The regular meeting of the Consumer Affairs Committee of the Representative Policy Board of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District ("Committee") took place on Monday, November 16, 2020, via remote access. Committee members present were N. Campbell, M. Levine, S. Mongillo, A. Rescigno, F. Pepe, and R. Smith.

Also present were: J. Donofrio (Office of Consumer Affairs), L. Gonzalez, R. Kowalski, T. Norris, and P. Singh (RWA), and J. Slubowski (RPB Staff).

Stephen:

Yep. We're at 5:30 and Ted's here, so we can call the November meeting of the Consumer Affairs Committee to order. I would like to remind everyone these meetings are recorded and posted, just so you're aware. And Jennifer, I assume you have the attendance for everyone. So we can move on to item one, the safety moment, which is posted. And some tips on Daylight Savings Time in terms of coping with that. I always feel that little adjustment and it does fatigue you, et cetera. So it's good to be aware of it. And also some tips on adjusting to the new time in preparation for winter. So thank you, Jennifer, for that.

Stephen:

Item two is the approval of our minutes for October 19th. Do we have a motion?

Frank:

Yeah. I got a motion.

Stephen:

Frank. And second.

Mark:

I'll second it.

Stephen:

Thanks, Mark. I'll give everyone a second. If there are any comments, corrections, additions. I'm hearing none. All those in favor.

Group:

Aye.

Stephen:

Any opposed? Thank you. The minutes passed. Item three, our special topic for today. Ted Norris will be with us on the business continuity work plan. Ted, I'm going to turn it over to you.

Ted:

All right. Thanks, Stephen. Good evening everybody.

Tony:

Hi Ted.

Ted:

We have four activities planned this year. Jennifer, you can go to the next slide, please. And the next one as well. Oh, that's right. Right there. That's good. Sorry. These are the four activities. The AWIA Emergency Response Plan. I'll talk about each one of these in a little bit more detail. Table top exercise out of Gaillard. Divisional and departmental table top exercises and regular planning activities. Our consultant is continuing with Kate Novick who's been with us doing business continuity planning for several years now. Okay, Jennifer. Oh, let me talk about this one first.

Ted:

Because the top bullet is completed one, so I don't have a slide on that, per se. But I want to talk about it a little bit because it is important. AWIA stands for American Water and Infrastructure Act that became law in 2018. Required [inaudible 00:04:52] utilities to conduct a risk assessment, a very comprehensive risk assessment of their entire business as well as to develop emergency response plans related to those risks. We completed the risk assessment and certified the same to the EPA back in March. A large effort by a lot of folks and identified numerous risks that we knew about and then also determined which ones where we thought were the highest risk. We actually looked at 250 different risk pairs as part of that.

Stephen:

Ted, was that just for the water industry?

Ted:

Yes, it was.

Stephen:

Okay.

Ted:

And then the second part which we just completed in September is this one. The Emergency Response Plan Certification. So based on what we found in our risk assessment, we looked at all of the response plans that we have and determined whether they were up to date or not, whether they covered all the risks that we need to cover, and then put that together. So the response plans covered responses to natural hazards and malevolent acts, financial systems, [inaudible 00:06:09] system, monitoring other kind of monitoring. So we developed a lot of those plans. But our methodology was really to develop a plan of plans. We don't have one plan that covers all of these risks, but we have many plans that do cover all of the risks when all combined.

Ted:

So that's what we developed. So for instance, we have our business continuity plan that determines what we will be doing if we lose 90 Sargent Drive to, say, a flood or a fire. [inaudible 00:06:36] management plan that talks about how we will conduct incident management in the organization as well as departments. We have our critical component failure plans. We have over 40 of those for different components of our system, help stations, water treatment plants and the like. Great Hill Tunnel is one for example. And we have cybersecurity plan as well as plans for droughts, floods and dam failures.

Ted:

HAZWOPER plans, risk register, emergency equipment plans and others such as medical emergency shelter in place. So we have a plan of many plans. We updated the ones that needed to be updated and are putting them all now underneath one umbrella. We have completed what EPA has required us to do, but that is required every five years now. So the next person who is in line here, I guess to go through it all again and work on it. But the first time is the hardest time because that was the time they provided most of the information.

Ted:

Jennifer, you can go to the next slide, please. So the second activity plan for this year is a table top exercise out of Lake Gaillard Water Treatment Plant. We want to simulate what would happen if we lost the plant and we had to go to a raw water bypass. That means directly from the lake into our distribution system with only chlorination. We actually have a plan in place to do that if we ever lost the treatment plant or the pump station. It tests staff readiness, incident command system and emergency plan documentation.

