

**Representative Policy Board
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District
Consumer Affairs Committee**

**July 19, 2021
Meeting Transcription**

Stephen:

Okay. It's 5:40 and we do have a quorum, so I'd like to call the July meeting of consumer affairs committee to order. The first item on the agenda is our safety moment. I'd like to congratulate Jennifer on her creativity for these episodes. If you grew up when I did, you probably could add about five things to the bicycle safety list, starting with what's a helmet? That was for sissies when I was a kid, I guess, I don't know. Anyway, some good tips there. Item two is the approval of the minutes. Do I have a motion?

Naomi:

[Crosstalk 00:02:49].

Frank:

Yeah, [inaudible 00:02:51].

Stephen:

Naomi, you second?

Naomi:

Yes.

Stephen:

Thank you. Are there any corrections, any changes, omissions, additions? There ain't none. All those in favor?

Naomi:

Aye.

Mark:

Aye.

Stephen:

Aye. Any opposed? Any abstaining? Thank you. This month Prem is going to give us basically an update on the strategic plan and some of the objectives as a preview to looking again at the tools that the Marianne Dickerson talk about that Water Alliance have developed at our next meeting to see how it all jives and what the challenges are facing strategic authority. And then hopefully some of those tools are available as they are free. Prem, I'll turn it over to you.

Prem:

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Thank you, Steve. Good evening everyone. Today's agenda is going to be strategic planning and I just wanted to give a little bit of a background before we go into strategic planning. As you all know, over the past few months, the issue team spent quite a bit of time in reexamining our 2025 strategy plan, right. If you remember, we also did in late 2020 a blue sky visioning session. We looked at how would RWA look like in 2050, right?

Prem:

We took a lot of that futuristic what we call as megatrends, we identified those megatrends and we wanted to make sure that we take a step back and take a holistic look at our 2025 strategic plan and really bring in the most ingredients that would have a sustainable long-term vision for our 2050 plan. A lot of work that happened as you all know where if you think about strategic plan, it's a rolling plan. It's dynamic plan.

Prem:

RWA is thinking about to keep it more relevant. One of the things that we keenly did was we reviewed our goals, right, and we also looked at objectives and targets. We defined our direction and focus for what are we going to accomplish for 2025, right. That's a background that we looked at. If you slide through next slide Jennifer here. As I mentioned, when we looked at our megatrends, as you all know, a few things bubbled up, especially with the COVID 19 pandemic, right?

Prem:

And we started thinking about what are the things that are changing for us to start focusing on our futuristic plan. Rise of technology was pretty obvious as you all know, the ways of working has changed quite a bit. Things like forced agility being nimble to be able to change as we go, right. That's one of the things that we all learned from a business standpoint whether it's financial or operational, etc.

Prem:

That has been a key trend that we found that it's happening across the [inaudible 00:05:57]. We all telecommuted as we know overnight we had to change the ways of working including our contact center, if you will. We had people taking calls from home, for example. So we put a telecommuting policy in place. Those things were pretty obvious as we started thinking about how things are changing.

Prem:

Greater government involvement, whether it be our investment in our capital plan, or even the infrastructure plan, the bill that president Biden had been trying to put through. A lot of those interaction, where we need your support. A lot of focus on how to really engage as a partner. Financial integrity is another area where we started thinking about how do we start thinking about a capital planning, things like alternative financing, methodologies, right? Things like that, really understanding our business model for example, bringing commercial revenues to offset our rates as being a key ingredient.

Prem:

We looked at certain things that hold our financial integrity to be able to run RWA or a longer sustainable plan that was pretty eye-opening for us. And as we got hit with pandemic, as you all know.

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Changes from customers, although our regional integrity is more focused on elderly customers, there is a whole as you know, we had 12% of sales that happened in the residential market in Connecticut, so a lot of people moving in, a lot of customer changes happening.

Prem:

Understanding our customer segmentation was important. We did some great blue bar surveys that we did to understand how to really shape our future customer needs. I'm pretty sure many of you have similar challenges and you're looking in other businesses as well. The employees, one of the key things, as you all know, we have looked at the our BI, we have taken it very seriously in terms of generational changes for employees, how do we really make sure that everybody feels more inclusive.

