

**Representative Policy Board
Consumer Affairs Committee February 22, 2021
Meeting Transcription**

Stephen M.:

[crosstalk 00:00:21] the February, hi Prem. Consumer Affairs meeting to order and the first item on the agenda, is the safety moment. Are you going to put it up, Jennifer? I did read that today, with my previous experience. A lot of good information there. The numbers, if you read it, tell the whole story, about exercising and not exercising and what happens. So everyone should take a look at that. It's a good reminder. Thank you, Jennifer.

Stephen M.:

Item 2, is the approval of minutes. Do I have a motion?

Frank:

You have a motion to approve the minutes, Steve, Frank.

Stephen M.:

Thanks Frank. And second?

Naomi:

Second.

Stephen M.:

Thanks, Naomi. Are there any corrections? Any additions? Any omissions? Hearing none, all those in favor?

Female:

Aye.

Male:

Aye.

Stephen M.:

Aye. Any opposed? Any abstentions? The minutes pass, thank you. Third item on the agenda, is a presentation by Ellen Durnin, from Southern Connecticut. We appreciate her being here today. Thank you for giving us an insight into this. When I read it, I didn't realize RWA had been as involved in this as they were, so Larry, perhaps you'd like to talk about RWA's involvement and introduce Ellen.

Larry:

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Well yes, I think Ellen's going to touch on the RWA involvement as part of her presentation. So I won't steal her thunder. But Ellen is the former dean of the Southern Connecticut State University School of Business. Right now, she is serving as Business School of Dean Emeritus, while they are conducting a search for a new dean. But I've worked with Ellen for most of the time that I've been at the RWA, whilst she has been at Southern Connecticut State University and worked very closely with her, while she was on the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce Board and Executive Committee.

Larry:

So Ellen and I have worked closely together and several years ago, we approached the then president of Southern, about the need to have a degree program to prepare students to go to work for utilities and that's water, gas and electric. So Mary Papazian, who was the president of the time, said, "Gee, that's just the kind of work we like to do", and she asked that I collaborate with Ellen and that began the journey of working with Southern and Gateway Community College, to develop this public utility management degree program. I won't say anymore than that and I'll turn it over to Ellen, who is going to run through a brief history and talk about the program a little bit and then we can answer questions, afterward. Ellen, over to you.

Stephen M.:

Thanks, Larry.

Ellen:

Thank you, Larry. So all of this happened at a holiday party at our president's house and the lesson I learned from that was, don't ever go to holiday parties at the president's house, because she turned right around and put this project in my lap. But I'm kidding, because this has been an amazing project and an amazing collaboration with Larry and others. Many things that we do at Southern Connecticut State University, come out of partnerships with our community members, or come out of demonstrated need, that someone in the community has and this is I think a very good example of one of them. Larry and his colleagues had done a lot of the research already and had really done a needs assessment for us, to demonstrate the need for such a program and have the data to show about the percentage of employees, managers and supervisors, who would be retiring over the next number of years and the real lack of a pipeline of emerging leaders, to come into these utilities and to take them forward.

Ellen:

On the other hand, we have a group of smart, hard-working students who are looking for career opportunities, I have to say, I don't think they wake up in the morning and say, "I think I want to be a public utilities manager." This was just not anything that was even on their range at all to be thinking about. So it was a great partnership. Jennifer, I'll ask you just to go to the next slide. As we talked more and more, Gateway Community College, also located in New Haven and one of our sister institutions, has an associate's degree program in public utility management, that they tweaked really, to meet this need and the determination was made for us to partner with them, because they would provide more of the technical background and what we heard from the employers was, "We want students and future employees, to have a strong, solid business background, as well, to move into those leadership roles, but with a public utility focus."

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Ellen:

So we partnered with Gateway and we created a Leadership Advisory Board and the program really was created around what they told us was needed. Larry and Tony Marone, from Avangrid and I have been kind of the triumvirate that has gathered this group together, two or three times a year, to talk about, "What should the curriculum be? What are the employer's needs? What is the work force needs? How do we create that?" So Jennifer, you can go to the next slide. So the program was created with what we call multiple pathways. The idea that students could come into this program from many different places and they could also exit at different times.

