials. She isn't pointing her finger at any one person, but when you don't have information - bad news is better than no news - that's when the rumors start flying. What are they trying to hide? Why aren't they telling us this? It goes on and on and on. The biggest thing for her is - she does have a whole house filtration system - it is costing her a bundle in salt because of what is going through that system. People are now getting their water tested through Culligan, and they're seeing what is in this water. On top of everything else, they are trying to figure out how they can get these systems into their homes, into their businesses. That shouldn't be their responsibility. They are paying for something, and they aren't getting it. And that's good quality water. It has affected a few people. She has pictures if anyone wants to look at them. This is a lady on Elm St. She has three small children. The water in her bathtub was completely brown. After the boil order was lifted, she gave her daughter a bath and the daughter broke out in hives and blisters. And she kept telling her mom that it was burning. And she said there is a very, very strong smell of chlorine. The woman sent her a list of things that shouldn't be in our water, and they are. She passed out copies to the Board. She also stated that she didn't see anything posted anywhere from the last meeting. She didn't know if that was something that's not supposed to be posted, but it has on the site the agenda and the minutes. The last one that is posted on there is 2024 and the one prior to that is 2016. Ms. Veltri responded that last month's weren't posted because they weren't signed by the chairman, and she can't post them until they are signed. She said they will be signed today, and they will be posted this week. Ms. Mentzer said she appreciated that, and she appreciated that there was going to be a signature because she had taken it up with Mr. Mastrantoni. A lot of these alerts and postings that go out, it just says Weirton Area Water

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Board. When something is signed, it means it's official. It means you can go to that person, and you can question or you can find out exactly what that's about. It's taking accountability. So when those things go out, they are just generic. There was another City of Weirton page with the seal and everything on it that was made on Facebook. Mr. Shockley stated that we have a five-minute time limit and asked Ms. Mentzer if she could wrap it up. She said absolutely. She commented to Mr. Ash that she would like to know where the answers to her questions were. Mr. Guida stated that he would address that. He reported that we received a new list of questions separate from Ms. Mentzer from John Kraina containing sixteen questions. The only information Ms. Mentzer, Mr. Kraina, or anybody else is entitled to get from us is if they file a Freedom of Information Act request. He is going to request that Ms. Mentzer restyle her request that she made a month ago to be a FOIA request, also indicating as to how much she would be responsible for because we have to make copies. This isn't a Q & A. We will produce paperwork with a budget for certain items. We will give her the budget. Under the law, we don't have to pay to make copies of that. That will be on the person making the request. Usually what they say is if it exceeds more than \$100, please let me know and then they will let you know after that if they are going to pay or not so we don't have to copy a bunch of paperwork and then the person not pay. He will instruct Mr. Kraina to do the same thing. Mr. Ash asked Mr. Guida if Mr. Kraina had sent the list of questions directly to him. He replied that Mr. Havens gave it to him. Mr. Havens commented that the City Clerk had given it to him and asked him to present it to the Board. Mr. Guida stated that there is a time period under the law for us to respond. There is also a provision that we can take additional time if we need to depending upon the type of request and how much work is involved. That is how we will handle it. We can't keep having people come in with questions and wanting us to specifically answer them. We will be happy to give them the documents, and they will have to decipher them and sort it out. That is all the law requires.

Utility Director Communications: Mr. Mastrantoni shared a note from Ray Seifert of 3043 Orchard St. It is a thank you note for the work two employees did trying to thaw out his frozen water meter on one of the coldest days of the year.

Mr. Ash asked a question because he wasn't sure of the procedure. If one of the Board members wants to suggest something to the Board do they put that in as a resolution to give to the Board so they can vote on it? Mr. Guida stated it would be placed on the agenda. Mr. Ash asked who did the agenda. Ms. Veltri replied that Mr. Havens did it. He asked if he just called Mr. Havens to have a resolution added to the agenda and he was told yes.