Prem:

We have a lot of focus on that specific initiatives. We are also looking at specific employee need as well as we go through various roles, because roles are also changing. Last but not least, we also found a lot of trends coming in terms of [inaudible 00:08:20] and clean and safe water for all which is basically things like DPB that we talk about, right, 90% is our compliant [inaudible 00:08:27] for example, we are looking and making sure that we are able to provide clean and safe water to our customers.

Prem:

Operational challenges as being one of those things as well as trends. Not just access water maybe but other people. Although it's a Canadian coming to get water, etc. They have similar challenges that we're looking at. That was another big trend that we saw that is coming to change. But keeping all this in mind and I'm pretty sure many of you have other things that you are noticing, but that blue sky vision gave us a lot of insight on how do we really change our 2025 strategic plan.

Prem:

We took a step back. If you go to the next slide, Jennifer. If you remember, we actually had what we used to call as guideposts in the past, we had six guideposts, etc. We wanted to make it really simple. What we did with our 2020 strategic plan is that we went back to our basics, right? We looked at our balanced scorecard and we draw it down into four foundational basic perspective that we call it customer or constituents at six on top of everything else, right.

Prem:

Employee learning and growth was another perspective we looked at. Financial is the third one. The last one is internal business processes. When we started thinking about these four perspectives, we wanted to make sure that we connect our strategic plan to these four perspectives. And then we thought about our strategies. Again, to keep it simple, we made sure that we tie all these four perspective to as simple as three strategies across the board.

Prem:

That's what you see in this slide here. Looking at different, I would say five year strategies that we incorporated in here. For example, if you think about customer satisfaction, the first one, we talked about the transactional service. I think I mentioned in our prior meeting where we are looking to launch

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a transactional survey as soon as the customer is sold. That is to really measure how good are we doing in terms of our customer experience.

Prem:

And then other examples like monthly and commercial billing that Rochelle talked about earlier in our finance committee too, we're trying to put those things in place where not only from a revenue standpoint, but from a customer standpoint to offer more products and services on the commercial side. We are looking to expand some of that as well. Employee learning and growth, so that specific area has multiple tentacles.

Prem:

We have looked at for example, some of the basic things I would say is that from an employee learning and growth perspective, we started off to think on how to really approach a succession planning. As you know, we are trying to really make sure that we look at operations in a holistic way. If you remember the three R's discussion when Beth was here, we had a lot of discussion about three R's.

Prem:

We started trying to pull that perspective of three hours, so understanding how to really support in terms of employee learning and growth internally from a succession planning perspective, right. And then now going into financial, a little bit on the financial side, at a high level, I talked about commercial revenues, sources to mitigate rate increases. We are looking to understand not just our PipeSafe program, that you're all aware of.

Prem:

We are looking into other revenue sources as well. As a company, we are now figuring out how are we going to navigate through bringing in other acquisition in place, where we are trying to bring additional revenue sources to make sure that we actually have what we used to talk about as \$1 million in revenue offsets one person of a customer rate. Keeping that in mind, and we have a goal of 9.2 million net revenue for 2025, we really are looking at acquisition as being one of the key pillars along with our PipeSafe and other [inaudible 00:12:23].

Prem:

And then we did touch upon pension and retirement funding, as you are aware, we have been pretty strong on contributing more towards operation retirement funding as well. We are doing pretty well in this space.

Stephen:

Hey Prem. Prem, this is Steve, excuse me. You keep fading in and out. I don't know-

Jeff:

I thought that was me.

Prem:

Okay. I think I need to stay closer to the mic here.

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Stephen:

Okay.

Prem:

Is that better now?

Stephen:

That's better. Yeah.

Prem:

Okay. I'll stay closer to the mic. From a financial perspective, as mentioning before, we have been conducting towards our pension and retirement funding pretty strongly as well as you know, even though we had pandemic and with our financial planning and performance there, it has been a very I would say good year for us to keep an eye on COVID, at the same time do what's needed from a future perspective, right.

Prem:

That was along the lines of financial. Last but not least, in terms of internal business processes, I mentioned about three Rs a little bit, technology as a focus, right. What we did now is we went through an assessment with for cyber, for example, right, with CLA they were used to call as BlumShapiro, as you know. We completed our cyber survey with them, and we are trying to put together recommendations on how to really align with the DHS recommendation or the recommendation that are coming in play from a cyber-standpoint.