Ellen:

So a high school graduate could come and do the two-year associate program at Gateway and then go out and get a job, or they could come to Southern and go for four years and graduate with a bachelor's degree, or they could go to Gateway and then transfer to Southern and then finally, what we heard from some of the employers was, "We have some people who have great technical experience, but don't have a bachelor's degree. Or maybe have a bachelor's degree in something else and we'd like to send them back, to get these credentials." Okay Jennifer, the next one please.

Ellen:

So as I said, the program was developed in partnership with this Employer Advisory Board. They serve a number of purposes. They've helped us to create the curriculum, the format, the delivery mode. They advocate for the program in different settings. They have provided financial support and they have created numerous opportunities for students, all along the way. Then in return, I felt strongly that it was important that we gave something back to these folks. So what we've done each year, is to present a program for them, for their own professional development and networking opportunities. Again, Larry, Tony Marone and I, would reach out to them and say, "What would you like to hear about? What would you like us to present? What would you like to talk about?" The idea is that, these were CEOs and other leaders and we were providing them with a safe space to talk to each other.

Ellen:

So the first year of the program was titled really, "What Keeps You Up At Night?" That was what they wanted to talk about and we had some great conversations, discussions and we brought a professional firm in to present, that many of you may know. Then this past year, we brought in a leadership consultant and we thought for their own personal development, they're all going through a time right now, with the pandemic and how do they create the kind of leadership style that they need and the kind of environment they need in the organizations to be successful?

Ellen:

So a couple of other things that we did, we hired a retired executive from the Regional Water Authority, to help us think about the business curriculum, because the employers are really clear. They said, "We want them to have a traditional business curriculum. Accounting, marketing, finance, all of those things. But we want the focus to be on this industry, on utilities." So we hired Jim Flynn, some of you may know Jim and he worked with our faculty to infuse Public Utilities Management materials really, into each of those business courses, that the students take. So we're talking about cases and exams and exercises and things like that.

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Ellen:

Then just to give you a few examples of some of the courses in the program, asset and infrastructure management, rates and revenue, green energy environmental sustainability, ethics and the law and then again as well as general business courses. Jennifer, you can go to the next one, please. So about our students. Southern students and Gateway students, more than 95% of them come from Connecticut. What many folks may not know is, more than 85% of our graduates at Southern, stay in Connecticut. So I always tell employer groups when I'm speaking to them, or community groups, that, "We are educating the state's future work force and that therefore, that's why it's critical for us to be working with you and talking with you and finding out what your needs are."

Ellen:

A little bit more about our students at Southern. More than 50% of them are the first in their families to go to university, first generation. More than the majority of our full-time students work more than 27 hours a week, while they're going to school full-time. More than 38% are designated as eligible for and receiving need-based financial aid, or Pell grants. So these are hard-working individuals, who want to have an opportunity that makes sense for them and also, with this generation, they're really passionate about making a difference. We talk with them about how a career in public utilities, is a way to do that. It has resonated with a number of them.

Ellen:

So next slide, Jennifer, please. So Public Utilities Management fits in with the mission of our university. Southern is considered a social justice university, where we are addressing barriers to equity and accessibility and we want this to be available to all members of our community. We know that public utilities is a place to be doing that. In addition, the School of Business has embraced a value of change for good, the idea that while we're educating future business leaders, we're teaching them how to do good in their communities, while they're also doing well. One very visible way to demonstrate that is, we're about to break ground on a new School of Business building at Southern, later this spring and it will be the first net zero building that has been constructed by the State of Connecticut, meaning that we are going to produce more energy than we are going to consume. We will have a photovoltaic farm in our existing parking lot and we will have geo thermal heating and cooling wells on-site.

Ellen:

So we really want the students to understand that, we're walking the talk. We're doing and their home at the School of Business, is a place where public utilities are taken seriously. Then Jennifer, I think it's the final slide? A picture of some of our students on a tour at the Regional Water Authority. I would just wrap up by saying that, we're very proud to be a member of the community at Southern and to partner with employers to address work force needs. We are always interested in continuously improving our programs. Gateway started their program, in 2017 and Southern started in 2019, so that their students could then transfer to us. So we're still relatively new and young and we are very open to your comments, your feedback and there's some contact information there, if you would like to reach out to the folks that are listed there, or to me, really be happy to hear from you and to answer your questions. So Stephen, maybe I'll stop there, in case folks have questions or comments for me.