Ted:

[inaudible 00:08:20] plan to review we will review all the field activities necessary to get the raw water system up and running including the temporary chlorination system. We will evaluate ourselves by doing a lessons learned afterwards. So this is a critical exercise because obviously Gaillard and the pumps in the Gaillard Treatment and Gaillard Pump Station are our largest facilities and most critical to the organization. So that's the table top. That's the second activity. Third activity is where we will be doing divisional, departmental table top exercises. Each department has their own business continuity plan. We'll be testing those. Putting those in place. Now, we're not going to do every single department. We'll do all of the departments over a course of a few years. We'll ask them to exercise the response plans and to form teams of incident command structure and assign roles within that structure for planning, operations, logistics, finance and the like.

Ted:

And here we will also run a lessons learned as we do after these kind of exercises to determine what needs to improve, what went well, what didn't go well. So that will improve that. And then the fourth activity and the final real activity is our normal plan activities. We have a business continuity subcommittee. It's a large group composed of many people from across the organization. They typically meet three to four times a year. We have not done that this year. We will be doing that right at the beginning of the year. [inaudible 00:09:52] get the AWIA work done and we discuss training. Review of the departmental plans and assessments that [inaudible 00:10:00] need to be done. And this is a committee ... [inaudible 00:10:06] smaller team that will design table top exercises and develop a

training schedule for training such as incident command, 90 Sargent Drive evacuation, active shooter and shelter-in-place. So that in a nutshell is where we are with business continuity for FY21.

Ted:

Again, a lot of it has been focused on AWIA and getting that done. That was a big effort by a lot of people. I'm giving people a little bit of a breather before we pick it up again in the beginning of 2021. So if there's any questions?

Stephen:

Thank you, Ted. I have one for you. COVID-19. Where did that fit into the ... obviously that wasn't anticipating, I don't believe.

Ted:

Oh, so that's an incident of command that we're living right now, Steve. Like everybody else is, right?

Stephen:

Yeah.

Ted:

So, it forced us-

Stephen:

What previously had been done for business continuity that prepared you for that?

Ted:

Honestly-

Stephen:

[inaudible 00:11:12] better position to respond to it.

Ted:

Yeah. Honestly, nothing really prepared us for that that we have done. What we did early on, as soon as we got wind of what was coming, we developed our infectious disease control plan. A large document that we put in place and are using to inform our response to COVID-19. So COVID-19 has really been a test of folks working from home. Like if we did lost 90 Sargent Drive, particularly early in the year when we were all, almost all of us were working from home or outside of 90 Sargent Drive, so it's allowed us to actually test that kind of system. Really the larger scale BCP.

Stephen:

Well, you did have plans to work remotely right? If you couldn't get to a certain location. So that must have helped at least. And you had laptops for at least some people.

Ted:

That's right.

Prem:

Can I add something here, Ted? Are you okay if I can add some more stuff here?

Ted:

Certainly, Prem.

Prem:

No, I just wanted to say this is a great question, right? So overnight things changed on us, where we went from having no telecommute to much of [inaudible 00:12:22] telecommute, right? So we [inaudible 00:12:25] exercise something to answer your questions to you, right? We [inaudible 00:12:28] exercised at this [inaudible 00:12:30] to be able to put out people out there for remote working. So that was something. And with Ted's point, right? Although we did not prepare for the pandemic because we never knew that we were going to have one, but we did have an incident response plan that we have. Like during [inaudible 00:12:45]. We do have that, right? So we kind of enacted that immediately and then we started getting all the crews together and doing what we're supposed to be doing.

Prem:

So it was some of that that we had to kind of play along as soon as we got into the situation. But we are pretty ... I mean, as you all are aware, we are pretty dynamic in making that change. All of it from remote working to, for example, field services. We had people deploy the crews right out from their homes. We also have contact center taking calls from home remotely. So all of that happened pretty fast, right? So I just wanted to add that was a big win from AWIA perspective [inaudible 00:13:24] still planning to do it. We already had it up and running, right? So that was something, right? So it was a good exercise and we could put that in place pretty quickly. So ...

Rochelle:

Ted, correct me if I'm wrong. Didn't we have the infectious disease plan in place already? I think it just needed to be updated, correct?

Ted:

We had something in place, but it was not nearly comprehensive enough to handle a COVID type situation. Right.

Stephen:

Well, I believe you responded just admirably, considering your critical utility and the scope of the organization and a number of different things that you had to address. We've not really heard about anything that's happened negatively in a major way. Everything seems to be going along and getting done which is pretty remarkable. So, good job.

Ted:

Well, thank you. Thanks, Prem.

Rochelle:

Thank you.

Prem:

Yep. Thanks, Steve. And one other thing just to add a little bit more color to what Ted also mentioned, right? One of the key things that I know a lot of questions come upon cyber and how are we doing things and to Ted's point as part of AWIA, there were certain pieces along the cybersecurity plan and we've been closely working with [inaudible 00:14:47] right, making sure that we are in compliance. We use the same tools that they use for cybersecurity. So a lot of that work has been happening and as part of BCP, we make sure that we're in line with them, right? So I know there's a risk committee coming up for [inaudible 00:15:02] next month, and I'm planning to do a cybersecurity update specific to that which will tell you a little bit more of the details on cyber. But it's all part of the overarching plan, like Ted mentioned, right?