Prem:

And then innovation, we do have looked at a couple of things, for example, on process area improvements. We set up what we call as a center of excellence. We have 48 years of center of excellence. Those are procured to pay, you have source to consumption, recruit to retire as one of them. What is the fourth one? Procure to pay, source to consumption, recruit to retire.

Rochelle:

Meter to cash.

Prem:

Meter to cash. Thank you Rochelle. How could I forget that one? Those are the four areas of center of excellence we had established. Basically what we're trying to do there is to really make sure that we identify real process improvement, tangible benefits, right, to make sure that we can put that in perspective. Either we have an efficiency in terms of process, or we have an efficiency in terms of financial, how we deliver our processes for our business, a lot of focus in that space.

Prem:

Those are high level strategies that we're looking at and making sure that we are really anchoring back on how does this connect back on the 2050 plan? Those are some examples. Any questions from

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anybody from just from perspective of connecting the four main perspectives into the strategies before we go into the goals? Because there's a full stream of how does this flow into strategies, into goals is the next section. Any questions from anybody so far?

Stephen:

Prem, I have, just I don't know if it's a question as much as a comment. Although we need new employees with new skills, especially for say customer service or the information technology at the core we're a pipes and pumps and tank company, and one of the strengths has always been that people stayed there a long time and there was institutional knowledge relative to getting the water out the door.

Prem:

Exactly, that-

Stephen:

You have two things to work at there.

Prem:

That's right, exactly Steve. And as a matter of fact, that's a great point, right? Because when we looked at some of the skills in-house, one of the key areas on succession is also to develop those skills, right? For example, some of the water treatment operators' roles, we are trying to make sure that we have that bench so we can actually create the institution knowledge, and as our people are retiring, we want to make sure there's a legacy that they can leave behind, right.

Prem:

We are creating that, I would say as primary and secondary backups, so we don't end up having an issue as we go through, right. But as you know, as everybody knows, it's been a challenge to attract that resources, the talent because it's not readily available for us. We are trying really hard to make sure, but that's an excellent point. Right. If you go to the next slide, Jennifer. That leads into how do we really measure? And as they always say what gets measured gets done, right?

Prem:

How do we really measure some of these things to make sure that we are able to hit our global metrics as we navigate through our future? One of the things that the leadership team has quite a bit in detail was to really break it down into yearly metrics. Although we have our 2050 future plan, then we have our 2025 strategic plan, we have to have an yearly plan, right? We broke those, what we call as global metrics, and by the way, this is just a top global metrics that we track, but we have at least three dozen or four dozen of operational metrics behind.

Prem:

We do have that list of that's been tracked by each leadership team member. We have our own personal goals aligned to that. But at a high level, this is what drives our pay out, right, for example, right. Some of the global metrics, I'll quickly go through some of these in here. We have E-bill

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participation rate of 30% for fiscal 22. If you remember, our target was to get to a 42% by end of 2025 and that's been big.

Prem:

Then a monthly billing rate... A monthly billing project plan and we have baked into the overall plan where we could actually change the customer's behavior to drive more self-service etc. We have this target for this upcoming year, this year which is FI 22 plan. On the safety side, this was one of them that we missed this year, but and as Larry always says, we try to achieve zero preventable injuries.

Prem:

But we do have an eye on that. And this year we are trying to do the safety programs that Jeanine is trying to put in play to make sure that we achieve our goal. Safety is an important thing that we plan to track as one of the global metric. The third one we have is a capital planning management. As you know due to pandemic, it was a little haywire as you know, everywhere in every business out there.

Prem:

So we wanted to really create a plan where we don't spend unplanned dollars on anything more than 5% for fiscal 22, right? If you look at our capital budget, we strive ourselves to be putting in the 5% mark and this year we are looking to achieve that as well. And this conduits towards sticking to our FI 22 plan. That's the idea behind that. DPB as you know, 90% is a high level compliance target that we have in terms of enabling legislation, we want to make sure that we are keeping those standards for quality, high quality of water.

Prem:

An idea is to really keep the DPBs under 10% so that's why we have that goal as a global metric. And this was the same last year too. Process improvement ideas, like I said, of the four, center of excellences that we are setting up, we're looking to put together four tangible benefits process improvement [inaudible 00:19:55]. We are tracking that and there's a whole team that sits on innovation, how we call it.