Stephen M.:

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Sure, thank you.

Tony R.:

Hey, Steve. This is Tony. I have a unique situation here. I'm wearing two hats. Obviously sitting on the RPB and the Consumer Affairs Committee here, for the Water Authority, but also doing work for Southern as the business executive-in-residence. Aside from, here's the thing that interests me and Ellen touched on it, but aside from the fact that, we've developed a program specifically to address the need of future employment, at utility companies, particular the Water Authority, having the Water Authority as a full-fledged partner, with a local university, to me, is just, you can't replace that. The stronger the ties, the stronger we develop this relationship, can only benefit the Water Authority. So I see a really dual benefit here.

Stephen M.:

Tony, I see that in the technical area too that I've worked in previously, when you have those ties with academics and [inaudible 00:16:04].

Jamie:

Dr. Durnin, this is Jamie Young. Thank you for your presentation. It was really informative. I'm wondering, how many students were in the program and what's your recruitment look like for the program.

Ellen:

Sure. So right now, there are about eight to 10 students at Gateway and I think we've got nine right now, as well. So we have the pipeline of the Gateway students hopefully coming to us, as well as recruiting high school students. But also, at the utilities. We want to be talking to them and saying, "How can we recruit your students?" So Jamie, I'll just tell you, we had offered admission to 19 students at Southern in the fall and we had offered scholarships to every single one of them and then of course, we were in the middle of a pandemic.

Ellen:

So we are not at the number that we probably would have been at and where we would like to be. I think our goal at Southern, is to have a class of about 20 students, moving through together. We thought we were there this fall already, in year two. So we're going to have an aggressive recruitment calendar this spring. It's a little bit hampered because, again, in the past, we used to be able to invite high school guidance counselors to campus and go out and visit them. It's a different type of recruitment now. But we really would like to see the program continue to grow.

Jamie:

Thank you and all the students, are they all basically from New Haven County, or are you getting them from across the state? Can you give a sense of what the demographics look like?

Ellen:

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Yeah, sure. We're getting them from across the state and so when we talked with the Employer Advisory Board early on, we asked them what they thought would be the preference for the delivery mode. They were very, I actually thought they might say fully online. They did not. But what they encouraged us to do and what we have done, is to create a hybrid model. So it's a mixture of online and on ground. Now again, I'm talking pre-pandemic, right? So that's how we were, because they said they thought it was important for the students to have some contact with their professors and some contact with each other, with people in other utilities, face-to-face. We are still in a hybrid model, but we are more online now, than we had been, because of the pandemic. But by the fall, we hope to be fully back to normal again, with the way we deliver our courses.

Ellen:

So we have folks that come up from the Hartford area. So it's pretty well around the state. But primarily Southern Connecticut, I'd say. Oh and you asked me about the demographics too. It's a mix of traditional-aged students and we have, at the university, we're about 15% non-traditional. So by that, you might think the adult learner. But in this program, it's actually more about 25%, we have more adult learners in this program than in other programs.

Jamie:

I think that probably will benefit your retention rate overall in the program too.

Ellen:

I think so.

Jamie:

I don't mean to consume your time, but one more question and then I'm sorry, fellows, thank you for letting me [crosstalk 00:19:42].

Stephen M.:

No, go ahead Jamie. Go ahead.

Jamie:

I know that Larry's been instrumental in getting this thing under way and seeing the need. Are you working with and I think you said the networking thing, other utilities came into play. What other utilities have been involved beyond RWA in helping you form this and eventual job recipients, I'll say it that way. People that will benefit from, or entities that will benefit from these students?

Ellen:

Sure, so Larry and I have talked to the CEOs of three other water authorities and they are all interested. One of our most involved partners is UI and Avangrid. I will tell you, I don't know why, but it's been challenging to get into Eversource. We haven't been able to get a representative from there. So if anybody has any ideas, I think they should be at the table. I think it would be great for them to be at the table. We also have representatives from some public health areas and some state regulatory agencies. Larry, do you want to say anything about anybody else?