Prem:

A lot more details. But it's pretty comprehensive when you start thinking along those lines.

Stephen:

Prem, I would imagine that the cybersecurity issue just continually needs to get addressed as technology changes.

Prem:

Yeah. Exactly. Pretty much every day, Steve, right? And I keep a tab on that pretty much what's going on. And things that we don't talk much, like penetration test and we did a phishings test and as part of our regular routine. So we do like four times in a year phishing test. We do a penetration test as an annual thing. So we do a lot of those things. That happens behind the scenes. But you are right. We almost look at it every day, pretty much, right? Looking at what's going on. Yep.

Stephen:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Any other questions for Ted, Prem?

Tony:

Good update.

Ted:

Great. Thank you.

Stephen:

Very good. Very good. Thanks, Ted. Appreciate you being here again.

Ted:

Glad to do it.

Stephen:

Okay. You take care.

Mark:

[inaudible 00:16:19] good, Ted. I didn't want to not say anything. Excellent presentation. You sure [inaudible 00:16:25] the water company for another couple years.

Prem:

We ask him all the time, Mark.

Mark:

Hey, maybe you should hold out. See if you get more money or something, you know? Maybe they'll give you Cadillac.

Ted:

Maybe I'll just do it for love, Mark. Maybe just a little love.

Mark:

That's the best one.

Ted:

All right. Good bye everybody.

Jeff:

Bye, Ted.

Group:

Bye.

Stephen:

Good bye. Item four is discussion regarding RPB dashboard report. I put this on the agenda just so that we could formally sort of talk about it. The first thing I wanted to say is, and I'm not trying to create work for the staff at all in any way and I don't know if we're even going to do this, but when I sort of heard one day in conversation in one of our meetings that we're getting 200 calls a day, I just thought, "Maybe there's a way for us to kind of take the pulse of consumers", as the Consumer Affairs Committee. Because the dashboard as it originally was put together fell to the Finance Committee which is, I think, perfectly reasonable and logical as most of the parameters are financial. But I just put down a few things that you all got, just sort of to think about it in terms of what you might want to see or think would be relevant for the Consumer Affairs Committee to monitor either monthly or quarterly.

Stephen:

We could in addition to the number of calls, have a breakdown of some of the things we might be interested in seeing from that group. I have a few suggestions there. The water rate comparison we

could just take from the other report. That's interesting to see. And some other incidents. Main breaks that happen that impact people in the community. If there are any other incidents on our property that we should be aware of.

Mark:

Hey, Steve?

Stephen:

And also the website. How is that performing, kind of? Do we want to get one report from that section at one of our meetings or do we want to continually kind of see if what numbers they're dealing with and how that's going on a monthly basis?

Mark:

Steve? Steve?

Stephen:

Yeah.

Mark:

You know, a lot of these people you're talking about a dashboard, these new members don't know what the previous dashboards were like, you know? So I think you should do like an outline of what you think we should do or have somebody appointed to try to come up with a dashboard only committee. Can you try to come up with an outline? An outline for this. And you're right, I think before we do it ourselves, after you do your outline, I think everybody on the CAC should try calling the water company and see what it's like.

Stephen:

[crosstalk 00:19:54].

Mark:

[crosstalk 00:19:54] see what that part is, because that's going to be part of the dashboard. Communication and stuff. And how they respond to your questions and stuff like that. That's one part of it. Like computer stuff was another part. Loss of water supply is another part of it. I'm just saying maybe we should come up with like four or five things for the dashboard, because you're right. The other dashboard was too out of hand. So like I said, I don't think these new people know exactly what we're talking about.

Laura:

And I-

Rochelle:

Oh, can I just [crosstalk 00:20:27]. I was going to say, can I also add? So I know the dashboard that we're currently using did go through some review. It definitely did not include all the KPIs that we currently

track. So if you like, I can share some of the KPIs that we do currently track, although they're not on the RPB dashboard. And you can see if that's something that you're interested in seeing.

Stephen:

Yeah. Thanks. I really appreciate that. And as I said, I don't want to create any work, but if you have something that's already there that'd be great. And I don't know what management contributed in terms of an idea to this. But I wanted the members to think about it. We'll talk about it in our next meeting again. And I will try to get something a little more organized together in addition to whatever I can pick up in the next month or so.

Mark:

So who would you want to fill this out? The RPB? Management? RWA? I mean, the five member authority? Who would you give this to fill out? Customers?

Stephen:

Someone in management would have this information.

Prem:

[inaudible 00:21:41] can I suggest something? I guess I know Laura, she pretty much runs the customer care, right? She's the director of our customer care and as part of our, like you said management, we do have [inaudible 00:21:53] dozen KPIs we track. More than four dozen to be honest with you, right? So we can do it two ways. We could either have RPB members, like you have a list of four different KPIs for example. You could give us what you think you would like to see and we could come up with what we have. Probably we can work together on creating the dashboard, right? And Mark had a great point. I'm not sure what else was there in the past dashboard. Only the thing that makes sense to you and important for us here, we could actually add, because there are a lot of them that are operational day to day stuff KPIs. I'm not sure if you want that level of detail.

