

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

**November 18, 2021  
Meeting Transcription**

Mario:

All right. It is 6:30 and welcome everyone to the regular meeting of November 18th to the Representative Policy Board. Mario Ricoszi, chair. And thank you all for coming this evening. We have some background noise. First item of business is the safety moment on carbon foot print. How each and every one of us can reduce it. We all contribute in one way or another, some more than others. And if we just think about it, we probably can do quite a bit as individuals. And then also as we look forward to things that we do in the future.

Greg:

I have a question on it.

Mario:

Yes.

Greg:

Rethink fashion choices?

Stephen:

That's the same question.

Jennifer:

They make clothes out of recyclable products.

Greg:

Okay. All right.

Mario:

Yeah.

Stephen:

I was just wondering how you wanted me to dress, Jennifer.

Mario:

It's more of a cotton or recycled versus a fur. Or you can keep your fashions in your closet long enough so that they come back in style, and this way you've saved on purchasing them too.

Tim:

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I was wondering if I could just point out that cows eat more plant foods than all of us. And they've got four stomachs, and they produce I think four times the amount of methane.

Mario:

And now on to item number two. The approval of the minutes of October 21st.

Jamie:

I'll make that motion.

Mario:

Thank you very much. Jamie. Who's second?

Greg:

I did. Greg.

Mario:

Greg did. Thank you. Any corrections, amendments or additions to the minutes? Not counting cows. Okay. Hearing none. All in favor.

Greg:

Aye.

Mario:

Anyone opposed? Anyone abstaining? Okay. Thank you very much. Communications. You received in your package with your agenda, the ethics and gift profit disclosure report. Unfortunately, there's a typo in there. So you should receive an email tomorrow which will have the 2021 form. So if you'd please fill that out, either email it back to Jennifer. Or mail it back to her, either way, as soon as you can. It's for the period ending November 30th. And unless you plan on taking someone else's turkey, then you can probably fill it out now. But I'll leave that all up to you as individuals to do that. So thank you.

Greg:

Jennifer. Can you mail one out to me?

Jennifer:

Yes. Anybody else who wants it mailed?

Mario:

Anyone else need a hard copy? Jay?

Jennifer:

Probably Jay. Oh, I sent one out to Jay. Jay, I'll send you a new one.

Brian:

Can you send the email... Send the address you want us to send them back into, if you need physical copies.

Jennifer:

I could take the email copies. That's fine. But I'll send the address we're to send it back, if you want to mail it in.

Mario:

Please. Just add that in your email. Okay. One other piece of information. Since we talked about coming into Teams being started sometime after the first of the year, Jennifer has been working; I think Prem is probably poking her. That we'll be switching to Microsoft Teams for meetings. So if you are familiar with that platform, it's very similar. I think it's a little bit more user-friendly and a little bit more intuitive. If you've gotten used to using Zoom for your personal stuff, it'll take a little bit of getting used to. I believe you can download Microsoft Teams for free from the web, but we will look into that before we make the jump. Is that correct, Jennifer and Prem?

Prem:

That's absolutely right, yeah. We'll make sure that there's training. I know Jennifer and myself and the team have been talking about it, but we'll come back with more information on that.

Mario:

So it won't just be tonight we're on Teams? Good luck if you don't have it already on your computer.

Prem:

Oh yeah.

Mario:

Okay. Thank you very much. The role-

Stephen:

You can always call in with Teams, even without having it.

Mario:

Steve, you had a question? You froze, Steve. Okay. Steve, you're still frozen. When you unfreeze, we'll take your question. I don't know if... Does it have the feature that you can dial in?

Brian:

I believe Teams does have the feature you can dial in.

Mario:

Okay. You need the pro level, I believe, to do that, to allow people to dial in. Okay. Steve, you had a question.

Stephen:

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Yeah. As a matter of fact, I'm having a little difficulty now. My connection's unstable and I've never had a problem, but I'm starting to get... I noticed that my bandwidth is too low. So maybe Prem could speak to that in terms of either the Zoom or the Teams.

Prem:

Yeah, no. I think bandwidth situations, Steve, it's basically based on what you have as the internet connection at home. So for example, Comcast, other providers, they actually have different levels in terms of the bandwidth. To be honest with you, what we get in terms of our bandwidth really would matter, especially for video conferencing, whether it's Teams or Zoom. It wouldn't really matter. So we can talk offline, and I can suggest some things in terms of [crosstalk 00:07:41] personally. I think it might be helpful for you. If others have the same problem, talk about it.

Stephen:

I can't believe I'm not paying Comcast enough right now.

Rich:

Steve, if you turn off video, you may find it works better tonight.