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Larry:

Yeah, we have the vice chairman of the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, Jack Bukowski is a member of the board. We've got the woman that serves as the head of the Connecticut Water Supply section, of the Department of Public Health, is on the Advisory Board. We've had Workforce Alliance, the head of Workforce Alliance in New Haven has been on the board, as well. So we have a mixture of water and electric utilities. Our interest in getting Eversource on the board, is so we can get the gas utility perspective, as well, which we have been trying to do, because this was meant to be a three tracked program, at least water, gas and electric operations. So we have a pretty diverse representation, I think, in terms of input, when we were forming the program and those individuals sporadically attend the Advisory Board meetings.

Jamie:

Thank you.

Stephen M.:

Anyone else have a question?

Larry:

Go ahead, Jeff.

Jeff:

Thank you. Just really quickly, I love this program. I have to tell you, when I heard about it, I really thought it was a phenomenal idea. What makes it even better, is that the Water Authority's involved in it. Dr. Durnin, I'm the consumer counsel for the Water Authority. I'm not on the committee, or a board member. I'm an outside lawyer that serves as the consumer counsel. The idea of a public utility management program, is a phenomenal program, to build a skill set in an area that really, I think you had a statistic in your program about the coming retirements in the industry. I think it was 38%. So that's very significant. Not sure what you're doing to increase awareness with boards of education around Connecticut, but maybe I can offline, help you with that, in terms of contacting CABE.

Ellen:

That would be great.

Jeff:

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and Connecticut Association of Public Schools Superintendents and in terms of Eversource, maybe Larry we can connect offline. I'm the town attorney in the town of Berlin. I have some dealings with Eversource, whenever they need a [inaudible 00:23:09] something reviewed. So maybe I can help you with that, as well.

Larry:

Thank you, thank you. That would be wonderful on both counts.

Jeff:

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Sure.

Ellen:

Thank you, Jeff.

Jeff:

Thank you.

Larry:

Ellen, there was one question that maybe you could address. I know when the program was approved, it was an interim approval by the Board of Regents, to see how it goes. I think you mentioned recently that you were either up for review, or going through that process, but maybe you could provide us an update on where that stands.

Ellen:

Sure, thanks Larry. So when the Board of Regents licenses new programs, they give you three years to get up and running and then they invite you back in and they're basically looking to see, are you viable and should you be given permanent licensure and accreditation, or should something different happen? So we got invited to be reviewed, because Gateway had started in 2017, so it was their three-year review. We actually had only started in 2019, but because we were a collaborative program, we went up together and we went before them in December and we got the permanent licensure and accreditation.

Ellen:

So that's great. They want to hear back from us in two years and they're doing this with, I think, all new programs, just because of the COVID situation, they want to see the impact. But they put you through the ringer, in terms of, "Where's your needs assessment? Where's your budget? Are you making money? Is there a real demand for this program? Are you duplicating other programs?" As we learned, there's no other program like us in the country. One of the things that we've said even for future growth is, maybe we think about doing a fully online version of the program and then it could be offered really anywhere in the country.

Stephen M.:

Ellen, hi this is Stephen.

Tony R.:

Hey, Steve.

Stephen M.:

Yeah? Go ahead, Tony.

Tony R.:

No, go ahead, Steve.

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Stephen M.:

I had some-

Tony R.:

I was just going to say, go ahead.

Male:

Got to be Frank Pepe.

Frank:

Well obviously not, I'm quiet today.

Male:

All right.

Stephen M.:

Ellen, I have a couple of comments and questions, as well. I see that this can be accessed, if another student wants to take some of these specific courses, or someone in another discipline could access it. I don't know what you offer specifically here. I can tell you from being on two utilities, that there's a tremendous amount of issues and problems that management has to address. So I would just say, keep going with content, in terms of what might be offered. One of the things, I don't know if you addressed the issue of where the utilities fit into the community.

Stephen M.:

Not just in terms of sort of having some maybe scholarships, or funding for some programs, but the same kind of utility can mean a different thing to each community, because of what the community needs are. So I think you have to be really aware of that, as a manager of a utility, in terms of the big picture and looking at where you fit in. So in this program, now the students are in a business program, but they're concentrating in utility management. So what are they giving up, in terms of how much they can pack into their education? I'm talking about your full-time students here.