Mark:

And again, who fills this out? Who answers the questions? Or is it just each department will get a report on this dashboard?

Prem:

[crosstalk 00:22:38] go ahead, Rochelle. Go ahead.

Rochelle:

I think you should consolidate. So, if that was the approach. So even in the current dashboard, it does have some ... although we could adjust it, it does have like the customer stakeholders component. The financial. And then some system metrics. But in the KPI ... and then it has some operational metrics like unaccounted for water and our production. The KPIs, we do have ... I just want to mention a couple items that are maybe somewhat comparable to what you have on the list. And you can see if it makes sense for you. So we do have like average speed of answer is one of the metrics that we currently report [inaudible 00:23:29] complaints. And then currently there isn't a customer satisfaction metric that we're reporting.

Stephen:

Do you record how many are taken care of on that first call it's made?

Rochelle:

So not currently. Where that did come into play was on our prior customer survey. That would be one of the inputs that we got as part of that survey. I'm not sure if we should actually self-report that. Because that's really, I think, from the customer perspective.

Stephen:

It was just one way I thought of sort of gauging-

Laura:

If I could just chime in, Stephen. It is a metric that's used for to indicate the customer's experience. First call of resolution is a very strong measure. It's not something we presently track but it is something that we will be looking to track because it goes to the customer experience. So that is [inaudible 00:24:45] it is something that we would be interested in doing. Don't have it yet because we need to develop a mechanism to track.

Stephen:

Okay.

Rochelle:

[crosstalk 00:24:56].

Stephen:

Because kind of indirectly the survey does do it, but it's just whoever responds to the survey.

Rochelle:

Right.

Laura:

Correct. What we're looking to do is more on our customers that do call us and of those customers, all customers that call us, the percentage that basically are resolved on a first call and that's a very strong, positive indicator.

Stephen:

Yeah. Well what I was going to say is it may be a little work [inaudible 00:25:35] but I anticipate that after that it's just a matter of updating it.

Laura:

Correct. That's right.

Rochelle:

Right. The number of shuts we do track, as you know, we're not currently ... we're not actually shutting, but we do have on another report that we use internally, we do track the number of shuts each month.

Stephen:

Yeah. I would like the committee members to think about this and see if they can come up with something that they think is relevant. And does the OCA have any comment on this?

Jeff:

No. I mean, I guess it comes down to what are your goals? What are you trying to achieve?

Stephen:

Yeah. I have a very generalized goal of just taking the temperature of the customer just because I didn't think the other dashboard ... the other dashboard sort of takes the temperature of the company in terms of how it's performing and operating. But as Consumer Affairs I just thought maybe we could come up with some parameters to see how people are interacting. You know? And there may be some things from the recreation program, too, that could be part of it.

Laura:

And we do, as Rochelle indicated, we do track ASA, for example. Average speed of answer. How fast we answer our calls. How long our customers been waiting. We do track abandonment rates. We want to be sure that most calls are not abandoned and that goes in line with that. We also track internally some service levels. How many customers ... the percentage of customers that are actually experiencing a wait time of let's say 70 seconds or less. So there are ... those are metrics that speak to the customer experience.

Stephen:

Yeah. Well-

Prem:

[inaudible 00:27:18] all of this [inaudible 00:27:20] Laura mentioning is all part of our global metrics. We track it as management to make sure that we have [inaudible 00:27:27] so we do all of that stuff. So this is day to day business. Business as usual. So I mean if you're thinking about [inaudible 00:27:35] something for the committee to look at, we can also do that. Or if the committee wants to come back and say, "Hey, we would like to see some of these things", we could also work together on that. So I don't know, whichever way the team here feels comfortable, we can do that.

Stephen:

Yeah. Again, I'm totally open to you not wanting to do this if you think this is the operation of the company. It's kind of a fine line. Or whether it's not really our responsibility to look at this. It was just an idea I had. That's all.

Tony:

Hey, Steve. It's Tony. Let me give you my perspective on this. We get the, once a year, the analysis of customer satisfaction surveys and we pay consultants to do that. It's professionally done. This gets more

into the weeds and whether it's necessary. It isn't necessary for me. I mean, I'm happy with getting the reports that the customers are whatever. 95% or 98% satisfied with things. I mean, if you're requesting all this information I think it's just for sort of our own benefit, and curiosity. How many calls come in and how many shut offs. But I think we're just adding work that may or may not be necessary.

Stephen:

Okay.

Tony:

Just my thought. I would not-

Naomi:

Okay. Also ... Oh.

Tony:

If everybody agreed that they wanted it, I would not have an objection to it, but since we're discussing it, that's my feeling.

Naomi:

Steve?