Mr. Shockley thanked the Harris administration on behalf of the Water Board for everything they have done. Mr. Ash brought it up at the last meeting while Mr. Shockley was attending by phone, but Mr. Shockley wanted to comment that the work our staff has done has just been remarkable. Once again he wanted to thank everyone. It's been tough for everybody, but everyone is hanging in there.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on the WTP Expansion Project – Jesse Alden reviewed a report from Thrasher Engineering that he passed out. A construction progress meeting with Triton Construction, BHJ, and the EPA is scheduled after this meeting to discuss the project. He reviewed a couple of items which are included in Change Order #1, which he has to present to the Board today. Once they began excavation in the area where the new flocculation basin is going to be constructed, they ran into several utility conflicts such as old pipes that weren't shown properly on the old record drawings. They have several different options that they looked at to resolve this issue, and they came to the best option which was to relocate the existing flocculator drain pump station. That requires excavating out the existing lift station, moving it to another spot, and replumbing and rewiring existing electrical so the pump station can continue to function after it's moved. Once it is moved out of the way, this will allow Triton to come in and install the flocculator basin as designed as part of the contract. The second portion of this Change Order includes installing a temporary VFD for the proposed high service pumps. This work is necessary to expedite operations of the new high service pump. The existing pumps are in bad shape. They are trying to get the new ones up and running as soon as they can to continue pumping water. In order to do both of these items and continue on, this constitutes a Change Order of \$169,063.99, and it increases the contract times by ten days. It will require a motion by the Board for approval. Mr. Mastrantoni asked for a breakdown of the two items. Mr. Alden replied that the cost to relocate the existing flocculator drain pump station would be \$99,471.56 and to install the temporary VFD and the piping for the high service pump the cost would be \$69,592.43. Mr. Mastrantoni stated that staff concurs this Change Order is necessary. Mr. Ash made a motion to approve Change Order #1. Mr. Bragg seconded. The motion passed unanimously. After this Change Order is applied, it will bring the contingency amount for the project to \$1,812,386.01. The Ranney well should be back up and running February 26. Mr. Visnic asked about the underground area that was poorly mapped. Mr. Alden replied that any time you are relying on old record drawings and you go in and start digging, you find things in locations that weren't exact. For the most part

the utilities were shown, just not in the exact location of where they found them. They had to relocate a lot of utilities within the existing yard. As they've excavated this entire area, surveyors have been down there taking shots of the location of the pipe. The record drawings that will be provided after this project is complete should be far more accurate. Mr. Alden commented that they are relying on original plant drawings from 1964. Mr. Mastrantoni added that each subsequent project does record drawings based on the previous project but never goes back to the first drawings. This allows for deviation over the years. Mr. Guida asked what the tentative completion dates were in case he missed the discussion when he was out of the room. Mr. Alden replied that they are January 8, 2026, for substantial completion and February 7, 2026, for final payment. Mr. Visnic asked if the additional ten days were accounted for in those dates. Mr. Alden replied the dates would be January 18, 2026, and February 17, 2026. He said they would be updated for next month's meeting.

Mr. Erste presented Draw #8 for the project in the amount of \$1,067,427.39 consisting of payments to The Thrasher Group for \$54,479.48, Triton Construction for \$1,010,644.13, and BHJ-MPC for \$2,303.78. Mr. Jones made a motion to approve the payment of Draw #8. Mr. Gianni seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

- 1. Next Meeting Date - March 13, 2025**

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Mr. Ash reported that he spoke to Mr. Mastrantoni yesterday. He wanted to thank him for the report he gave him on the vehicles that we talked about that needed repairs. Most of them have been taken care of, and they are operational. When you have a vehicle with over 180,000 miles, you better start thinking about replacement. He just wanted to put that in everyone's mind. He is happy with the report Mr. Mastrantoni gave him yesterday, and he appreciated it.

