

**Representative Policy Board  
Executive Committee  
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District**

**March 2, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.  
Meeting Transcription**

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[MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 5:02 P.M.]

[EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS BUSINESS STRATEGY FROM 5:04 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M.]

Mario:

All right, we'll move on in the meeting. That took a lot longer than I expected, but we'll try and jump through some of the other items. Approving the minutes of August 3rd.

Greg:

I move.

Mario:

I have a motion from Greg. Second?

Charles:

Second.

Mario:

Second from Charles. Any discussion, corrections, amendments? Hearing none. All in favor?

Group:

Aye.

Mario:

Opposed? Abstaining? Okay, thank you. Nominating committee status, New Haven Authority Member. Greg, I don't think you've heard anything?

Greg:

No. Let me run through it. Really, nothing's changed. As you know, the mayor submitted three names. We interviewed all three individuals. In the final interview, the last one really didn't meet the requirements, because he was not a New Haven electorate, or a resident, of new Haven. We sent a letter to the mayor, and I talked to, I think her name is Tajah Anderson, who was really running the whole shell there for the new members, and asked her if she wanted to go with the two names, or wanted us to include Joe, or do they want to submit a third name? She was adamant she wanted to submit a third name.

Greg:

We sent a letter to the mayor informing him we'd have to submit a new name, because one individual wasn't qualified, and we haven't heard anything. I also talked to Taijah, and then I called her again, asking her, does she have anybody for us? We would appreciate it if she could come up with somebody relatively quickly. She said she would work on it. I also talked to the other two individuals. Tell them, "You're still in the running," and I told them what happened. What transpired. They appreciated that. Then, I know you sent a letter out to the mayor, too, Mario, but I haven't heard a thing.

Mario:

I just checked my email, Greg.

Greg:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mario:

Friday afternoon, I sent the note to Taijah, trying to move this along. I got a note back, I guess it came in sometime today, from Sean Matteson, who is the mayor's Chief of Staff, I believe. He says, "The city is fine with the RWA selecting from the two remaining candidates."

Greg:

Okay.

Mario:

You can move forward. Get your committee back together.

Greg:

Yep.

Mario:

If you do have any discussions with the two candidates, their ability to compartmentalize the confidential information the RWA is looking, at versus their city jobs, because they're all employees of the city.

Greg:

Yep.

Mario:

That would be one item. That's always a difficult thing for an individual, but I think they understand their fiduciary responsibility.

Greg:

Right.

Mario:

Both of them.

Greg:

Okay.

Mario:

Okay.

Greg:

That's new.

Mario:

It is, and I will forward you the note, because I didn't realize Sean had gotten back to me.

Stephen:

Mario, this is Steve. Greg, have you interviewed the two people? The other two people?

Greg:

Yes, I did.

Stephen:

Do they qualify under the guidelines?

Greg:

They do, pretty much, but we have to go with whoever the mayor sends, you know? There are the three, and we have to choose one of them. [crosstalk 00:04:05]

Charles:

Greg, on that point, we have no option? As far as picking.

Greg:

No, not to my knowledge.

Stephen:

Still, there might be a soft option. A discussion of some kind. This is a huge position. It's five years. To have somebody on a level that can really function to oversee a major utility.

Charles:

Well, especially when, I believe you said that they are city employees?

Greg:

City employees.

Charles:

I got to tell you, I have concerns about this whole process. I hope it's not being politicized. I worry about that part of it, especially when you had that reaction about putting Joe in the mix there, and the way you said she was very much against that. I don't know if there's something else going on, and I would hate to see this process be politicized. Especially now that I hear that they're putting employees in there, with limited knowledge of our operation. I don't know. Something doesn't ring right for me.

Stephen:

Greg, this is Steve again. Do they get a list of the qualifications for this position?

Greg:

Yes they did.

Stephen:

Okay. Maybe Larry knows somebody, in New Haven there, to discuss it with. This is a lot.

Mario:

I think if we wanted to open, or reopen, the agreement that was done back at the beginning, with the Daniels administration, we can go that route. At this point in time, we provided the mayor with the information.

Charles:

[crosstalk 00:06:08] It might be worth taking another look-see at. I don't remember the specifics of it.

Mario:

I think it was, basically, an agreement New Haven would have someone on the board.

Bob:

Yes, and that's all it was.

Greg:

Yep.

Mario:

The mayor would be the one... It's actually the mayor, and the Board of Alders, I believe, recommends or has to...

Bob:

Come up with nominee's.