Ellen:

I understand what you're saying. So they're getting a Bachelor's of Science in Business Administration, with a concentration in Public Utilities Management. So every business student declares a concentration in something. So this becomes their concentration. So they've already gone through all of the general education courses at the university. They've already gone through the business core, so they've taken the general courses in accounting, finance, marketing, all of that. Then they focus in their concentration. It would be almost like you'd think of a major, but it's [crosstalk 00:27:45].

Stephen M.:

Okay. I understand that now. Thank you.

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Ellen:

Sure.

Stephen M.:

I think your net zero building is great. Is that an engineering certification, or did you just do that?

Ellen:

No it is an engineering certification. I wish I could tell you what that means to qualify for that, but I can't [crosstalk 00:28:06].

Stephen M.:

No, no. But you do have to qualify, yeah.

Ellen:

You do have to qualify and we had to work with architects who have done this before, who have built net zero buildings before. But as I said, this is the first one that the state of Connecticut is building, so.

Stephen M.:

Yeah, I don't know if you've been to the Yale Forestry School.

Ellen:

Yes, [crosstalk 00:28:27].

Stephen M.:

But same concept where they tried to incorporate all their environmental concepts into the building.

Ellen:

Exactly.

Stephen M.:

Yeah, very nice. Tony?

Ellen:

The other thing I would say is, so what we've done is, because I said, we've got nine or 10 students right now. So we are creating these sections of business courses that are focused on Public Utilities Management, but a general management student could take those classes, as well, it's just that they know that if they're sitting in that section, the focus is going to be on this industry. So in a way, that's another recruiting tool, as well, because we've got general management students in there saying, "Wow, this is interesting. I've never thought about this before. There's good jobs here. There's meaningful work here." So that was done intentionally.

Stephen M.:

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Very good. Tony [inaudible 00:29:20], you had a question?

Frank:

Yes, so this is Frank Pepe.

Stephen M.:

Okay, Frank.

Frank:

[crosstalk 00:29:29] idea. But besides just the colleges, I know a while ago, before the COVID hit, we were going to bring some students, to a superintendent, from two schools and come down and do a term. Besides management, are there other programs in the fields, like for the lab, for engineering, besides the business management of that?

Ellen:

So Frank, are you talking about in the Business School, or in the university in general?

Frank:

Yeah, like in more of all the fields, like all the working of the water company.

Ellen:

Oh I see what you're saying.

Frank:

Besides just management in the office. I mean I'm looking for opportunity for all the fields.

Ellen:

Right. So Gateway's associate's degree program does address those areas.

Frank:

Yep, oh okay. Yes, okay. Okay.

Prem:

Frank, this is Prem here. I had a couple comments. But I think, also [inaudible 00:30:41] work and asset management piece, which is hands-on kind of area, right. So really kind of looking at the operation side. So it's not just the back office, if you will. Rates and other things are, but there are things that are part of that and I think Steve made a comment they are going to expand that more, with the content, et cetera, right? So that would be the future. But I had a couple of other comments too.

Prem:

I mean this is great, right, in addressing aging work force problem and based on Larry's invested interest in that, we also are looking at a graduate development program. This is the second part of the hiring and

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keeping [inaudible 00:31:17] et cetera, right? So we're going to be working closely, Ellen and the other team as well, we're going to use that as part of recruitment, right? I work with Jenny to reach out on that, to kind of really putting that to light, not just the program to educate, but also to hire, right? So that's part of this thing, so. But I would reach out.

Ellen:

Thank you.

Jamie:

Dr. Durnin, your presentation was excellent. This is Jamie again. I just think the work that you and Larry and the board I guess, is doing, is exceptional from every angle. So thank you for the work.

Ellen:

Thank you, Jamie. I believe that there is a brochure for the program attached to the agenda, as well. So just to give you some more kind of general information. It's funny, because we have the Business Advisory Council at the Business School. When Larry and I first talked about this program, we had people sitting around the table from other industries, as well and they all were saying, "Oh, I have an aging work force too. Can you create a program for me?" So we have to be selective, but I mean this one was really a no-brainer, so. It's been great.

Jamie:

Well there's also that if you broaden a program, when you start to do recruitment and if you decide to go nationally, there's the international focus, because a lot of the work leading into the Army Corps of Engineers too, I mean there's a lot of work abroad in utilities that needs to be done, even on Indian reservations, or around the country. Over and beyond our regular main line utility work, so. There's lots of possibilities here. I think you guys, this is terrific.