Mario:

Yeah.

Stephen:

Is that putting more pressure on your bandwidth.

Stephen:

Oh, okay. Thank you.

Prem:

And also remember, it's not just you. If you have others working as well, like in my case, four other people in the house sometimes use the same bandwidth. So there are other things that can also happen. So it's not just you. So, things like Rich mentioned, switching out video sometimes helps because just audio is better. It uses less bandwidth. So there are things that we can do, but let's start off where I can give you some tips if you have other issues.

Stephen:

Thank you.

Mario:

All right.

Greg:

Why are we changing? Because of cost?

Prem:

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There are various benefits. So as a matter of fact, I was talking to Larry also this morning. One of the things in the primarily cyber security. So if you remember, we were [inaudible 00:08:47] I think it was Consumer Affairs. We had a Zoom bombing situation. I know me and Jennifer, we talked about it. That's one of the reasons in terms of security, but there's also cost efficiency. Microsoft Teams, we save around \$5,000 in a year because you already have those licenses in place versus Zoom. We have a original licenses. But that being said, I know me and Larry talked about it this morning. We also talking about coming in personal, and having these meetings in person. If that's the case, we may not even want to transition into Teams.

Prem:

We may just come in. Once we have our video conferencing, I know Mario touched on it last time, to reconfigure our [Welsh 00:09:26] room, et cetera. So we are trying to hire somebody to come and give us a good suggestion. If that works out and then based on a plan, if we come back to normal in April, we may not even have a switch. So there are a couple options in place. But of course we'll make sure that there's proper training. Jennifer is going to make sure everybody's trained if they switch and we'll have a soft launch. Best idea.

Greg:

Thank you.

Prem:

So options are on the table. So we'll discuss more.

Mario:

Okay. I just wanted to give you a heads up. All right. Any other communications, Jennifer? I think we're good at this point.

Jennifer:

Nope. We're good.

Mario:

All right. So the consideration and action item, Jennifer, if you'd put up the fourth Thursday of the month, is our calendar for next year. And we discussed third Thursday versus fourth Thursday. I believe Jennifer sent out both. I didn't know if someone would like to make a motion towards adopting the fourth Thursday calendar except for November and December.

Jamie:

I'll make the motion.

Mario:

Okay. Jamie. Is there a [crosstalk 00:10:40] second? Joe, thank you. And discussion. Bob, I know you had a conflict that you were going to look into.

Bob:

Yeah. It's still a conflict, but we'll see what we can do.

Mario:

Okay.

Rich:

So can I ask what is motivating the change?

Mario:

Part of it is that extra week in order to get the reports completed by staff, so that they close out the month. So when we get the report from them, it's complete. And also Consumer Affairs sometimes meets before the full RPB, sometimes meets after the full RPB. So this would always have Consumer Affairs meeting before the full RPB in the month.

Jeff:

Yeah, not this year, Mario. It got really complicated. We tried to move our meeting to an earlier Monday and because of Finance Committee and holidays, they had to change. That was impossible. So we had to vote the third Monday again, just because of timing and getting this schedule out to the towns. But we do have four or five holidays that are rescheduled. So it's not going to be smooth for a while.

Mario:

Understand. Other discussion?

Rich:

So, and I'm sorry, Mario. So it's in order to give more time to finalize the subcommittee reports?

Mario:

It's actually the reports that are prepared by staff.

Rich:

Okay.

Mario:

When we postponed, I believe it was the October meeting, the September meeting, to the fourth. I think it was September. They found that it worked a whole lot smoother and they weren't rushing to get the reports done. Further discussion. I believe, and I'll ask David. I believe you adopted the fourth Thursday?

David:

We did that this afternoon as part of our meeting, yes.

Mario:

Okay. I guess we'll take a vote. All in favor of the calendar of the fourth Thursday, say I.

Joe:

Aye.

Mario:

Opposed? And abstaining? Okay, Jennifer, think the ayes had it on that. Thank you all. Did no other action items that we have and we're up to reports. So Mr. Slocum, Finance Committee.

Tim:

Thank you, Chairman Ricoszi. Finance met on November 8th. We had a very interesting meeting, a very fulsome meeting with a lot of numbers, basically discussing the 10-year model. Larry introduced the model as developed using projected capital program. Target model included steps to mitigate future rating prices. The capital program used in the model includes updates associated with water treatment plant upgrades and dam upgrades. So there's a lot more expenses in there, but again, with their proposed models, they're able to presume more or less the same course where water works out costing about the same much amount of money.