Prem:

We track across organization cross-functional. Everybody's talking to each other to make sure that we identify those processes and we improve those processes. In terms of coverage, we are trying to keep up with 140% coverage, but at the same time, without a draw from the discretionary funds this year, it's even more challenging target for us. Again with no shortfalls, right. That's another critical, heavy hitting global metric that we want to track.

Prem:

The last, I can't see the bottom of the screen here, but the commercial enterprise growth as you had seen, we did go through an acquisition this year. And then we are looking to actually acquire two other acquisitions for the upcoming, this fiscal 22. The reason for that is when we looked at our overall commercial enterprises growth, we wanted to make sure that we address the gaps.

Prem:

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We have PipeSafe program that we offer today. We're also looking at another program that we want to offer to our customer, but just by doing those, we are now going to hit a 9.2 million target. We had to do something different so we can actually offset the rates for our customers. At a high level, this is one of our target to do two acquisitions this year, right. It looks like there's one last one that you don't see here. Maybe the presentation is not looking good, but the last one is the 96% coverage.

Speaker 10:

[inaudible 00:21:30].

Prem:

Yeah, there you go. 96% coverage. Basically we want to make sure that we plan and work on a capital plan based on what you think is to be able to hit. Because as you know, we finance majority of our capital, now, although we did our internal funds last year, fiscal 22, the first half is going to be internal funds, the second half is going to be finance, so the idea there is to really make sure that we hit the 96% spend for a capital plan.

Prem:

Those are the global metrics and behind these global metrics, we have, like I mentioned, the leadership team has all the operational metrics that we track. Personally, I have two dozen metrics that I track for my department, similar to Rochelle does hers, Jeanine does hers. The idea is to really keep the organization moving forward so we can actually move and change as we go through our plan, right.

Prem:

Those are some of high level as to how RWA is trying to learn from others, trying to put our strategic plan together. We are working through a plan. But any questions for me or for the members here, any of these content?

Stephen:

Any questions from committee members? Prem, the capital budget management, I'm not quite sure what it means to work efficiently to the benefit of customers. What isn't working now or what needs to get better?

Prem:

You're looking at the third one now Steve, the capital planning management, is that what you're talking or you're looking at last?

Stephen:

No, budget management.

Prem:

Yeah. No, I think that was more of an internal one Steve, right? Basically as you know, the make-up of our capital plan, we only have five major plan. We have make-up of a capital plan projects, as you know, things change or things, not from a business standpoint, but even from what's going on outside world, right. The idea there was that we have to hit a 96% spend on our capital budget.

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Prem:

What we do for that is we have a committee that we go through where we look at all the products that are being hit on month by month basis. And we do have hoppers in the project, for example, dam project might not be spending the money that we think that it's being put into the plan, so we actually bring another project that's in the hopper, right. The reason we sell with the customer there, it's really more of a touch point where we are financing some of those dollars from outside, right.

Prem:

It's really that part of it's not directly impacting the customer, but it's more like making sure we hit the plan of 96% spend, right. That's what it does. Rochelle, is there anything else you'd like to add, Rochelle?

Rochelle:

Yeah. Maybe I'll just add that we also want to make sure that spending as far as meeting this target makes sense in there, perhaps accelerating projects from one year into the other not just spending for the sake of spending.

Prem:

Exactly.

Rochelle:

That was also part of it.

Stephen:

Is the matrix being viewed and followed the same way that it has been, it gets reviewed and projects change priority?

Prem:

Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Stephen:

The dynamic process.

Prem:

Yeah, exactly. As a matter of fact, Larry sits in those meetings as well. It's all the leadership team members, including Larry, we go through all the list of projects, there's a recommendation from the team and we look at the priority to make sure that the metrics is all taken into account and then we approve the projects. Right. Now to Rochelle's point, we don't want to spend money for the sake of spending, we want to make sure that we're putting it on the right priorities.

Naomi:

Prem, looking at all the new business, all the new residents that are moving into the city of New Haven, will we be able to get any of that business at all?

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Prem:

Are you talking from a customer sense Naomi or from a business?

Naomi:

Well business or a customer, either way, if it's commercial, whether they're... I'm not sure how they do these apartments that are all being built around here, downtown New Haven, there's like maybe thousands of people that look like they're moving into the city.

