

CLARKE COUNTY SANITARY AUTHORITY MEETING MINUTES
March 19, 2024

PRESENT:

Mr. Roderick DeArment, Chairman
Mr. C. Wayne Armbrust, Vice Chairman
Mr. Tom Bauhan (participated remotely via telephone)
Mr. Bryan Conrad
Mr. Lee Coffelt
Mr. Bev, McKay, Liaison for the Clarke County Board of Supervisors (arrived late)

ABSENT:

None

OTHERS:

Paren Crawford, Inboden Environmental Services
Mark Inboden, Inboden Environmental Services
Mike Legge, Staff
Sarah Shiley, Staff
Catherine Marsten, Staff
Ms. Lisette Turner
Mr. Mark Stivers

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman DeArment called the meeting to order at 9:03 am.

Chairman DeArment introduced and welcomed Mrs. Sarah Shiley, who is the newly-hired Sanitary Authority Clerk and Senior Billing Manager.

II. MINUTES

A. January 26, 2024

Mr. Coffelt made a motion, seconded by Mr. Armbrust, to approve the minutes of January 26, 2024 as presented. The motion carried as follows:

Mr. DeArment – aye
Mr. Armbrust - aye
Mr. Bauhan - aye
Mr. Coffelt - aye
Mr. Conrad – aye

B. February 20, 2024

Mr. Armbrust made a motion, seconded by Mr. Coffelt, to approve the minutes of February

20, 2024 as presented. The motion carried as follows:

Mr. DeArment – aye
Mr. Armbrust - aye
Mr. Bauhan - aye
Mr. Coffelt - aye
Mr. Conrad – aye

Mr. McKay entered the meeting at 9:08 am.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

A. Ms. Lisette Turner of 103 North Greenway Avenue appeared before the Board and advised the following:

- When she purchased 103 N Greenway Ave, the seller represented that the availability fee for water connection had been paid already, possibly in the 1970s or 1980s, and that all she would have to do to for water service would be install a water meter.
- There is a cinderblock structure on the property, previously known to the community as the “old fruit stand”. This structure has a separate electric meter and appeared to have been previously inhabited, though it was full of trash and in poor condition when she purchased it.
- She has done extensive renovations to this structure, including hiring an excavator to dig up the street. During that process, they found that there is infrastructure existing already, including pipes that are in good condition, and an empty water meter crock on the property.
- Inboden Environmental Services and the Clarke County Building Department have both inspected and approved the work done on the property. Sanitary Authority staff told her that they could not activate water service until the availability fees were paid.
- Due to the existing infrastructure and the previous owner’s representation that the availability fees had been paid, she feels that CCSA should waive the availability fee or that the property should be grandfathered in due to the existence of the empty water meter crock. She is more than happy to pay the sewer fees and to pay something for water service, but has not budgeted the additional \$14,000 availability fee.

Mr. Paren Crawford of Inboden Environmental Services confirmed that he had inspected the property and noted a line from the water main to the empty meter crock but that there were no signs of a water meter ever being there. Mr. Crawford also noted that the water was shut off at the water main and not at the empty meter crock.

Mr. Coffelt asked if there was any indication that water service had ever been used at that property. Mr. Crawford replied that the only way to activate service there would be to dig up the road to access the valve, because the service line is shut off at the water main. Usually when a connection is made, an accessible shutoff valve is installed along with the meter.

Mr. Mike Legge advised that CCSA Rules & Regulations provide that, after a connection is made, customers must pay the minimum payments to preserve the connection and the availability fee they paid. As an example, the owners of a building that burned down in Boyce

continued paying the minimum user fees while the building was unusable so that, they could maintain the connection and restore water service without paying an availability fee. There is no indication that any availability or user fees have ever been paid for this property.

Mr. Legge added that the minimum water service fee (approximately \$12 every two months) was established in 2015 in order to keep more accurate records and to maintain revenues. There were some customers who were unhappy with the fee. The Board adopted their current policy where, if a customer does not continue to pay the minimum services fees, they lose their availability fee. If a customer changes their mind within three years of service shut off, they can pay just the user fees to restore service. However, after three years they must pay an additional availability fee to restore the connection.

Mr. Coffelt asked Ms. Turner if the structure had an occupancy permit when she purchased it. Ms. Turner advised that it did not, but one has since been obtained. Mr. DeArment asked if there were any sinks or toilets installed in the building prior to purchase. Ms. Turner replied that there were not, it was in “flea-market condition”.