Tim:

So basically I guess my takeaway from this is that, management continues to work along the lines of maintaining the best optimal path for the organization. Gives me great confidence in all that they're doing. And so I can only speak for myself on that, but I felt the committee got a great deal out of it and probably walked away with [inaudible 00:15:00] perspective. Beyond that, that was a rather fulsome meeting followed by Michelle actually laying it all out for us. And we had a handful of questions and then everything came to an end, so to speak. And our next meeting is scheduled for December 13th, if anyone would like to join us.

Mario:

Questions for Tim? Okay. Thank you very much.

Tim:

Thank you.

Mario:

Land Use Committee, Mr. Harvey. I understand you're pinch hitting again.

Bob:

I believe I am. Can everyone hear me?

Mario:

Yes, sir.

Bob:

Okay. We had our meeting on the 10th and we had a presentation given by Ms. [Duxbury 00:15:48] from the University of Rhode Island, and also Ms. Reynolds from Yukon regarding a [swallowworts 00:15:55] and some of the bio control that they're trying to do to get this under control. And it is on some of our properties. Ms. Reynolds from Yukon is doing some control work on the properties, trying to see what

can be done to limit its spread and also stop it. It was very informative and it's one of our non-native plants that seems to be having some real problems taking over.

Bob:

But other than that we discussed a bunch of the rainfall, a percentage of our reservoirs, but hopefully Larry can give a better update on that. Other than that, it was a pretty much normal meeting. We are finding out that permit holders for the recreation program are dwindling down. I guess, the niceness of being able to go out and use RWA trails and everything is starting to wear off people, or they had their permits and now they're letting them expire. But other than that, it was a very good meeting. And our next meeting is going to be on December 8th, I believe at 05:30.

Mario:

Thank you. Questions for Bob?

Tim:

[Crosstalk 00:17:15]. I had a question, Bob. Oh, go ahead, whoever was first.

Stephen:

This is Steve. I go up to Chamberlain quite a bit and I notice people parking outside and walking in. I don't know if that's just because they don't want to use the gate or if they don't have passes. But I was thinking if they post on the weekends, especially one of our staff there, you could offer them a free visit. But try to get their name in return for mailings at least, for the recreational program. So I don't know if that's going on at other places as well.

Bob:

I'll bring that to John Triana's attention and see. I don't know if we have staff who can go out there on the weekends.

Stephen:

Yeah. I haven't seen people when I was out there.

Brian:

The most recent time I was there, there was a member of the staff that was there. But I don't remember if it was a weekend day or not. If there was someone right at the entrance of the trails and stuff.

Mario:

Good point, Steve. Thank you, Brian.

Tim:

My question for Bob was, I just want to make sure I heard him correctly. There's been a fall off in applications for passes? Is that what you said, Bob?

Bob:

Yes. The amount of permit holders has dropped.

Tim:

And that wouldn't be because lack of enforcement? You just think it's just because COVID is sort of dissipated in a sense. But hence, maybe made those places less of an impactful.

Bob:

Yeah. It dropped from the month before September to October, dropped by probably about 80 permit holders. And from a year ago, it was dropping also. So I don't know if they've made any assumptions as to why. Probably the easiest one is that people were looking for means to get out and maybe not so much anymore. So they're not renewing their permits.

Tim:

So that wasn't necessarily a year-over-year. It was basically month-to-month. So we could be dealing with just the number of wet days compared to a year ago. We had a lot of wet days.

Bob:

Well, we had the October of both 2021 and 2020 data and also September of '21 and '20 data. And both of them, they seem to correlate by the amount they drop, but I don't know. It could be just a time of renewal or just people aren't renewing.

Tim:

Right. Thank you, Bob.

Mario:

Okay. Thank you. Other questions.

Brian:

If anybody's interested, I just pulled up the minutes from our meeting, which can have the numbers here. So from October of 2021, we were at 5,366 permit holders. In October of 2020, we're at 5,788. September of 2021, 5,684. So we're down 300 from September to October, and we're down about 300 year-over-year. But as I recall that this was a huge surge. So we had gone up over a thousand more. So we're still well above where we were pre-COVID.

Bob:

Yes.

Tim:

Exactly.

Mario:

Okay. Thank you. Any other questions? Hearing none. Mr. Mongillo, Consumer Affairs Committee.

Stephen:

Yeah, good evening, Mario. We met this past Monday and Rochelle was there to do the presentation for the 10-year financial model. Everyone's had a chance to get that presentation at this point. She did

cover the base case and a target model that incorporated the flexibility for what seems like endless challenges financially for the organization. So a lot of thought went into it and very comprehensive presentation to try to consider all the things that might happen, but we'll have to see how that all works out. We did appreciate her coming in, presenting us with all of that information. Consumer Affairs tried to consider changing the date that we meet because we had four or five holidays in this schedule that had to be changed. We looked at a few things, but as I mentioned, didn't work out and we didn't have enough time to change it. So perhaps next year, if there's enough time, we'll be able to reconsider. We were also trying to put a little more time between us and the RPB meeting so that we get the minutes together.

