

**Onondaga County Water Authority  
Regular Monthly Authority Meeting**

Otisco Water Treatment Plant, 2460 Lawrence Road Marcellus NY  
Wednesday August 16, 2023 @ 12:30 p.m.

Members of the Authority present were J. Bianchini, B. Doran, K. Gardiner, A. Geiss and D. Wickman.

Others present: J. Brown, C. Marvin, G. Miller, J. Stowell, M. Thomas, A. Weiss and T. Wisely.

**A. Board Meeting.**

1. The Pledge of Allegiance.
2. J. Bianchini, Chairman called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.
3. On a motion by B. Doran, duly seconded by K. Gardiner, with all members approving, the Authority approved the regular meeting minutes of July 12, 2023.

**B. Executive Director**

- J. Brown presented to the Authority members a request from the Village of Phoenix for a courtesy adjustment. OCWA (and MWB) and Village of Phoenix have had many conversations over the years about the Village's system. He explained that these conversations have resulted in OCWA selling water to the Village as a wholesale customer. T. Wisely stated that Village officials contacted via email him in October of 2022 concerned about billed consumption. The billed usage had been increasing but not to levels where T. Wisely would consider the amounts as an exception. He engaged in several conversations with Village officials, which resulted in a request from Village Officials for leak detection assistance. Leak detection is not a service that OCWA offers to wholesale water customers. Upon consultation with G. Miller, A. Bettinger and C. Deitman, OCWA's leak detection crews went to Phoenix to assist. The team was able to identify several compromised areas of the system. With this information, the Village was able to make repairs and billed usage has dropped approximately 3 million gallons per month.

Conversation ensued regarding the request from Village of Phoenix. The Authority members discussed that wholesale customers own and operate their own water system and purchase water from OCWA to redistribute. Because the high consumption of water was exclusively due to failures in a third party's system and the system has been identified as problematic, a rate adjustment is unprecedented and not recommended. The Authority members were appreciative of the efforts made by leak

detection team lead in locating sources of leaks and the Village in making the necessary repairs to its system.

- J. Brown reviewed the proposal from HomeServe to provide a leak adjustment coverage program. T. Wisely explained that all retail customers would be automatically entered into the service and a fee would appear on their bill. Customers would have the option to opt out of the program if they do not want to participate. He explained that OCWA's current in house program allows him to consider each retail customer's request.

The Authority members engaged in conversation and decided to continue with the current inhouse program using our current wholesale rate as the discounted rate.

- A letter has been sent to the Town of DeWitt, advising them that effective September 1, 2023 the rate for water purchased off the Southern Branch will be correlated to rates charged to OCWA by the City of Syracuse. The Authority members discussed rates charged by the City and how that impacts OCWA customers.
- J. Brown briefed the Authority members on the status of conversations with Micron. OCWA has provided Micron information outlining the cost of the infrastructure necessary to provide the volume of water they require. J. Bianchini asked about the potential impact on OCWA rate payers. The executive team will provide projections at the next meeting. A. Geiss noted that any inquiries from the press should be directed to J. Brown.
- A. Weiss advised the Authority members that officials have started conversations about White Pine South development.
- KPI's relating to the following three attributes of Effective Utility Management are available on BoardDocs:
  - Financial Viability
  - Water Resources
  - Infrastructure Strategy and Performance

## **B. Reports**

### **1. Water Production and Delivery**

G. Miller presented the following:

- Lake Levels: The lake level is -3" which is about 10" above the long term average.
- Water Demand – With all the rain, water usage is down to the mid 30 MGD range.
- Watermain breaks – about average on a monthly basis but still below average for the year
- Metered Ratio – still above 87% - this is really a great job by everyone, can't emphasize enough how this reflects upon the great work that all employees do
- **Skyridge/Clearpath** – The grant application was submitted this past Friday 8/11/23

- **LaFayette / Tully** – Tully is proceeding with putting out a bid for replacing watermain in the existing system, long term they intend to connect to the Village water system and intend to submit for grants, moving slowly. LaFayette – pursuing both connecting to Tully for Cardiff and a much larger project of connecting to Southern Branch at Sentinel Heights and serving both the hamlet of LaFayette and Cardiff. B&L is asking the Town for \$100,000 to complete the reports and grant applications.

## **2. Engineering**

A. Weiss presented on the following:

- The Salt Springs tank is complete, filled, tested and was placed into service on August 8th. Minor final site work remains, and a separate contractor will mobilize in early September to begin rehabilitation of the existing 5MG tank.
- Terminal Piping Repairs: The work is on the West side 48” currently and is progressing very slowly.
- LOWTP: Valve/Actuator issues have been partially resolved with some open questions remaining. The issue appears to be quality control from the factory. All valves are being evaluated. Filter 5 has its backwash valve repaired and is being placed into service August 8th. Overall, project progress remains steady.

## **3. Human Resources and Insurance**

- J. Stowell advised the Authority members that September’s meeting is the annual meeting. The October meeting is tentatively planned to be held at the Lake Ontario Water Treatment Plant.
- A portion of the OCWA fleet of vehicles have been outfitted with magnets that say – “Come grow with us, we are hiring”.
- The Human Resources department is evaluating processes. Sharon Adams, Personnel Aide, has assumed more responsibilities associated with employee onboarding, offboarding and benefits. A recruitment campaign is underway for an Administrative Aide to support safety, legal and insurance.
- OCWA and the Teamsters met on August 11<sup>th</sup> to begin negotiations on the CBA that expires December 31, 2023.

## **4. Legal/Public Education/Communications**

- M. Thomas briefed the Authority members on the pending PFAS settlement.
- CCI continues to deny liability for damages caused in Sylvan Beach. OCWA will proceed with legal action.
- Conversations are ongoing with the NYS DEC regarding the 90 acre Otisco parcel.
- The MOST exhibit is in its final stages. Many OCWA employees have participated in the design and creation of the exhibit that has

resulted in very little expense.

**5. Fiscal Services**

- C. Marvin reviewed that water revenues are underbudget for the year to date and there is concern that due to the weather they many remain that way.
- He announced his retirement effective at the end of 2023. The Board expressed their gratitude for his time and dedication.
- J. Bianchini asked if there are funds available to make improvements to the Otisco Water Treatment Plant Laboratory. Conversation ensued.

**C. New Business**

**1. Expenditure Authorizations**

- Were signed without issue.

**2. Main Extension & Job Order**

*One (1) Main Extension.* On motion by A. Geiss, duly seconded by K. Gardiner, with J. Bianchini, K. Gardiner, A. Geiss and D. Wickman approving.

- approving, the Authority authorized J. Brown to execute the following:

<b>Job No.</b>	<b>With</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Proj. Cost</b>
9004135	Edge Civil Corp	Guard Shack Service and Hydrant	\$35,000.00

**3. Other business**

- A. Geiss inquired about the increase in fleet maintenance expenses. G. Miller discussed the status of the fleet and supply chain issues.
- J. Binachini inquired about vacation time provided to new hires.

On a motion by K. Gardiner, duly seconded by A. Geiss, with K. Gardiner, J. Bianchini, K. Gardiner, A. Geiss and D. Wickman approving, the Authority adjourned the meeting at 2:32 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Authority is scheduled for September 20, 2023 at 12:00 p.m., at 200 Northern Concourse, Syracuse.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennie S. Stowell

Recording Secretary