

MINUTES OF THE UTILITES WORKGROUP MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 17, 2021 AT 5:30 P.M.

ST. TAMMANY GOVERNMENT COMPLEX

21490 KOOP DRIVE, MANDEVILLE, LA.

Call to Order by Honorable Michael R. Lorino, Jr., Chairman

Roll Call: Marty Dean
Michael R. Lorino, Jr.
James "Jimmie" Davis, III
Christopher Canulette
Michael "Mike" Maxwell Smith
Jerry Binder

PUBLIC COMMENT: a three (3) minute time limit is established for each member of the public wishing to speak (for or against) an item on the Agenda.

1. Discussion of Tammany Utilities Operations

Present:

Members of the Committee: Lorino, Davis, Canulette, M. Smith, Binder

Staff: Riles, Gonzales, Hayes

- Announcements by Chairman Lorino
- Ms. Hayes provided update on consultant: qualifications, review, scope of work, contract.
- Mr. Lorino recommended that consultant hold a small community meeting for those members of the public who are here tonight and those who have concerns in the community. Asked if the consultant would be reviewing past actions and recommended that they do so.
- Councilman Binder discussed his requests that consultant look to past incidents to make recommendations on how to avoid problems in the future.
- Ms. Hayes clarified that there may need to be some changes in scope/contract to accommodate some of those requests.
- Mr. Binder would like members of workgroup to be able to meet with consultant on individual basis.
- Councilman Smith stated he would prefer a larger community style meeting to the one on one meetings proposed by the consultant.
- Councilman Canulette made suggestions re: operations. Question re: timeline of consultant contract. Ms. Hayes stated that contract is for 90 days or less, but anticipates it will be less.
- Councilman Davis asked if there is a medical expert on the consultant team. Ms. Hayes stated there is not, but there is an epidemiologist at LDH who has been contacted.
- **Public Comment Period**
- Stephen Leech: Discussed certifications of operators; state law. Stated that he filed a complaint against Assistant Director of Tammany Utilities Cynthia Samuels on the basis of her being unlicensed.
 - Ms. Hayes advised that Ms. Samuels is not a water operator. She is an administrator who handles payroll, office operations, etc. and she is not licensed. Supervising and operating the water system is not part of her job responsibilities.
 - Discussion by committee of the job description versus actual job duties.
 - Ms. Hayes advised that Aaron Davis, who is a Class 4 operator, would assume the role of lead operator in Tim Brown's absence.
 - Mr. Smith asked about TU's operator classifications.
- Andrew Ogea: Lives in Cross Gates. Has previously had issues with skin rashes and other conditions.
- Neil Waguespack: Believes idea about pressure keeping water safe is a myth. Does not believe system has the capacity to keep pressure up. Discussed Easter weekend/Holy

Week incident. Says that some residents have flushed their water heaters and the water looked like “the Mississippi River” which he does not believe is normal.

- Mr. Lorino stated that this information needs to be shared with the consultant.
- Mr. Davis asked for an update on how people are doing, if people are getting sick. Mr. Waguespack advised that people do occasionally still get sick. Mr. Davis believes it would be helpful to share who has been sick and what their symptoms are with the consultants so they can investigate.
- David Binder: States that previously Owens and White was engaged, but apparently the contract was not completed (2 or more years ago). Believes that there are people in the audience who have not fully recovered from the contamination event, as well as the ongoing skin rashes. Asked questions re: LDH investigations/findings, TU operations. States that there were overflowing manholes today in Cross Gates after heavy rain event. States that he was sent videos of the same. Referenced letter from Jay Watson (from several years ago, when Mr. Watson was Lead Development Engineer).
 - Mr. Lorino stated that all of this information needs to be shared with the consultant so that they can answer these questions.
 - Mr. Smith asked re: what has been done since the last meeting.
 - Ms. Hayes advised of updates, some of which have already been provided at Council meeting, including SCADA system, lock out/tag out system, operating procedures, continuing education training of operators, conference call with state water officials and epidemiologist, parish looking into the management or sale of TU. Valuation of system is a two-step process; step one is complete or very near completion.
 - Mr. Smith asked about a chlorine burn. Ms. Hayes advised that they looked into it and it was not advisable.
- Nate Welch: Has owned Cross Gates Fitness Center with his family for years. People who have used the Cross Gates pool have claimed they have ad rashes. No complaints they can related directly to these incidents.
- Allison Fronistas: In 2018 her three-year-old had a severe reaction to the switch from free chlorine to chloramine. Has had to install additional filtration systems because of her family’s immune system problems.
- Paulette McNulty: Her biggest concern is the lack of transparency at TU and that Tim Brown reports to himself. Believes TU is putting people’s lives in danger, and it isn’t right that people pay a water bill and still need to buy bottled water and boil water.
- Adam Johnson: Would like to note that no one from TU is here.
- Ashley Schenck: Has lost trust in the TU system.
 - Mr. Lorino states that he too has TU, and he wants to get to the point that people can trust this system and can trust the water.
- **Back to Committee**
- Mr. Lorino states that he will not hold another meeting until the process has had time to run. We will meet again if there is another incident or when the consultant is done. Asks that citizens participate with the consultant and contact us if they have any issues.
- Mr. Waguespack asks that residents be updated as improvements are made, though announcements, etc.
- Mr. Lorino addressed the issues of people following, filming, harassing TU employees. Asks that the citizens give us time to make improvements.
- Mr. Binder made closing remarks.
- Mr. Binder (son) concerned about graphs.
- Mr. Smith made closing remarks.

ADJOURN

Mike Lorino, Chair of Utilities Workgroup

**Karlin Riles, Acting Clerk of 5.17.21
Workgroup Meeting**