Stephen:

Jeff reported that things are still quiet. So that was good news as well. And our next meeting is December 20th.

Mario:

Very good. Questions for Steve? Okay. Thank you very much, Steve. Next is Authority and Management, Mr. Borowy, Mr. Bingaman.

David:

Yes, Mr. Chairman, thank you. And members, good evening, everybody. A robust meeting on several topics. And our first item was meeting as the Environmental Health and Safety Committee. And I see Kevin is on here, if he'd like to give us a report as chairman of that committee.

Kevin:

Sure, Dave. Mr. Chairman, members of the board, we first heard from Amanda [inaudible 00:23:18], who's the manager of environmental health, safety and risk, and gave us some updates in her area and for our committee. One of them being the reference to the September 15th, North Cheshire well field tabletop exercise, where they tested the incident management plan, responding to a mock scenario of PFAS being well above regulatory limits. They also tested the drought response plan, well field emergency plan, water quality emergency plan, and business continuity. The event had representatives from the Connecticut Department of Public Health, Southington Water, Meridian Water and a PFAS consultant, Weston & Sampson also participated. And I think that the... I guess there were some comments from the Connecticut Department of Public Health that they haven't seen an exercise such as this in the past. And I think that that goes to the experience that the authorities gaining in a holding these tabletop exercises and eventually, hopefully back to an actual exercise at some point in time. And so I think that speaks well for Amanda and her team and Ted and Larry as well.

Kevin:

If you ever get a chance to attend a tabletop exercise as an observer or witness, I would try to do that, especially if you're able to do it more easily during a remote or a virtual session before they go back to being live sessions. It's been to evolved in a few of them and they're well worth it.

Kevin:

They also discussed, her and Rochelle have been working on a revision to a risk mitigation assessment, which I thought was interesting that they're using a standard or a well-known template, but they're

tailoring it, working on it for the authority. And it's also in connection with the My Safety app... Sorry, I'm not sure if that's me or... Sorry, we've got some interference there. She also talked about the safety app on RWA phones where workers can immediately enter a near miss or an incident into the app, which can be reviewed by team leaders and employees and management later on to try to build a comprehensive understanding of ways to increase safety. I asked if there had been an increase in incidents in the past year or injuries. I was told that no, there had not, but it's just an ongoing commitment to have zero work injuries, which is commendable.

Kevin:

Talking about returning back to in person training in small groups post-COVID, there's some things that can be done online obviously, and other things that are better in person, so they're working on that. And then the Safety Starts With Me is an initiative that's being rolled out to help employees to understand their role in creating and maintaining a safe workplace. And it has three different aspects of it focused on employee behaviors. Once again, reaching zero injury goal.

Kevin:

It's the three modes of human performance that is being utilized, skill-based, knowledge-based and rules-based. Perhaps the RPB would like a brief presentation on that in the future. We also heard from Lori Vitagliano, the legislative update. It's a short session that Lori pointed out, which is primarily, usually focused on the budget. However, there are some topics that could impact the RPB way. One of them being the extended producer responsibility, which is better recycling options for gas cylinders, and lower fees that would help the HazWaste central program. PFAS substances, Safe Drinking Water Advisory Council, there might be some activity or some topics that emerge with respect to that, which is a topic you're going to hear repeatedly about over the next number of years. And then virtual net metering, which has been a request for quite some time to allow the authority to sell electricity they generate from solar panels, back to the grid. As a political sub-division, you're not allowed to do that right now. And so that was our meeting. Thank you.

Mario:

Very good. Questions for Kevin?

Mark:

Kevin, so on that selling power back to the grid, where's that at? Is there a bill saying that we should be able to do that? Or is there a bill saying we shouldn't be able to do that?

Kevin:

No, there's neither. There's been an effort on the part of Lori. And I'm not sure if there's other water companies or utility companies that are involved in that, but there's been an effort over the years to... since Jim Flynn was around, Mark, to allow us to do that. And we haven't gotten anywhere with it yet. I don't want to say we haven't gotten anywhere. There hasn't been a bill that-

Mark:

Well, we can put power things on like solar and some, on our own property and use it ourselves. That we can do.

Kevin:

Well, yeah. And we've been doing that and it's been successful, but when you generate extra solar electricity, we can't sell it back to the grid right now. So there's an opportunity to sell electricity back to the grid that we cannot take advantage of as a political sub.