Stephen:

Mario, I'm not talking about amending that agreement at all, but making them aware of the basic level a person has to be at to function on this board. Really, representing their interests, because it matters to

New Haven, to have a very effective member. There are only five people on that board. Maybe making them aware of the current members, and their backgrounds, may be helpful.

Tim:

Yeah, Greg, is it reasonable for me to say something? I'm a member of the committee.

Greg:

Sure.

Tim:

I don't think the committee has been met with two individuals that are disasters, necessarily. I don't...

Greg:

As a matter of fact, I think all three of them were pretty good.

Tim:

Right. I think that's where I wanted to speak in, because of the two, I think there is one who's more distinctive. I don't think, given our circumstances, we're going to put forward someone who is going to be very disappointing.

Bob:

That's good to hear.

Peter:

That's good to hear is right.

Mario:

Charles, I don't think this is unusual, for New Haven, to put a senior staff person who is in the mayor's inner circle forward, because I know they had one of the councils for the city on the GNHWPCA board.

Charles:

I understand it, I'd just hate for it to become, simply, a political appointment that every time there's a new mayor, there's a new board member. It's not my favorite situation.

Mario:

Understood.

Greg:

That's their option, really. That's the agreement. I think the only political, or the agenda, I picked up anyway, and I could be totally wrong. I think a minority. By minority, it could be a woman, or it could be a black or brown person, but I think that her agenda. Did you pick that up, Tim?

Tim:

I think so. I think the other bias, we may in fact have, is our knowledge of Joe, and his knowledge of the authority. That's part of the issue here, too, but we can't come from that place.

Greg:

No.

Mario:

Charles, from my viewing of New Haven, this mayor has tried to get some younger people involved, and moving, in the city as opposed to keeping the same people in place.

Greg:

Yeah, I agree with that.

Mario:

I don't even know two of the candidates, two out of the three, I don't know. I only know one of them. I'm guessing all three were relatively, not young, but were not...

Bob:

Early in their careers.

Mario:

Mid-career.

Bob:

Okay, mid-career.

Greg:

I'll tell you, one's an attorney.

Mario:

Tests, pluses, and minuses.

Greg:

I know that.

Charles:

We're in a public meeting. I said my piece. I don't want to get into specifics of political appointments, how fore, wherefores, value, and all that. I'll depend on Greg, and his committee, to vet the people. If we put the right guidelines on there, and they meet it, it is what it is. It's the system we work within.

Tim:

Correct.

Mario:

I guess, Greg, whenever you get an opportunity to meet with Jennifer [crosstalk 00:11:07] and schedule-

Greg:

I'll call Jennifer tomorrow, and see if we can set up one more meeting.

Mario:

Okay. RPB self-assessment survey. We haven't done one in a couple of years. I guess the question is, do we need to do one now, post-COVID, or do we wait until after COVID is done? How do we want to go about that?

Jennifer:

Said somebody joined. Hello? That was strange.

Charles:

My vote would be to wait until post-COVID, because I think maybe we want to take a look at the way things have gone through COVID and proceeding. That type of thing.

Peter:

Correct.

Greg:

I agree.

Stephen:

Mario, I was thinking along those lines, as well.

Mario:

Okay. I wanted to test everyone else's opinions to see. I was leaning that way. Jennifer made me put it on the agenda.

Charles:

Blame Jennifer, right?

Jennifer:

It's been a while.

Charles:

[crosstalk 00:12:35] Is there going to be any issue of holding meetings by Zoom, and that type of thing, going forward? Especially during weather, and things like that, they seem to work. So many of us have been accustomed to them. I'd like to get back to some in-person ones. I think the interaction matters, but Zoom seems to have its place, now. We, as a society, are starting to become more and more accustomed to it.

Mario:

Yeah. That leads us, smoothly, into item number six. Jeff, take care.

Jeff:

Thank you.

Charles:

Take care, Jeff.

Mario:

Jeff is taking off, but to your question, Jeff, I noticed was, was nodding no. We should be able to continue in this manner. I think we can, under Connecticut law anyway, but I wanted to get everyone's sense.

Mario:

I agree. I think we do want to have some meetings that are face-to-face, but we may want to have committee meetings that are remote, or you have the option.

Bob:

Well, the committee meetings are less people, so that might be the first one to open up.

Tim:

That's right.

Mario:

Right, especially land use, because you're outdoors.

Greg:

Especially land use, outdoors.

Stephen:

Mario, we just did that, when we had to approve minutes. We met before the last RPB meeting.

Mario:

Yes.

Stephen:

That's a clear utilitarian reason to do something like that. I don't know. I like in-person meetings if we can do them.

Tim:

Yeah, I do too.