Prem:

Yeah. No, I agree with you. Right. To answer your question, yes, definitely, right. The way we are looking at it is as you know we have our construction group, our team member Ted Sheikh, works with our new construction group, so anything that comes in new, we make sure that we include those things as part of our jurisdiction, right, provided we have let's say a main extension plan, etc., right. And we make sure that we put that into perspective.

Prem:

But those are our potential customers, to be honest, right. There are certain areas where there's a well kind of a scenario, right. We don't have control over those areas, but most of it goes through a process and we make sure that we reach out to the customer. But you're right, I think there's 12% of our customers moving into our territory and our goal is to really make sure that we can increase our customer base as well. That's how we are approaching it.

Stephen:

Prem, are those apartment buildings generally supplied to the owner? It's not individual accounts, right?

Prem:

To be honest with you, Steve, you're partially right. It is true that we look at in terms of the owner, right, the builder and then sometimes what happens is in the multi-family scenario, we do have agreements with the tenant directly as well. It's a mixed bag depending on the customer itself. We have I would say a certain person, [inaudible 00:26:58] the tenant makes the payment, although they're not the owner, but that's one thing you're looking at as a process improvement to make sure that we are streamlining the process.

Stephen:

Yeah. If a building is supplied and we just charge the... It's kind of like-

Prem:

Owner.

Stephen:

...the customer, but it's we're charging the owner and the waters used. How do we make out of that as opposed to that many individual customers?

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Prem:

I think a classic example, correct me if, Rochelle, if I'm wrong, right. EL is a good example, right? We have a collective EL account. We look at in terms of the consumption and we actually send out a collective bill, right, as an example. But to your point Steve, right, there are challenges where we start thinking about the individual customer, right. Now we are dealing with an end customer where we don't have obligations.

Prem:

If there's a tenant and owner conflicts or some of the legal things that we can't get involved in. But when we actually put in perspective of whether it's owner or a tenant as the person who will be paying the bill, I would say, the better we are doing it is like you said, it's with the owner, right. Because this way, if the bill is not getting paid, we could actually have a lean process put in place, right, versus a tenant would just move out.

Prem:

We have seen some of those I would say exceptions, it's not happening all the time, all over the place, but that's where we end up talking about some of the adjustments that we make, etc. But I do agree, we are trying to make sure that we could go towards a model where it's more owner driven, where we could actually emphasize more on our processes that make sure that we can collect our money, right.

Stephen:

Yeah. I-

Rochelle:

I just want to add, it's still Steve, it is based though on the meter and the consumption, so regardless if it's being paid from the owner or individually-wise, it's still metered water.

Stephen:

Metered to the building or to individual customers you are talking to? Just to the building, correct?

Rochelle:

It depends.

Prem:

It depends. Yeah.

Stephen:

I'm just curious because I'm sure it's challenging. If you don't have individual customers, you don't have a way to connect with those people as customers, correct?

Prem:

Yeah, that's right. No, I think multi-family homes, Steve, mostly are one meter, right. It's a single meter.

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Stephen:

Yeah.

Prem:

It's not a building, right, so-

Stephen:

[Crosstalk 00:29:25]. Do you know who they are? [inaudible 00:29:27] other products, etc., as you're trying to generate the need for other services.

Prem:

That's right. That's exactly right. And I think there are a few exceptions, but I wouldn't belabor on the exceptions, right. In my mind, I think that's where we are standardizing the model to your point. Multi-family is a great example. We have a single meter I didn't mean to multi-family, right. And we have one bill that goes up.

Catherine:

Can I ask a question?

Stephen:

Sure.

Catherine:

Prem, I think it's very interesting and I'm glad Naomi asked this question about multi-family properties in New Haven. Do you think from a legal perspective, it makes sense to have meters where you're dealing directly with the landlord, but there are other things that the [inaudible 00:30:21] a lot of the [inaudible 00:30:26]? There are other things that the RWA offers, like the recreation programs, then it could be nice to be able to live [inaudible 00:30:37] and other places that have multi-family housing, so that you'd have access to those, the children that live in those facilities.

Prem:

Yeah. No, I think that's a good point. Larry, you have a comment? I see...

Larry:

Add that in addition to metering one whole building, many times buildings [inaudible 00:31:01] within that building. [inaudible 00:31:07] that way we can have individual accounts and some of the large accounts, apartment buildings. We'll know the customer by account. Did you hear me? I'm getting a lot of feedback on my speaker.

Stephen:

If I could just-

Larry:

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So where were we.