Brian:

So you're saying that we produce an excess of electricity now over what we are able to use?

Kevin:

Yes. It depends on the day and it depends on the cycle, but yes, that's correct.

Jamie:

I know that's an issue that state agencies were also having, so it's not just quasis. It's a bigger issue with state agencies and they're sort of infighting because of the way regulations work. So it might be beneficial to reach out to some other state agencies. So if offline you want to talk a little bit about that, that might be helpful. The other thing you can do as something to consider, it's going to be a long time before, or at least a couple of years before that gets resolved. But batteries are getting better now for preserving that power and using it at a later date, but it may be we have too much we're creating to salvage any of that.

Mark:

Well, I was under the understanding that the power grid that we have in Cheshire I believe, just makes enough to help our power. Doesn't make that much over what we use at that facility. I could be wrong, but when we went out there to look at it, that's what we were told. But how about this Lori? Isn't that her job to try to get somebody to produce a bill to lobby for this?

Kevin:

I think, Mark, that's... Yeah, I'm here. I think that's one of her aspects of her job. I don't know if Larry or somebody can speak further to that. Like what her exact job responsibilities are.

Larry:

Yeah, she's the RWA's official Government Relations Representative to the state legislature. She also is one of the tri-chairs of the Connecticut Waterworks Association Legislative Committee. So she's up there not only representing RWA's interests, but also in the legislature lobbying on behalf of the water industry. And in the past, when there's been a bill on virtual net metering, she's been up there for RWA and the industry as well. She's also in charge of the HazWaste disposal program. So she oversees that even though we have somebody that acts as a regular coordinator, but she oversees that. And then she is... You probably recall that you will get messages from her as well as other individuals in the communication staff, when there's been a main break or water quality issue. She also acts as one of the communications representatives to send out those notifications to towns. And she's one of the representatives that has five towns within our drinking water district that she'll call on those town's CEOs periodically to keep them informed in RWA. So she's got a multifaceted role in her position.

Mark:

So are we pushing for the ability to be able to sell back power?

Larry:

Yeah. We do every legislative session, Mark, but the problem is there's a lot of, as Jamie said, there's infighting on that. Legislature is concerned about opening it up to political subdivision. So there's a lot of, and sometimes the electricians are not aligned with doing that either. So there's a lot of different factors that come into play, why that bill doesn't make it through the legislature, but every year she tries to get that introduced. And when she does, then she of course lobbies for it. But sometimes it's just overtaken by factors out of our control.

Mark:

Okay.

Larry:

A perfect bill, quite frankly, that would be perfect bill, that we could get the RPB to help us with, by calling their state representative and state Senator, asking them to support the bill.

Mark:

You're right. That's exactly what we should be doing. You're right.

Tim:

I had a question for Kevin, if I may, or staff for that matter. I'm certain we were incented to even develop the solar panel there. Correct? And there was probably a cost benefit analysis done that it was worthwhile. So it was a subsidized program to get us involved in the first place. So there's a cost benefit associated with that. And then of course, my next question is this. What is the revenue lost? I know as Jamie said, we can't store it. I think the maximum storage developed in Los Angeles is an hour and it hasn't even been able to be put in place. So what really is the potential income loss, and what did we gain from this to start with?

Kevin:

Tim, we had those numbers. I don't have those numbers today.

Tim:

I can figure this much, Kevin. I understand.

Kevin:

[Crosstalk 00:34:34]. Yeah. But we did have it in the past. We had a presentation with Jim Flynn was here and there was a much more specific information that would help answer that question. Sorry, Mark, go ahead.

Mark:

It's saving us a bunch of money in Cheshire. I know that. I can't remember the exact figure, but it's saving. It's 20% or 30% of our energy use is being produced by the solar panels out there in Cheshire, and I could be off on my things. But they did do a study on it. Right, Bob? They did a study when they put the solar panels in, and it is very helpful. We are saving money.

Tim:

I know, for example, in the town of Cheshire, they instituted it. They put a solar array over the landfill cap, and the estimated savings to the town over... I forget the life cycle, but I think it's like \$200,000 in excess of that. So it's not as if there's not a benefit. So I just would like to see a cost benefit analysis to even fight over, getting paid for the excess energy produce. Maybe it's a battle we don't need to wage, generating savings.

Mark:

But you have to realize we have a vast area. It can be used for solar. Then there's wind. You're not talking a couple megawatts. You're talking like-

Tim:

In other words, you're talking prospectively. The potential exists.

Mark:

That's correct.