Mr. Ash commented that there is something that has been bothering him, especially the last couple of days. The Board, in his opinion, is here to set policy. He is not on the Board to go out and do the day-to-day operations. We have staff for that. He wanted

to thank the director, the crew, and Jasen - especially the crew who have been working hours and hours and hours. He can't believe the work that they do and how they do it with the equipment that they have. They have minor issues with the equipment, and they are able to deal with them as they go along. Until he got on this Board, he did not realize all the work these people do. He appreciates the work they do, and he knows the public does too. In case there was anything he could do, that is why he wanted to know how to bring something to the Board. He would really like to show appreciation to the staff in some other way than just saying thank you. He is asking for advice from the Board on what they could do. He doesn't want to give them a plaque. He wants to give them something that each individual could use. Mr. Shockley stated that we would have to discuss it with legal counsel. Mr. Guida stated that we are still right in the middle of this. He agrees that they need to be recognized and rewarded, but the game is not over by any stretch.

Mr. Mastrantoni reported that he has a list of line breaks that have been repaired since November 28, 2024. To date they have found and fixed 111 breaks of various diameters. American Water, who has provided great assistance to us during the coldest temperatures to help locate leaks that were not surfacing, has identified 44 leaks to date. This takes us through downtown, Marland Heights, and up to 16th Street on Weirton Heights. Once we complete this list, they will return with their equipment and manpower and complete the survey from 16th Street to the state line. Mr. Havens commented that some of the issues on the list that American Water came up with are service line issues with customers. Not everything on that list is our problem. American Water told him that out of the leaks they found on the previous job that they were on, 50% were on the customer side. Mr. Shockley went back to a comment Mr. Ash had made earlier about the Board. He has told Mr. Mastrantoni many times that he did not get on the Board for the day-to-day operations. After some discussion about the breaks that have been discovered, Mr. Mastrantoni commented that the conservation order is still very, very important. If anything comes from this meeting, it should be reminding the community that conservation is still the word of the day. Our tanks are roughly one third of their capacity. In order to lift the conservation order, we have to have levels of at least 55% - 60%. And we have cold weather coming next week which may cause another series of breaks. He thanked James White for providing a crew to us when we needed help. For us to say that replacing every pipe in town at a cost of \$37 - \$40 million and thinking that is a responsible way to deal with the situation would be a great folly. He thinks a lot of well-meaning customers who suggest that don't understand the industry or the dynamics involved. Mr. Havens also listed other areas that are having issues that he

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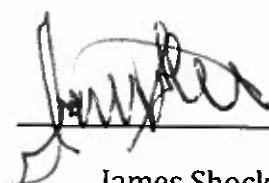
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found on the Channel 9 News website. Martins Ferry passed an ordinance charging customers \$1,000.00 per inch in line diameter per day if they don't repair their service line issues in a timely manner. Mr. Guida commented that the City of Weirton has the second largest land mass in West Virginia – bigger than Morgantown, bigger than Parkersburg, bigger than Martinsburg. We have roughly the same population as Fairmont. They cover six square miles. Weirton covers eighteen square miles. We have way more lines that could break or go bad. We are spread out. We use approximately \$350,000.00 per year for repair or replacement. Is that enough for eighteen square miles? No. He doesn't think most people realize that. Mr. Mastrantoni commented that the meteorologists in the area have used the term historic cold to describe this past winter. Under these conditions there are going to be distribution systems that are going to break. Historic cold is going to wreak havoc on lines buried in the ground. The only way to deal with it is to deal with this winter's activities, move forward, at some reasonable point in time look at the system as we have year after year, and see what needs to be addressed, what needs to be replaced, what needs to be maintained. The Board has done so responsibly for at least his time here with it. Mr. Havens commented that if you look at an average bill of 3,400 gallons per month per household, there are 330 systems in the state of West Virginia that can provide that service. Weirton's rates are 77th. We are in the bottom quarter of what we charge our customers. American Water is 2nd from the top. Mr. Ash stated that when he has people complain to them about their bills, he asks them to look at their bills. The garbage is on there. The sewage is on there. They look at the final amount and think they are paying that much for water and that's not true. There are three services on there.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before this February 13, 2025, Regular Session of the Weirton Area Water Board, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m. The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Ash and seconded by Mr. Jones. The next Regular Session of the Weirton Area Water Board was set for March 13, 2025.



James Shockley, Chairman