Stephen:

Sure.

Naomi:

Steve, can you hear me?

Stephen:

Yeah. Go ahead, Naomi.

Naomi:

Yeah. Also on that note, I'm kind of agreeing with Tony. I think that maybe if we want to do something like this going forward, maybe we should just as the committee ourselves maybe decide what we want to see and maybe we can reach out to the customer service person. I think her name is Laura.

Stephen:

Laura.

Naomi:

Give her some of our concerns because that's where she would come in and she could ... maybe she could take a look at this list or something that we put together as a group, because some of these things like Tony said, we already know what they are. So maybe we do have some other things that we would

like to see maybe we as the committee ourselves should decide that as a group. And then like I said, bring it to them.

Stephen:

Yeah. I mean, I'm fine with if the Consumer Affairs Committee wants to just have this as a report from once in a while from the customer service department. That's fine, too.

Mark:

I just had ... Tony. Do you trust that survey company? First, you're on that ... to answer that survey company you got to be on the phone for 15 minutes to a half hour. Now, how many surveys have you taken in the last 20 years?

Tony:

I've taken none. Well, but-

Mark:

I don't trust them at all. I mean, look at Quinnipiac and all the polls for this last presidential election. Right? There's no ... that polling kind of thing is dead. There's got to be a new way for them to contact people. You know what I'm trying to say? And they still use the phone system. [inaudible 00:31:09] pollers use the phone system.

Tony:

You make a good point, but I mean I think we would know if we've got issues, we would know about it. I mean we get reports from the OCA and they're minimal. I mean, so it sort of matches with what we're hearing from the survey takers.

Mark:

Of course they know that. They know that [inaudible 00:31:36] too. You know? I think I would like to see somebody from our company in the phone bank when they're doing the phone ... when they're doing these surveys to find out how many actually ... they did 600, they said. Listen, if somebody wants to put me on the phone for a half hour they got to pay me. And they don't do that.

Rochelle:

Mark, I just want to mention, though, I think you're talking about the GreatBlue survey. So we haven't used them in the last year plus. We are using another tool now and I think-

Mark:

That's those two young kids [inaudible 00:32:11]?

Rochelle:

Excuse me?

Mark:

Is that the two young kids that came? They were like 20 years old.

Rochelle:

More recently, we're using like a J.D. Powers survey although that's also being revisited. So I think we have to-

Mark:

I think it's just very hard to do surveys now and to get them accurate. It's not like a candy bar. And I've always said that that survey is like 50 questions too long.

Rochelle:

Yeah. The GreatBlue was.

Mark:

I mean, that survey should be like five minutes to 10 minutes. Really, that's what it should be. And you'd get more responses and you get a better response. That's my opinion. I think Tony is right. Tony's right. You got to be do something wrong. We don't get a lot of complaints. But I think a lot of that stuff is like how many times do you call Eversource [inaudible 00:33:03] and tell them what jerks they are for what they did? Nobody does that. So I think it's the same thing. But anyway, hey, it's my opinion. That's all it is.

Naomi:

I've been getting a lot of surveys. Every time I go to the doctor, [inaudible 00:33:18] I get home and even before I'm home, I have a survey. And the surveys are just like five questions. And a lot of times what they're saying is, "If you have time", they say, "would you like to continue?" And if you don't, then what you just do is you just submit it. But this is what I've been seeing the last several months which is coming ... I mean, I don't care where you go.

Mark:

That's a new thing.

Naomi:

Right.

Mark:

To be online, to be five questions. And sometimes they give you a handbag or a $20 gift certificate. But I'm just saying, if they're not going to do that kind of survey, they must have e-mail and numbers for at least half the customers in our company I would think. Does anybody know that answer? Hello?

Rochelle:

I'm not sure that's high. I think there's an effort, and Prem, correct me if I'm wrong, to get e-mails for-

Prem:

We do have data points. Yeah. E-mail is the next step. We first have to have all the phone numbers, right? To be honest with you, we don't even have all the numbers [crosstalk 00:34:22].

Mark:

I bet you half those phone numbers are wrong.

Prem:

Exactly. So I think-

Mark:

Because everybody's getting rid of their landlines.

Naomi:

Exactly.

Prem:

Exactly. But I think-

Mark:

All they have is their cellphones.

Naomi:

Cellphones.

Mark:

So I mean, I think we should make a big effort to get e-mails. I mean, they change too, but at least ...

Laura:

We did do that a couple of months ago. I think in April we did do an outreach to our customers to gain that kind of information for the point, Mark, that you just indicated. Our numbers are landlines. A lot of people don't call us often [inaudible 00:34:55] so we reached out for new cell numbers as well. New contact information including cell numbers and e-mails.

Mark:

By mail, right? By mail.

Laura:

Yes.

Mark:

Yeah.

Laura:

We did a mail in.