Prem:

It was in and out.

Stephen:

Yeah, there was a time it'd broken up Larry, so if you could just go over it again quickly it'd be helpful.

Larry:

What I wanted to say is that on some of these large apartment buildings or multi-family buildings as they're called, sometimes we can... Those are sub-metered, so there are individual meters for each unit. We can collect on that particular customer, treat them as an individual customer, despite them being in a large building with others. That way, for instance, to Catherine's point, we can send them information directly about programs that RWA has. They would get our currently quarterly customer insert bill inserts where we promote the recreation program and things like that. We treat them as if they were a single-family dwelling when they're sub-metered.

Stephen:

That's what I was getting at Larry. How do we identify those people and connect with them as individuals rather than just supply water to the building?

Larry:

That's right.

Prem:

Yeah. I think just to add, that's a great point, right? And one of the things we are doing, as you all know is what we call as the commercial enterprise changes, right? One of the things in there is also to identify customer, there's customer segmentation. Our sub-task in that is to identify who are real customers out there, right? We have like for example parcel data, we call it, from USPS.

Prem:

We'd exactly know who are the people who are in there, so we can actually compare that to our customer database. We say that these are the customers who probably are not metered, who we can offer these other programs, not just supplying water, but recreational programs, our products and services. That's where we are moving into. Some of the changes are coming into play there, but that's a good point.

Stephen:

Other questions for Prem? Prem, thank you for a great overview here today. It was a very good review of the issues.

Prem:

[Crosstalk 00:33:52].

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Stephen:

Yes, nice job.

Prem:

Thanks Steve.

Stephen:

Item four on our agenda is our consumer affairs report. Jeff?

Jeff:

Well, as you heard me say at the RPB meeting last week, there's no pending escalated matters with the OCA. It's been pretty quiet and I'm actually looking forward to getting the right application so I have something to do.

Rochelle:

On its way.

Larry:

Customer experience manager, Louis D'Amico is doing her job well.

Prem:

Exactly.

Jeff:

Look, we never have a lot of matters anyway, but last couple of months it's been I would say quiet.

Stephen:

Well, based on that, we can move to item five, which is the approval of your invoice for \$0.

Frank:

I make the motion approve [inaudible 00:34:49].

Naomi:

I second it.

Stephen:

I have to rephrase that motion so that we are approving \$1397.50 cents for Jeff.

Frank:

Yes.

Stephen:

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[Crosstalk 00:35:05]. Thank you. And second.

Naomi:

I second it.

Stephen:

Thank you Naomi. All those in favor?

Naomi:

Aye.

Speaker 12:

Aye.

Stephen:

Aye. Any opposed?

Frank:

Nay.

Stephen:

Any abstentions? Then I should have asked for any questions about this for Jeff. Does anyone have a question on it? Appreciate it. Thank you. Item six is actually volunteer for September because Mark, you're going to August now?

Mark:

Yes, I am. And that's not my name, Andy Barnett. [inaudible 00:35:40] my zoom and he put his name and so I have to fix that.

Stephen:

Okay. Is there anyone who has an interest in going to September? I probably can attend that if no one else is available. We can check next month. But if anyone does want to do that, please let me know. Item seven is the election of the committee chair for this year.

Mark:

I nominate Steve Mongillo.

Naomi:

I second it.

Frank:

I also second that.

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Stephen:

I was going to say I'm eligible, and would like to do it. But thank you. Are there any other nominations?

Mark:

Free time.

Stephen:

Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

Mark:

Move nominations be closed.

Stephen:

Thank you.

Mark:

Take it.

Stephen:

Thank you. All those in favor of electing Stephen Mongillo as the chair for next year?

Naomi:

Aye.

Frank:

Aye.

Group:

Aye.

Stephen:

Any abstaining? Thank you.

Mark:

I want an acceptance speech.

Stephen:

I accept the responsibility to continue doing the best that I can. And I was thinking today we're running out of zoom meetings and we're going to all have to get fully dressed. And I have to drive down pretty soon to all these meetings since-

Mark:

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I'm liking these zoom meetings.

Stephen:

Yeah, there is a convenience to it, for sure. And-

Larry:

Well, you have until next year to continue these, if you so desire, they've been extended until I think it's April of 2022.