Jamie:

So part of the issue here is you switch to becoming a generator, a power generator, which puts you into another universe in terms of the mission of our entity. So it's not as simple. We have space, we can build it and we can do it. It's a little more complex. And I know you guys all understand that, but it just gets really complex very quickly with the way energy is bought and sold in the state and supplied in the state, and how many megawatts you can create. So it's not just we can do it, so we should do it. There's just much more to it. So I think, as Larry and Kevin were saying, our legislative person is probably more immersed in the details. It might be beneficial to go back and do another presentation and see where we are, but there's a lot going on in the state. And it gets very complex very quickly.

Bob:

We, at one time, were looking to do another solar array, and I thought DEEP put the kibosh on that due to the fact that some of the chemicals in the photovoltaic cells might have had PFAS in them. So I thought it was stopped due to that.

Larry:

We were looking at one time at putting solar panels on Lake Saltonstall as a way to generate electricity for the plant. And in other studies it's shown that it actually improves water quality, but the Department of Public Health was not convinced that the materials in the solar panels could actually deteriorate water quality. So they would not approve us moving forward on that.

Bob:

Correct. So I'm not sure if they'd let us put it on any of our property.

Larry:

Well, they approved the solar panel at the north sleeping giant well field.

Bob:

And that was before they did their research into it and found the problem.

Larry:

Yeah. I don't know. We haven't approached them. The last time that we did this, we were looking at a well field at Gaillard and ultimately decided against that. And I think you're right. The Department of Public Health was not in favor of that. Ted, do you remember that? You were involved in that issue.

Ted:

Yeah, the Gaillard. We looked at the PPA and the dollars weren't worth it. The purchase power agreement that we would've had to enter into was we don't want to own panels, we want to be able to buy them under our PPA agreement. And in that case, Larry and folks, they determined that the dollars were not worth. But you're right, Larry, when we looked at Saltonstall, the state did come back and say, we don't like this. They never proved anything, but they were not going to approve us doing it.

Bob:

Correct. Probably until there's a technology change, we're probably not going to be able to put solar panels up. So trying to get money from the ones we have would be a good thing, but it's probably a mute issue right now.

Kevin:

Well, I just want to-

Mario:

Larry, if I could just request, because I know there's a lot of people remembering things, which is great, but Larry, if you might be able to, perhaps in January, have someone put together a kind of this is where we were, this is where we are, and this is what is happening in the legislature. And I don't know whether it would be better to do it to just a committee or perhaps to do it to the full RPB, just so that we have the facts. And if there is a need for us to take any actions with our legislators, then we can roll it into that.

Mark:

Maybe we should give up on this electric generating and go direct to planting marijuana. Think how much money you'd make with marijuana.

Mario:

Shake that up in the Land Use Committee, Mark.

Mark:

You'd have a lot more people wanting recreation passes.

Mario:

Okay. Other items, Mr. Borowy?

David:

Thank you. And Kevin, thank you for your report. We also met as the Strategic Committee and had a two-part meeting. The first part of that presentation was regarding our key performance indicators of which there are 10, and fiscal year to date all 10 are meeting the goals. And there are such things as e-billing participation and trying to get that to 30%. And safety performance and water system needs, cybersecurity improvements, et cetera. Those are all part of the KPIs. And you also receive a report on that folks, so you may recall that. The second part of the presentation was regarding business process improvements and how we were trying to realize some of the benefits of AMI with regard to helping make the customer experience better. So that it's a one stop call and answer issue so that there aren't multiple times having to have contact with the client.

David:

So they're doing a very good job smoothing out the process that the clients must go through and our customers must go through, as well as some accomplishments internally that the employees will see and a way of making us a little more efficient and working with our staff to make that work, to be a little efficient with that. We also talked about customer portal and mobile app coming in December as well as monthly billing is planned for January go live. And so we received our updates on that. So that was our Strategic Planning Committee. Questions on that before I hand it over to Larry for the business part of the meeting? I see most of you and I don't see any... All right. Then we'll turn it over to Larry for the business part of the meeting.

Larry:

Okay. Thank you very much. Before I do the financial report, I'll have Jeanine give a COVID update. There's been some things happening out there in the world. So Jeanine.

Jeanine:

Sure. Thank you, Larry. Good evening, everyone. Just want to let you know a little bit about some employee metrics. As of Monday in totality over the last, since March of 2020, we have had 40 confirmed cases of COVID. It is a change of two new cases since last month. Unfortunately, both of those cases were for employees that were vaccinated. So that's that. We are in the process right now of HR, now I've spoke about this last month, about trying to find out what the vaccination status is of all of our employees. We currently have collected 207 vaccination cards, which give us approximately 80% vaccination rate for our staff. So we're doing really well in that regard. We're down to about 20 people, trying to chase them down, to find out what their vaccination status is. All of this is in an effort to get ready for the new OSHA ETS regulations that are currently, you probably have all heard about them, requirements for vaccination and record keeping and whatnot for any employers employing more than a hundred employees. That is on hold with some legal challenges surrounding it.