Ellen:

That's great, thank you.

Stephen M.:

Ellen, Jamie just kind of reminded me of another sort of, just perspective, in that as a business person, you don't need to be the engineer, or the IT person, or a financial person, but you do need to have the skills to be able to work with those people and understand those areas. So that maybe something along those lines, if you don't have that is, that's a really valuable kind of thing to possess.

Ellen:

Yeah, it's interesting, Stephen, when we first started out with the Employer Advisory Board, I thought that there was going to be much more demand in the Bachelor's degree program for technical issues. You're right, it was much more about, "How do you manage people? How do you manage time? How do you manage resources?" I mean it very much, that's what they were looking for and asking for.

Stephen M.:

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Yeah, in my history, we once hired someone who was an engineer and a lawyer, we thought we needed both and what we discovered ultimately, was that we really needed an administrator. So you have to think about, what are you really looking for.

Ellen:

Right, right.

Stephen M.:

Any other questions for Ellen?

Tony R.:

Great job, Ellen.

Ellen:

Thanks [crosstalk 00:34:26].

Stephen M.:

Yeah, very nice. Thank you for bringing this to our attention. I've been with the Water Authority quite a while, but I didn't realize much had gone on. So, it's very enlightening.

Ellen:

Well thank you for having me and thank you as always, to the Regional Water Authority for the support of this program. It's wonderful.

Larry:

It's been great working with you, Ellen. Thank you.

Mark:

Thank you.

Ellen:

Same here.

Prem:

Thank you.

Ellen:

Bye-bye.

Tony R.:

Take care, Ellen.

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Frank:

Bye, Ellen.

Jamie:

Bye.

Ellen:

Thank you, thank you.

Naomi:

Bye, thank you.

Jamie:

Larry, what an excellent job you've done, pulling this all together. Well done.

Larry:

Well thank you, but it was a real team effort, I'll tell you. At the time Jim Flynn was the VP of operations, provided a lot of input into the curriculum. The former VP of HR, also provided some input. But it was really Gateway and the Southern faculty that took our input and really made it a reality. So it was a true partnership to fulfill a need, of not only the RWA, but also the rest of the utility industry in Connecticut and nationwide. There's 500, I think the number is 550,000 utility workers in the United States and 40% of those are going to be able to retire in the next several years. So there's a real need there.

Frank:

Great.

Stephen M.:

Very good. We're on to Item 4, which is the report of the OCA. Anything Jeff?

Jeff:

Yes, thank you, Steve. A couple of consumer matters to report on. One was brought to our attention, just six days ago, last Tuesday. A woman who recently bought a home in Branford, was experiencing an inadequate water pressure issue and had some dialog with the Water Authority about resolving it. Fortunately, it got hung up a little bit, unfortunately, got hung up a little bit. Fortunately, after she reached out to us, we reached out to Prem and Laura and Ted Norris and they jumped on it and I'm happy to report, that last Friday, it was resolved. I've confirmed with the customer that it's been resolved to her satisfaction. She's a past PipeSafe customer and it's going to be resolved through the PipeSafe Program.

Jeff:

The second consumer matter, is not as far along. We received through Rich Smith, contact by a customer who owns a rental property in West Haven. The customer is a Milford resident. He has a billing

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issue. The billing issue pretty much boils down to, confusion about whether or not he's paid in full or not and we're trying to get some more information from him. This is something that came to our attention, less than two weeks ago. He's reached out to us and said that he'd be available to speak this week. So I'll have a report on that, once we get more information from him, so that we can have the authority properly investigated and put that on the path to resolution.

Stephen M.:

Hey Jeff, this is Steve. I have a couple of questions. The billing issue you're talking about. How did that come to you? Did it go through customer service at all?

Jeff:

The billing issue came to us through Milford rep Rich Smith.

Stephen M.:

Okay.

Jeff:

The customer reached out to Rich, Rich reached out to us.

Stephen M.:

Larry, did we send out the new bills yet? Have those gone to anybody, the new style bill?

Jeff:

No, it's not, no maybe I can take it Larry, right? So that project, that's the bill [inaudible 00:38:32] project. That's slated for the end of March. We haven't seen any new bills. So it's still work in progress.