Prem:

Yeah. I think again let's not forget, right? So we always talk about these surveys. But at the end of the day we have to also have time to react and do what's needed, right? So one thing me and Larry talked about is survey is one good thing but we also have [inaudible 00:35:21] to act upon it and do what's needed to really correct. For example, I know Rochelle talked about J.D. Power, right? The more recent one that we did. Last year. We didn't do it, I mean because of the pandemic, obviously. The budgets were cut and everything. But before that, the year before, we did this and we took the [inaudible 00:35:39] and now we're working on really creating some action plans to get better. Nothing is bad but still there are improvement ideas, et cetera. But we also got to give ourselves time to work on these things, not just send surveys every year, right?

Prem:

So we just want to be reflective of that and really care about the customer and really take care of if there's a genuine issue and not just doing surveys. So to Laura's point, we had the phone numbers, for example. We are updating and taking care of those things. But really act upon to make sure the customer is taken care of, right? So we got to have that mindset as well. Hopefully everybody agrees because I've seen all these surveys. We dealt with J.D. Power. SurveyMonkey and GreatBlue. All these things are great but if you don't act upon it, then what's the use, right? So there's been a lot of focus on that now. To really kind of look at that and see what makes sense for us to help our customer, right? So …

Mark:

The more people that are going to pay their bill online, you must have their e-mail account [inaudible 00:36:36]. Would you say … you got 40% of our customers e-mail or less?

Prem:

I would say we have as of last month and Laura can correct me if I'm wrong, we have close to 26% of our customers which is close to-

Mark:

How much?

Naomi:

How much?

Prem:

[crosstalk 00:36:51] addresses and phone numbers [inaudible 00:36:52]. 29,000.

Mark:

29,000 e-mails. Well …

Rich:

Steve, this is-

Mark:

[crosstalk 00:36:58] there's a start for a survey. There's 29,000.

Prem:

Exactly. And I think if you remember, Mark and [inaudible 00:37:06] team, you also did a monthly billing business case if you remember. We did talk about e-billing. We set some targets for the next three years, if you remember that. Going from a 26% to like a 42% in a business case. And again, we are making sure we are getting good data and we can really [inaudible 00:37:25] off of that and we could use some of this for future surveys and things which is-

Mark:

My problem is too many companies have my e-mail.

Rich:

Hey Steve, this is Rich.

Stephen:

Yep.

Rich:

I don't want to interrupt Mark's dinner here. I don't think he brought enough for everybody. But I want to go back to Jeff's point. Jeff said in passing, "It depends on what our goal is", and we need to kind of understand as the consumer group what is our goal. And really when it comes to water as a consumer, as long as it comes on and it's not brown, it doesn't smell, I don't have a lot of interaction with the water company. I do have interactions with the water company if it stops. So things like main breaks. One of the things that I find in my role here is it's good to find out about main breaks before the neighborhood goes up and even the mayor gets to know. So things like how many main breaks in my district reports by billing problems or taste and odor or outages in each of our towns might be helpful. Because then people know that we're on this. Our job is to be advocates for these people.

Rich:

I don't really worry about how many bills were paid electronically or number of contacts or anything else. But if the water stops for the people in my city, that's something that I care about, right? So I could boil it down and say, "That's the touch point for me", is when do we have main breaks and were we notified in a timely way? And how many problems do we have with taste and odor or just outages? That's it. That's all I see from my goal on this committee is representing or being an advocate for the people in my city. And I don't always hear about main breaks, and I'm not blaming anybody. But sometimes I hear about them from the mayor before I hear about them from the Regional Water Authority. So those are some of the data points that would be interesting to me, broken out by town.

Mark:

Sometimes you hear about them on TV. You don't even [inaudible 00:39:37] there.

Prem:

I think that's a great point, Rich. Right? I just want to add, I mean, I agree with everything you said in terms of looking out for customer. And if you remember, I think Larry made a comment too that we set up that whole ... like having a specific person from RWA working with town. I know we had taken out four people in communications team and broke it down. If you remember that conversation, right? So we're going to start making the improvements. And to your point on main breaks, we have all the data points that we have and we work with the customer. And we can share. And to be honest with you, we want to share. We want to be very transparent and really go through that.

Prem:

But if the committee can come back and say, "Hey, these are the four things or whatever, we will make sure we can come back and we could kind of talk about how we report", and maybe use the same liaison that we have on the communications side. Really come out and talk about these things. So, we welcome [inaudible 00:40:32] and we will make sure we have those data points for the team here.

Rich:

Breaking them down by town would be helpful, because then we'd see where we might have problems. If we get a general number, we don't know, but we may see trends in a particular town for instance. Or in our own town where we have to maybe step up a little more because we represent that city or town.

Rochelle:

And I think, Rich, I think one of the things we can look at is on the communications that do go out to the public officials, if the RPB representative is included.

Rich:

Yes.

Rochelle:

It sounds like you're not.