Jeanine:

So we are in a little bit of a pause right now, before we make any next steps. But we think it is to our advantage to know a little bit more about our population. So we will continue till we get 100% of our people letting us know what their status is. Last meeting we talked about the customer care center returning to work in November on a rotating basis. You may recall some of the people were in the office all the time and others were home-based all the time. So trying to structure it so that they are following suit with our hybrid work policy, where you have so many days at the office and so many at home. That's been going well. Phase one started November one. Phase two will begin in January 1st.

Jeanine:

One of the things that we did was to reconstruct some barriers in that customer care center and some of the other areas in our [nineties sergeant 00:44:55] drive building for areas that have people maybe sitting closer to each other than they should. So that's all taken place so that everybody can be safe. Shuts. We talked last month about shuts starting on October 24th. We did have some shuts take place since then. We collected 15,000 of \$22,000 that were generated from those shuts and arrangements were made for the rest of that money. So we had some good work with our customer care team, collecting some money. And I think that is it on the COVID front? Does anybody have any questions or concerns?

Bob:

How many people do we have not coming to Sargent Drive?

Jeanine:

So we had about 140 prior to COVID that really used that building on a regular basis, somewhere around 140. While we have probably 120 or so of them rotate. Again, we have a hybrid policy which allows for three days in the office and two days at home, and sometimes a little different than that schedule according to their job responsibilities. So we have everybody coming back, they're just not all there every single day.

Mario:

Thank you, Jeanine.

Jeanine:

Anything else? All right. Thank you, Larry.

Larry:

Thank you, Jeanine. Well, for after five months of actual results through October 31st, our operating revenues are over budget by about \$1.4 million. And that's due to total water revenues being over budget by about 1.1 million, primarily due to higher than budgeted consumption from June through August. Our other revenues are over budget by about \$242,000, primarily due to the other proprietary revenues being higher than budget and things such as jobbing and things like that are also above budget. Our operating expenses are about \$2.3 million under budget, and almost all of that, about 2.2 million of that is considered timing at that point. Although that may change as the year progresses. When you do all the puts and takes, we're projecting a coverage of 114% with no shortfall, compared to our original of budget of \$922,000 for a shortfall. That projection reflects the higher than anticipated build consumption, a small reduction in the anticipated fiscal 22 debt service payments, and also reflects the one time impact associated with the big bang conversion to monthly billing.

Larry:

But given all that good news, we're still a little uncertain about the short and long-term financial impacts of the pandemic, associated with the variant impact on employment levels and customer's ability to pay. And that projection does not incorporate the changes associated with the rate application that you all approved at the last meeting. And the proposed rates will be adjusted based on our bond pricing in December. So on a storage standpoint as of November 15, Mark.

Mark:

Yeah, I'm here.

Larry:

Okay. Raw water storage was 86% compared to a long-term average of 66% for this time of the year. And that's interesting because for fiscal 22 to date through November 14, rainfall total about 28.6 inches or about 7.8 inches higher than the long-term average of 20.9 inches. So all of that rain has definitely had an impact on our reservoir levels.

Mark:

Yeah. But it seems not to have that much on our revenue, which is good. Right? And the use of more draw.

Larry:

Yeah. My report incorporated the June through August, so consumption was definitely higher during that period of time.

Mark:

And there was a lot of rain then too.

Bob:

Well, how are we doing with staff in general? It sounds like... I know we've been preparing for a bunch of retirements. Are we understaffed? Are we overstaffed in general?

Larry:

Yeah. We're under budget by... And Jeanine correct me here. I think we're around 10 positions under budget, but it's a very tight market and it is difficult to recruit people with the required skills or experience in the water industry. We just spent almost a year recruiting for a VP of engineering to take Ted's place when he leaves the company officially on December the 17th. And we just found one, but it's taken us almost a year to do that. So you all will have a new VP of engineering that will be participating in the Land Use Committees going forward. And that individual is to join the RWA on December the sixth. So Jeanine, you might want to talk a little bit more about some of the recruiting challenges.

Jeanine:

Sure. We've seen a real struggle in recruiting, and it's not particular to the water industry. Most of you, anybody that's out in working environments right now knows it is an employee market. We have this phenomena calling the great resignation. That is a real true thing. People are using the opportunity. I think COVID preemptive made that happen a little bit, using the opportunity to find other opportunities for themselves that either provide more flexibility or different benefits or whatever it may be. So we continue to look for a number of key positions. Larry, it was actually over a year to be honest with you. So it took a really, really long time for us to recruit a senior leader to replace Ted [crosstalk 00:53:21] not uncommon.