Jeff:

Yeah, actually what the legislature did was there was a bill from the governor that would have made offering remote meeting mandatory in addition to an in-person or a hybrid meeting. But what they did instead was they made it optional through April 30th. But what I've been told is that next year they will make it mandatory that in addition to a live meeting, all public agencies will have to offer the remote option, which quite frankly, if you've ever done a hybrid meeting, it's extremely chaotic to have some of the people in the room and some of the people on the zoom, it's just not... And I don't mean the board or commission members, I mean members of the public.

Stephen:

Jeff, we were talking about this, it's nice to have the option say you had a special meeting or something, but is the issue noticing those meetings and timing?

Jeff:

Well, it's not, the notice issue is the same, it's 24 hours under FOYA for a special meeting. The issue becomes the requirements that the legislature put into the bill. Having a recording of the meeting uploaded to the municipal or public agency website, having the meeting materials available on the website prior to the meeting, it's just it's too much because there's too many municipalities that have multiple board commission or committee meetings the same night.

Jeff:

And you saw what happened tonight with the typical zoom account. You can only host one meeting at a time. Now you can go out and you can buy an upgraded commercial account and host multiple meetings, but to expect municipalities to do that, and you got to have somebody that's making sure the meeting's being recorded. And we've had situations in some pretty good size towns where the recording gets screwed up.

Jeff:

That's the part of it that's problematic to say you have to do it for every meeting, there's so many small boards and commissions and building committees and ad hoc committees, to make everybody do it, is just too burdensome, but we'll see what happens next session.

Catherine:

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Hey, Jeff, just want to throw one more thing out there that the meeting notice requirement that as of July one of this year, for remote meetings is 48 hours, not 24. And the reason for that is you have to give people 24 hours to request a remote, a physical location where they can go and view the meeting.

Jeff:

Yeah, that's if your meeting is only remote.

Catherine:

Right. Yeah. Right.

Stephen:

Well, it's complicated.

Frank:

Jeff, does that one after tonight to get out to the zoom, to get out?

Jeff:

The finance committee had a five o'clock meeting and the basic zoom account doesn't let you host multiple meetings at once, so you have to wait until that meeting ends until you can start the next one.

Frank:

Thank you Jeff.

Stephen:

Okay. Larry, am I correct that we will be going to in-person meetings as of September?

Naomi:

[inaudible 00:41:10].

Larry:

I think that depends.

Stephen:

Okay, so we're not sure yet?

Larry:

No.

Stephen:

Okay.

Jeff:

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Well, the stock market dropped about 800 points today because of surging COVID cases among other things, so I think we got to wait to see how that plays out, right?

Larry:

I know David Borowy is therefore sitting, going to live meetings in September. And he's having continuous conversations with Mario about that but so I think it's still up in the air.

Mario:

Yes, that's been the target is to go live in September. However, we've been, each week or almost every day, we were picking up two, three more hospitalizations for COVID so start to get a little bit nervous as to how that's going to work.

Jeff:

Yeah, the breakthrough case number in Connecticut tripled in a month.

Mario:

Yeah.

Stephen:

Wow. Not a good development. We thought we were out of the woods.

Naomi:

Prem.

Prem:

Yeah.

Naomi:

Have we ever thought about moving out of zoom? I know within the city we went to Teams. Now would Teams allow us each to have a meeting whenever we want?

Prem:

Yeah, no, I think we do have Teams today, Naomi, right? I think if we ever try, I would say a transition plan. If you're questioned in the future, we're looking at moving towards more Teams. In terms of cost too, I think Teams is better because we are paying it as part of the licensing. The challenge we have is that when you start thinking of it, interest, it's still not that user friendly, right, to be honest, right.

Prem:

That's where a little bit of a challenge is there, but we are transitioning to [inaudible 00:43:06]. I would say we are not adding any more new licenses for zoom, so we're not adding any more costs, but our plan is to let it pass through our annual licensing model, right. Once we go there, I think we won't renew our license so it will automatically transition to Teams, that's the plan.

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Naomi:

Thank you.

Stephen:

Awesome. Okay. Our next meeting is August 16th, 5:30. If there are no other comments or questions, I'll call for a motion to adjourn.

Mark:

Make a motion to adjourn.

Frank:

I'll second this motion to adjourn.

Stephen:

Okay, thanks. All those in favor?

Group:

Aye.

Stephen:

Aye. And we are adjourned. Thank you everyone.