Rich:

I am sometimes. And I know breaks that have happened in Milford that I was not made aware of. But let me put an asterisk next to that because there are times where I said, "I never got an e-mail", and it's in my junk folder. So there's no perfect science in that world but it would be good to know of how many outages in my town per month. If we got simple data points like that. And we see that one town is spiking well over the others, it may be instructive.

Stephen:

Rich, in Hamden Dan Doyle is our representative and I'm always notified of main breaks not only when they happen, how long they may take and they also let me know when they're complete. So you should be getting ... I don't know if there's one person in charge of that or if it's done by each of the towns kind of coordinators. But that's information that you should be getting. And Prem, I guess talk internally with

the people who are responsible for communications to see that everyone is doing the same thing. I mean, if we were looking at it we'd see the number of breaks across ... Consumer Affairs would see the number of breaks across the whole company and not just a town.

Stephen:

And all the ... those of us on Consumer Affairs don't represent all the towns either.

Rich:

Well, Steve, that's my point. First of all, I do get notified. I just know there have been instances where I was notified a day after it happened. Breaking it down by town might be helpful. I know that we see the macro number. If we see it broken down by town that might give us some greater insights.

Stephen:

Yeah. Okay. I mean-

Rich:

It's just a thought.

Stephen:

... all of this of just rolling out for thoughts. Just to see what we could do as a committee. I just ... the dashboard to me is how your car is performing on the trip. The survey is when you get to the destination, how did it go? They're kind of two different things.

Rich:

But the water company is kind of like a bridge. If I go over a bridge and it doesn't collapse, I don't stop and call the architect and the engineers and thank them. I just assume. People with the water company assume they're going to get water. We don't have to say, "How was the receptionist and did you find it easy to park?" And all the other things around surveys. We just need to make sure their water is on and it doesn't smell bad.

Stephen:

Yeah. But when they do call, what's that experience like?

Rich:

Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

Mark:

You're talking about water breaks and all that which is definitely an important issue. How about the customer calls up and doesn't get satisfaction when they get a person on the other end? I think that's important, too. So Steve, I think you should take this back to your homework and come back with a full report next meeting.

Stephen:

Agreed.

Mark:

If you want, call me and we'll work on it.

Stephen:

I'd like everybody's input on it. We can ... we'll ultimately come up with something or nothing. But-

Rich:

Just don't call Mark at 6:00. It's apparently his dinner time.

Prem:

Steve, anything that you need the team and Steve, anything you need from us to help, to come up with [inaudible 00:44:37] and I'll be glad to do that with you. So please feel free to [inaudible 00:44:39].

Stephen:

Yeah, no. Prem, I will definitely call you just to sort of talk about this in a philosophical way. And to try to judge the merits of it and whether this is a good idea or not and we can go from there.

Prem:

Thank you. Yeah. Sounds good [inaudible 00:44:55].

Stephen:

As I said, I'm not trying to create great work for anybody. I'm just ... when I saw the other dashboard it just didn't have much meaning to me in terms of consumer affairs, but ... So, okay. Any other comments on this topic? If not, we'll move on to item five which is the report of the OCA. Jeff.

Jeff:

Well, it's interesting that you spent the last half hour or so talking about the dashboard because I have nothing. I have no consumer complaints. I have [inaudible 00:45:29] of any consumer and you would think that with everybody working remotely and presumably drinking and using more water, people would be more in tune with the quality of the service being provided but I've not been contacted by the authority or by any customer directly with regard to any concerns.

Stephen:

Well, that's great. When I was thinking about this dashboard thing, one of the things was we get the customers that come to you are things that get elevated from customer service. And frankly, most of them are just really it isn't that they couldn't get their issue resolved. They've just been very difficult people that you've had to deal with. So other than the number of them that come through, I don't know what we could get from monitoring that. But fortunately we don't get a whole lot that get to your level. So ...

Jeff:

I think that's right. And it makes sense because the customers that have the run of the mill complaint, I think are resolved at the authority level. There's no need to escalate those customers. It's by and large the dollars in dispute when we get a complaint escalated to us don't really justify the expense that's incurred in investigating and resolving a dispute. But every customer has a right to escalate their complaint and we're an advocate for every customer. And so when we get a complaint, regardless of the dollars [inaudible 00:47:15] we investigate it appropriately and we make the recommendations I would think is in the best interest of our consumers. So, it makes sense that there's certainly many more customers that have issues or concerns than we see at our level. But like I said, most of those are resolved at the customer [inaudible 00:47:37] level with [inaudible 00:47:38] authority.

Stephen:

I have a question for Laura or Prem. When someone calls the water company, do they get the same ... is it an automated system they first get to during the day, in the evening? Is it always the same kind of response? Does somebody pick up the phone ever on the [crosstalk 00:47:57]-

Laura:

[crosstalk 00:47:59] during the day we're here from 8:00 to 5:00. They have self-service options like they have about five over the IVR. Ultimately, they can get to an agent if they needed to. If they had an emergency, they would be able to do that. They can pay their bills, get the amount owed, get the last payment made and the amount, the date and amount of that. So a lot of that information is up front. And then ultimately we would be available to them if they needed us. After hours, they still have the same options. They can get their balance information and so forth, but they won't have an agent to speak to unless there's an emergency in which case the call is routed to Edwards for handling.