Mark:

This is Mark Levine. How are you?

Jeanine:

Good.

Mark:

Do you think it would help if the RPB would have a list of the openings that we are looking for at the RWA, because we all are out there in the world and maybe we know somebody looking for a job that might have the qualities that you are looking for. I'm just saying it might help.

Jeanine:

Yeah. We listen-

Mark:

Because April Capone got... I didn't even know we're looking for a director of public affairs. Is that what it is?

Jeanine:

Yes. So April is the replacement for Dan. So you might [crosstalk 00:53:59]. So that was that replacement. But yes, obviously any help that you, anybody wants-

Mark:

Imagine we post that once a month of what we're looking for? Maybe some of the qualification. Not that we know what we're doing and we could just mention it to, "Hey, listen. I know somebody that's out of work that has these kind of stuff. Here, call the water company and fill out an application or whatever."

Jeanine:

So the easiest thing to do, we have a career site and it lists all of our opportunities that are open. We don't take paper applications anymore, as you might know, and most people don't. So they would have to go into our website and apply for jobs, but they're all listed there.

Mark:

It might be better if we sent it out in our communication to our RPB members. That's all.

Jeanine:

Okay. We will figure out a way to do that.

Mark:

Just a suggestion. I might know somebody that'll fill a spot there. I'm sure Mr. Clifford would know somebody.

Bob:

With the changes that have been happening, can we have a new organizational chart with the people's names and what their tasks are? I know that used to be happening in the past.

Mario:

I had asked for that once. They fill the VP of engineering. I think that's the last senior position you were looking for. So we should be getting that first of the year.

Stephen:

Hey Mario, this is Steve. I have a question for Jeanine as well.

Jeanine:

Sure.

Mario:

Yes.

Stephen:

Yeah. How long was Dan with us and will the new person be communicating with the same towns?

Jeanine:

Yes. So Dan was here not quite five years, four plus years. And he wanted to work only remotely, as you might imagine. It's hard to do that when you have to be the spokesman and a community liaison type individual. So he [crosstalk 00:56:07] a different sort of job now. April we've kind of have to reshuffle the deck. I know that soon April and her team will be out. We are actually actively recruiting for another position in that department as well. So once we get all of those positions filled, we'll probably have to reshuffle the deck again, in terms of who is meeting with who from a community liaison standpoint. But probably anybody that knows April Capone knows that she is very skilled. She knows a lot of people, has a lot of connections and we've already seen the benefit of that. And the number of occasions in particular with some relationship that she has with Dick Blumenthal and the press release that she had a week or so about.

Bob:

Oh yeah. It came out after.

Jeanine:

Yes, yes. Again, I think she begged forgiveness on that. She was, I think, like day three into her job or something. So lesson learned. She will remember to let everybody know ahead of time and they tried to live stream it, but there was something going on with I think the bandwidth, to be honest with you or something. So that didn't work out either, but lessons learned. We'll get it all straightened out the next time.

Bob:

I hope so.

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Mark:

Thanks, Jeanine.

Jeanine:

You're welcome.

Mario:

Okay. Larry?

Larry:

Oh, that's all that I have to report this evening. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mario:

David?

David:

Thank you. We're all set. Thank you so much. That's our meeting, unless there's any other questions that was for summary.

Mario:

Thank you very much. I do want to remind everyone, and this was just brought up, but just monthly billing starts in January. So if you are not aware of it, in case you get a phone call saying, "Why am I getting a bill in February? I just got my bill in January." Or if your chief elected official asks you how come I'm getting bills every month. Also your finance people in your particular towns, they're going to be starting to get their water consumption bills on a monthly basis. So just make sure you let everyone know in your town. And I also want to wish everyone a terrific Thanksgiving to you and your families. Do we have any final words from either Jeff Donofrio, Bruce McDermott? I think we're out of... No one's in jail that you're trying to keep out, Bruce?

Bruce:

All good at my level, thanks. No one in jail again this month.

Mario:

Okay, good. Jeff?

Jeff:

Oh, the OCA certainly wishes everyone and your families a safe and happy Thanksgiving.

Mario:

Thank you. Any further business to come before us?

Tom:

Move to adjourn.

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Mario:

Thank you, Mr. Clifford. Is there a second?

Greg:

Second.

Mario:

Okay, Greg. All's in favor.

Greg:

Aye.

Mario:

Adjourned at 07:29. Thank you all very much.