Mr. Mark Stivers, attorney for Ms. Turner, opined that the difficulty with an older system that does not have or has failed to preserve accurate records is this type of uncertainty, which is troublesome for everyone involved. Mr. Stivers noted that his client is eager to negotiate a compromise, as she has put forth effort and has made inquiries with CCSA staff.

Mr. Armbrust observed that there is evidence that water service was available to the property, but no evidence that it had ever been activated. According to CCSA policy, minimum payments would have to have been made continuously in order to preserve any previous connection, and staff has provided evidence that no payments have been made since at least 2004.

Mr. Conrad asked if Ms. Turner had installed a water line to the structure, and if that installation required that someone drill a hole in the foundation. Ms. Turner confirmed that she had a water line installed.

Mr. Coffelt suggested, and Mr. Bauhan agreed, that based on the information provided, this would be considered a new connection. Ms. Turner noted that she disagreed with this assessment, and asked the Board to consider that the piping and infrastructure to the crock existed prior to her purchase of the property.

Mr. DeArment observed that the structure did not previously have an occupancy permit, so it was never legally occupied. Mr. Armbrust added that a customer whose service had been disconnected and who had not made minimum payments would also have the piping and infrastructure already in place but would still be required to pay the availability fee, according to CCSA policy.

Mr. Armbrust made a motion, seconded by Mr. Coffelt, to maintain existing policy and require that the customer pay an availability fee in order for CCSA to provide water service to the property. The motion carried as follows:

Mr. DeArment – aye

Mr. Armbrust - aye

Mr. Bauhan - aye
Mr. Coffelt - aye
Mr. Conrad – aye

B. Mr. Nate Williams of 1540 Millwood Road

Mr. Mike Legge noted that the customer, Nate Williams, had advised staff that he planned to attend this meeting but is not present. Water service was shut off on March 1, and no payments have been made.

Mr. Coffelt opined that it would be difficult for the Board to move forward with any sort of compromise without the customer being present; the leak and waste of water is secondary to this customer's non-payment and non-compliance with a payment plan.

Mr. Armbrust observed that about 12% of the Authority's customers are in some form of default but Mr. Williams is the only customer who is not making any payment efforts at all and he is also the customer with the largest outstanding bill.

Mr. Bauhan agreed and added that Mr. Williams' negligence and nonpayment is not only damaging his own property, but is also creating a substantial burden on the Authority's system.

IV. INBODEN REPORT

Paren Crawford reported the following:

- Water production was pretty high over the last month.
- Due to persistent leaks, the Scaleby line was turned off for a period of time and reopened on March 15. Staff monitored water tower levels over the next few days and they appeared to hold steady.
- On the wastewater side, staff determined that the sticks and debris were entering the system from a manhole near the elementary school. School staff has agreed to monitor the area more closely to prevent this happening in the future. A cover will also be installed at that location.
- Other manholes were located in Roseville Downs, some of which have fencing surrounding them. That fencing is in poor condition and it is unclear who bears the responsibility to maintain it.

Mr. Coffelt advised that he would speak with the property owner and get more information.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Town of Boyce Pipe Project

The Mayor of Boyce is seeking assistance from VDOT to pursue this project and submit an application to run a line underneath the railroad. Mr. Coffelt will coordinate a time to discuss the application with the Town Council, VDOT, and Inboden.

B. Utility Management RFP

Mr. Legge advised that the current utility management contract expires June 30. Staff would like to advertise and schedule a pre-bid meeting, and is hoping to get proposals returned in April, which allows enough time to make a decision before July 1.

Mr. Bauhan shared that he has not yet reviewed the draft RFP, but he will do so and provide any comments to staff as soon as possible.

C. Budget

The Board discussed a possible rate increase. Staff requested the Board consider increasing rates more than 3%, based on current budget figures.

By consensus, the Board agreed to table budget discussion until more information about the Board of Supervisors FY25 budget is known.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. 50 Tannery Lane

Mr. Legge advised that the March bills indicate there was a substantial and unusual water use at this location, upwards of 20,000 gallons. It could be due to a leak that was repaired, as the use level has since returned to normal.

VII. FINANCIAL REPORTS

Mr. DeArment requested to discuss accounts currently on payment plans and in active collections at the next meeting.

VIII. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, April 16, 2024, at 9:00 am.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman DeArment adjourned the meeting at 10:29 am.