Stephen:

Okay.

Prem:

Yeah. I mean, let's not forget of the team here, we have a control room. It is 24 by seven for emergencies, right? So we have somebody [inaudible 00:49:02] but only if it's an emergency [inaudible 00:49:06] emergency. For day to day, let's say a billing question and things of that sort, like Laura said, it's 8:00 to 5:00. And obviously we are trying more self-service. If you remember again the business case on monthly billing, et cetera. So there are options that we have today with IVR that takes the customer directly to make an IVR payment with no person being there which is the case, right? It's a good thing, but we are trying more of that promotion now, right? So, but more to come, right? We're working on multiple other things. Different channels. And there are a couple projects we are working on, like deploying a mobile app and other things which are our FY21 goals. So we are working through that. So ...

Stephen:

Do you track the calls that go to ... that people do the automated system and take care of it themselves? Or do you know that?

Prem:

Yes.

Stephen:

Okay.

Prem:

We do that. Actually, as a matter of fact like Laura mentioned, we have those five different menu options and based on what customer presses, it goes into that kind of specific menu. So we do track. I mean, there's a lot of metrics around that. We want to make sure that we can fine tune [inaudible 00:50:07] for example even the scheduling our workflows. Laura does a great job by looking at our schedule in terms of the call volumes, right? Like Mondays are pretty hectic and Fridays are hectic and between there's not many calls. So she does all the scheduling and everything [inaudible 00:50:21] all the teams. So we have all those metrics in place which we use to schedule the number of people taking calls, how many are working on property closures, how many people are working on back office stuff. So there's a whole slew of metrics for that. We track all of that. Yeah.

Frank:

I have a question for Prem. Prem, Frank Pepe. Did you ever actually call the water company during the day yourself and try to get through?

Prem:

Yes.

Frank:

There is still an operator. It's all automated. There is no speaking to a human. And [inaudible 00:50:57] their phone number. Why is it so hard to get through ... the water company?

Prem:

So let me tell you this, Frank. That's a great question. I did call, by the way, so I did call. And I also had Laura call once to make her own payment, right? So a couple of things there. As we do more self-service, like the fourth message you see through, right? It's an automate message to pick up the options, the five options, right? Based on what options you pick, you go navigate through ... let's say you want to make an IVR payment. It's all automated fashion. But as part of those five options, if the customer is not able to get through, they are actually directed towards an agent, right? So it's done in a fashion where a customer can do a self-service but eventually if they want to have a live agent, they can actually talk to somebody.

Prem:

So that's how the menu options are placed today. And I will, to your point, if a customer is able to get through that option where he's able to speak to a live agent it might happen in a couple of minutes or it could happen in seconds or sometimes it might take some time based on what they choose, right? If they want to make a payment [inaudible 00:52:02] automated fashion. So again, like I said, there's more work that needs to be done and we are working towards getting it more automated fashion.

Prem:

But at the same time have an option for customers to speak to a live agent as well, right? I do agree with you Frank. It really depends on their experience. And we have to make sure we give the best customer experience. And that's one of the things that a lot of us deal this year to make sure that we have those best menu options out there, right? That's part of our objective, to be honest with you. So ...

Frank:
[crosstalk 00:52:34].

Mark:
That's a good point, Frank. That's definitely a good point. It's not easy to get through.

Stephen:
We are on Jeff's report which is minimal. Thank god. So-

Jeff:
[crosstalk 00:52:50] going on.

Stephen:
Jeff, nothing else?

Jeff:
Nope. Nothing going on.

Stephen:
Okay. Item six then is the approval of your invoice for October for 1,385. Do I have a motion?

Frank:
I make a motion [inaudible 00:53:04].

Naomi:
I second it.

Stephen:
Thank you, Laura, Naomi. Any questions for Jeff on the bill? All those in favor?

Group:
Aye.

Stephen:
Any opposed? Great. Your bill is improved, Jeff.

Jeff:

Thank you.

Stephen:

Item seven, our calendar meeting dates for 2021 have been proposed. Anybody have any comment on that? Do I have a motion to approve these?

Frank:

Make a motion to approve.

Stephen:

Frank. And a second?

Rich:

Second.

Stephen:

If they're okay with everybody, all those in favor?

Group:

Aye.

Stephen:

Aye. Any opposed? So those will be our calendar dates for next year. Our next regular meeting is all the way to December 21st at 5:30. So anybody have any comments before we adjourn?

Mark:

Happy Thanksgiving to all.

Stephen:

You too, Mark.

Laura:

You too.

Stephen:

For sure.

Rochelle:

Thank you. Same to you.

Stephen:

I want to thank Jeff for joining us tonight. It's always great to have everybody available and helpful. Provide a lot of information. So thank you.