

REPRESENTATIVE POLICY BOARD

NOVEMBER 17, 2022

MEETING TRANSCRIPTION

Mario:

All right, it is 6:30 on Thursday, November 17th, 2022. This is the regular meeting of the Representative Policy Board of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District. I'm Mario Ricoszi, the chair. Welcome to everyone.

The first item is the Safety Moment. For November it is Winter Weather Preparedness, and after the 70 degrees of last weekend, I don't know how many of us were actually prepared for winter weather this week, but please go through and check your smoke detectors, your chimney flue, and have your thermometer ready so you can complain to your significant other that you need to turn the heat up or down.

And remember the emergency car kit. So please take a read through on that. It's important that we all remain safe throughout everything that we do, especially around the holidays now. Everyone's going to have their mind in other places and thinking about many things. So please take the time to read through. And we welcome our additional members who are joining us from the RPB. The next item of business is Public Comment. We added this to the agenda, I believe it was last month, so residents and customers may address the Board if there's anyone there. Jennifer, do you see anyone?

Jennifer:

No, there are no members of the public.

Mario:

Any public comment? Any public comment? Any public comment? Okay, thank you. Well, we'll do the approval of the minutes of October 27th, 2022. Is there a motion from someone?

Mr. Rescigno:

Motion.

Mario:

Okay, Mr. Rescigno. A second?

Mr. Jaser:

Second.

Mario:

Mr. Jaser. Any additions, corrections, or amendments to the minutes? Okay, hearing none, try your minds. All those in favor say aye.

Group:

Aye.

Representative Policy Board

November 17, 2022

Mario:

Opposed? Anyone abstaining? Okay, the minutes are approved. Thank you very much. Communications. We have the Ethics and Gift Profit Disclosure Report form for the period ending November 30th. Make sure you get those to Jennifer. If you need a hard copy mailed to you raise your hand right now or tell her now and she will be happy to mail you a hard copy. There is an attachment to the minutes, or if you need a separate email, please speak up. "She will be more than happy to do that," he said, hoping that he was correct. Okay, so please get those into her. You want them by December 7th?

Jennifer:

Yeah, I think it's December 7th or the 9th. I just need them by the 15th, so I have to make sure I collect them all.

Mario:

Okay, so please aim for December 7th, if not earlier. Thank you. One other item under communications that we created because of public comment and the possibility, if you are talking to one of your residents, the customers, and they want to somehow address the Board or if we have someone during public comment and we'd want to capture their name, telephone number, that type of information, the authority was kind enough to create an email address, a generic email address that is boards B-O-A-R-D-S@rwater.com. That email will be monitored by Jennifer and I believe also Tara, who has been assisting and keeping an eye on Jennifer.

So that'll be monitored and they will then send the question to the appropriate individual, whether it be someone on the board or more than likely someone on staff. So thank you very much to everyone at RWA for helping that come along. And David, I think that'll be a good positive step. Make it simple for our customers to reach us.

David:

I agree. Thank you.

Mario:

I don't think there's any other communications, Jennifer?

Jennifer:

No, that's it.

Mario:

Okay. Thank you. Items for a consideration and action. We have the calendar year for the RPB regular meeting dates 2023. And if we could have a motion to accept.

Brian:

This is Brian. So moved.

Mario:

Thank you Brian. And a second?

Greg:
Second.

Mario:
Is that Greg?

Greg:
Yes.

Mario:
Thank you. Jennifer did a nice job putting these together and I think we were okay this particular coming up, as far as keeping the dates. Any issues that anyone sees? Okay. And if we do run into something during the year, obviously we could cancel a meeting or reschedule a meeting. It would then be a special meeting. So we just have more restrictions on us. So all in favor?

Stephen:
Mario, this is Steve. Just a comment. December meeting is the 21st. I mean, was there any thought given to having that a little earlier or you're going to try to do that?

Mario:
I think there was a concern about a conflicting holiday. We can look at that though, Steve, and if we need to, we'll make it a special meeting.

Stephen:
Yeah. I don't have any issue with it.

Mario:
Yeah, I was a little concerned also, but it's kind of the week before.

Stephen:
Okay.

Mario:
There's the weekend in between that and Christmas holiday. All right. Any other comments? All those in favor say aye.

Group:
Aye.

Mario:
Opposed? Abstaining? Okay. Thank you very much. That's it for items for consideration and action. We move on to the reports and the finance committee. Mr. Slocum.

Tim:

Thank you Mr. Ricoszi. The Finance Committee met just a few days ago it seems. It was Monday of this week. At that time, we took under consideration, we met actually on the 14th, we took under consideration the Lead and Copper Rule update and the 10-year model updates, both of which were conducted and reviewed with staff in executive session. So there's nothing really to share with the group on that in the public forum. And beyond that, we accepted and adopted the finance committee calendar for the coming year. And with that we adjourned. It was a delightful meeting of about an hour and a half, so I can tell you we watched a lot of paint dry. That's all I can say. But we thank staff for everything.

Mario:

Questions for Tim?

Tim:

I'm happy to receive all the meeting dates if they want to record them, but they may have received them with our minutes.

Mario:

Yes. And that same presentation I believe is coming up. So please, if you did not make it to the Finance meeting, I believe Monday's meeting you should try to attend and see those same presentations. Next is the Land Use Committee. Mr. Betkoski.

Peter:

Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you and hello everyone. Our regular meeting was Wednesday, November 9th at 5:30. We reviewed the Safety Moment, approved our minutes. We had to make a little agenda removal of... Steve Vitko was supposed to give us a reservoir safe yield model, but he has to go through with some management issues first before he presents it to us. John Triana gave us all the updates on the RWA properties, including invasive species. Sunny was there and just put out there that, if we can come up with some ideas for next month's meeting, any suggestions that can help management better themselves, to bring them forward. Joe Oslander was at the meeting today, I believe. Right, Joe?