Stephen:

Maybe the option of joining, if you can't physically be there, should be considered.

Greg:

To be honest with you, in the interview process, I prefer face-to-face with the person.

Mario:

Oh, absolutely. I made your task a little bit harder, for sure. I do not see us getting together face-to-face for a while. I don't know if any of you have heard any of people starting to have public meetings in person.

Greg:

The only thing I hear are the kids are going back to school.

Stephen:

Things seem a little premature.

Mario:

Oh, definitely. I'm guessing the summer, at the earliest.

Peter:

Yeah.

Greg:

Well, in Texas, the governor just lifted other restrictions. Don't have to wear a mask. Everything's open.

Mario:

Oh, okay.

Greg:

That's [crosstalk 00:15:29].

Mario:

How are you feeling, Greg?

Peter:

You feel better, Mario?

Mario:

I lucked out. I got my first shot yesterday, so I'm feeling very good.

Peter:

I think you're right, Mario. We stay right where we are right now, obviously. Then, hopefully, moving towards the middle of summer, or something, we can start seeing face-to-face. I think sitting face-to-face is very important. It's been nice to do these virtual meetings, but I hope it's not going to be a cop out in the future, because it is easier for people, but I think it's important for us to sit face-to-face and get together. At least some of the time.

Mario:

Yeah, I will-

Charles:

Jennifer, what is the office doing? Is RWA... Are they back? Is arguable way. Are they back full-time there?

Jennifer:

No, not yet.

Mario:

No, that's been extended, I think until mid- April, at the earliest.

Greg:

I don't think we could even think about going back, and meeting, until the RWA goes back.

Peter:

Correct.

Mario:

You mean staff?

Peter:

Yeah.

Mario:

Because the authority, the five member authority, is looking towards us. I've had these discussions with Tony before, and with David, as far as when do we want to start having in-person meetings. For them, it would be much easier to have an in-person, because they could go in that round conference room on the second floor, or even the first floor meeting room we usually are in.

Charles:

They don't have the people. We wouldn't be able to distance or anything.

Mario:

No, we can't distance at all. I will say, trying to do a hybrid meeting, where some people are in-person, half are in-person, half are virtual, is very difficult.

Peter:

It sure is. I've had experience with them. They're really tough.

Mario:

Yeah. We would definitely have to use that screen, Jennifer, and project all the people coming in on the screen, in order to be able to try and figure out who wants to speak, who's doing what, and who's seeing what. It would be challenging, to say the least.

Greg:

Can I ask Jennifer a question? Since we've been doing Zoom meetings, do we have anybody from the public that joins us in any of these meetings?

Jennifer:

We actually did. Last month. I think it was at the Authority Meeting. Somebody showed. Two people showed up.

Greg:

That was the hearing?

Jennifer:

No, that was the Authority Meeting.

Greg:

Oh, the Authority Meeting.

Mario:

In the afternoon.

Tim:

That's right. I was there representing the RPB. That's right. I recall that.

Jennifer:

Yeah, somebody came on and jumped off pretty quick. I don't know if they got cut off, or what, but one gentleman was there.

Tim:

I think we had to go into an executive session. I think that was part of it, too.

Jennifer:

Yep.

Greg:

It's a lot easier for the public to join.

Mario:

Early on, Greg, if you recall, we had a member from Derby, I believe it was. He kept joining. Trying to see how we were doing our meetings.

Jennifer:

It was the Town Clerk.

Mario:

I want to say it was Derby. Town Clerk. He didn't like the way we did one of our meetings.

Jennifer:

It was the first meeting.

Mario:

Yeah, it was one of our first meetings, and he got cut off somehow. We were able to resolve it.

Greg:

Not Jennifer, huh?

Jennifer:

He thought I cut him off. He blamed me for cutting him off.

Mario:

He did. We backed [crosstalk 00:19:33].

Tim:

Wow.

Mario:

Anything else you all have for information?

Stephen:

That was a good discussion on the new efforts.

Tim:

Yeah, very.

Mario:

I thought you should hear that. Especially with the moving towards other opportunities, because I don't want to get into details since we're not in executive session anymore. That was good.

Greg:

It was good.

Mario:

I appreciate everybody's time. Especially since it was a real long meeting. This is longer than some of our RPB meetings, with public hearings attached. Let the record show, Jennifer, our portion of the meeting was 20 minutes, and Larry's was an hour.

Jennifer:

Okay.

Mario:

In case Rochelle complains about the cost.

Peter:

At least we know we're doing our job, right? We didn't push through it.

Mario:

Thank you, all.