Stephen M.:

When did you say it was slated for?

Jeff:

This is going live at the end of the March timeline.

Stephen M.:

Oh okay.

Prem:

Yeah, so we still have time for that. But it's interesting, I mean to Jeff's point right, we're ready to hear more details and can jump into the details and see what needs to be done there. This [inaudible 00:38:58] customer bill, I'm not aware of it. So we'll wait for more information on that.

Stephen M.:

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Okay. Hey Jeff, the woman in Branford with the pressure issue, was it just her house? Or was it an area issue?

Jeff:

Her water line is at the bottom of the back yard hill. That's part of the reason for the pressure issue. Also, there was a small leak in the line. So she indicated that when she moved, she didn't realize that PipeSafe went with the house, rather than with the customer. So when she transferred her PipeSafe service, she didn't realize that, when she moved rather, she didn't realize that she hadn't transferred her service. So it's kind of a longer story than that, but the bottom line is that she's been approved for the service. The authority's going to do what needs to be done to satisfy her pressure concerns. We let her know that when the pressure increases from 20 psi to 48 psi, she may have some internal plumbing issues, so she should engage a plumber to work with her, to ensure that she doesn't have any internal leaks or any problems and she understands that and she's on board with it.

Stephen M.:

Okay. Thank you.

Naomi:

I have a question. Do we normally send things directly to the OCA without going to the water company itself to representatives that would handle this?

Jeff:

It's really up to you. I mean ordinarily, I would say probably 75% plus of the consumer-related matters that come to the OCA, are escalated to us, after the Authority has worked the account and is unable to reach a resolution. However, from time to time, customers do reach out directly to a representative in their community and at that point, the representative will send either directly to the Authority, or to the Authority and the OCA, that customer's concern. So really Naomi, it depends on whether the customer contacts the Authority directly, or whether they go to their RPB rep.

Naomi:

Okay, thank you.

Jeff:

Sure.

Rich:

But that might be my fault for not also sending it directly to the company. He had been in touch and gotten a buy out, or a pay off figure and then the figure changed and I'm still accustomed to Jeff reading out on these things that I just forwarded it on to him. So in the future, I'll make sure that it goes at least to both places, if not to the OCA first.

Jeff:

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Oh, that's no problem at all. That's no problem at all. There's no issue here. We get it and we reach out to the customer first and we make sure that before we go to the Authority to get the Authority's side of the story, that we understand what the customer's complaint is. We have a pretty good read from the information that was initially provided, by the customer, but we just want to talk to them first, to find out that, there's really a question about the information that he received and who he received it from and when he received it and that kind of thing, that we like to pin down, so we can give the Authority a lay of the land and maximize the efficiency with which they do their internal investigation.

Rich:

Yeah, thanks for following up on that, Jeff.

Jeff:

Sure.

Stephen M.:

Yeah, customer service doesn't need to see it and get all the details for Jeff. So that's always a good place to start, within the company. Thanks, Jeff.

Jeff:

Sure, thank you.

Stephen M.:

Is there anything else that-

Frank:

Thank you, Jeff.

Jeff:

Thank you.

Stephen M.:

Anything else from your side?

Jeff:

Nope, that's it.

Stephen M.:

Okay, Item 5 is the approval of the invoice for the OCA for January, in the amount of \$2640. Do I have a motion?

Tony R.:

[crosstalk 00:43:10].

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Frank:

[inaudible 00:43:12].

Stephen M.:

We'll make it Frank and Tony second.

Frank:

Okay.

Tony R.:

Very good.

Stephen M.:

Any comments on the bill? Any questions for Jeff? All those in favor?

Frank:

Aye.

Tony R.:

Aye.

Naomi:

Aye.

Stephen M.:

Any opposed? That motion carries. Our next meeting in March, will be the 15th, at 5:30. Don't have the agenda yet, so I'm not sure what we'll be doing, but that's the date of our next meeting. Is there anything that anybody would like to bring up?

Tony R.:

I would move we adjourn.

Stephen M.:

Okay.

Frank:

Second.

Stephen M.:

Thank you. All those in favor?

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Group:

Aye.

Frank:

[crosstalk 00:43:58].

Stephen M.:

Thank you, everyone.