Joe:

Yes.

Peter:

Good job, Joe. Got to love that. And our next regular meeting is December 14th at 5:30 and then we adjourn. Any questions?

Mario:

Questions for Peter? Okay, thank you very much, Peter.

Peter:

Thank you.

Mario:

And onto Consumer Affairs Committee. Mr. Mongillo.

Stephen:

Good evening, Mario. Consumer Affairs doesn't have much either. We didn't meet yet. We will, as you mentioned, meet on Monday. And again, as you mentioned, anyone who has not had a chance to attend the presentation on the 10-year model, are welcome to come to our meeting. That's the 21st at 5:30. So at this point, that's it from Consumer Affairs.

Mario:

Okay. Any questions? All right, very good. Thank you Steve. Onto Authority and Management. Mr. Borowy and Mr. Bingaman?

David:

Yes. Thank you very much, Mario, Mr. Chairman and members, I'm well aware that I'm the only thing between you and adjournment, so I'll limit this to an hour or so and go from there. We actually had a couple of robust topics that we discussed. We met as the Environmental Health and Safety Committee first, and Kevin is at a conflict with a family obligation tonight. So you'll indulge me to give the report.

When the committee met, there were three items, the DEEP stream flow regulations implementation. And we know 11 years ago that there was a beginning of the regulations that were taking our water usage and stream flow standards and goals that are going to become effective September of 2026. We've conducted and done the capital items that were necessary and improvements to the various sites to comply with this.

And we talked about the storage that we have and the capacity and the empowerment of how much water we have and the fact that we're blessed in this area to have quite a lot of water and we have quite a margin of safety, well above the 15% that we need to have, which is great. We talked about various drought triggers and how the 2026 regulation will affect our safe yields and our reservoir storages. And whether we wanted to talk with our legislators to allow us to advance drought-related enforcement legislation.

In other words, right now it's ambiguous whether we, being an authority as opposed to a municipality, have the right to go in and say to, and we do in the later stages of drought, say to our residents, "You can't use as much water," and have some limits. But the enforcement is the issue, whether the municipalities would be able to enforce that or whether we'd have to enhance, even more than we did recently, our police force, in order to do that. So those are issues that we're looking at and those are issues that we will work with our legislators on if need be to make sure that we would have whatever authority was necessary. So it's proper planning.

The second topic was really related and it was our RWA reservoir safe yield model. And of course the modeling is done and updated regularly and Tighe & Bond did a 2019 study and the HydroLogics did it as well. And of course our worst drought of record was in the 1960s and we need to make sure that we have enough water with a safe yield. We have above that. So the discussion goes to, well, someday are we going to expand? Someday, are there other towns near us? Obviously not to the south of us with the ocean, but are there towns near us that we could possibly expand to that we could help them out if the need arose?

And certainly we feel that there may be. So we, on the one hand, would want to push for limited water usage during a drought, even if we may not be affected by the drought, it's the state that would declare

it. And statewide there may be issues but not necessarily in our area. But at the same time we know that we may need the blessing of the extra water that we have to help us if we need to help other communities. So that was part of the Safe Reservoir model yield.

And then we also got a legislative session outlook from Lori Vitagliano, our government specialist, and talked about the fact that we're looking, we're always monitoring builds that might affect us and funding and bonding legislation for capital projects, which is very big, especially when we've got the Lead and Copper Rule that's going to have a significant impact to us. So that was the Environmental Health and Safety Committee. Are there questions?

Tim:

Yes, David, if I may. Tim Slocum.

David:

Yes, Tim.

Tim:

The Water Authority is opportunistically sold water during periods of drought, correct?

David:

Yes.

Tim:

Is this somehow different? We would be compelled to volunteer the water and be paid whatever, or it's just a matter of it's just a regulation, potentially?

David:

No, there are seven interconnections that we have with some municipalities and then with the quarry, on through the eastern end of our district I believe it is. But the issue is are there other municipalities, when the aquifer protection regulations come in and there are more restrictions put on what is able to be drawn from the aquifers, underground, as opposed to the regulations now, which is surface water, are there municipalities around us and throughout the state that are going to be negatively impacted and are going to be in need of more water? And we will hopefully be able to help them out. I really don't want to say much more than that in public.

Tim:

That's fine. That's fine.

David:

But it gives us an opportunity to know that we are looking at the future, that maybe it would allow us to have some other municipalities that we might be selling water to or working with.

Tim:

Okay. Thank you for that.

Stephen:

David, Steve Mongillo.

David:

Yes, Steve.

Stephen:

When you talk about safe yield, is that essentially how low you can draw down that lake?

David:

How low you can draw down the lake is with the stream flow regulations and how much water would be sent out. Theoretically, downstream is supposed to have as much water as upstream, from the impoundment area that we have. But safe yield is different. Safe yield is how much can we take out, and it isn't necessarily the level. But I think maybe Steve is going to be able to give you more technical answer. I know. I believe he's on tonight. If not, we'll get Sunny.

Stephen:

I think we draw down some lakes to sort of help out other lakes at times, too. So it's not quite that simple, as to one body of water.

David:

It is. There's a lot of interconnectedness.

Stephen:

But if we contract with someone, we would be obligated to provide them with whatever water we contracted for, correct?

David:

Correct.

Stephen:

Okay.

David:

We have contracts now. They're fairly minimal in the scale of the amount of water that we have, but we have contracts now.

Stephen:

Yeah, we're fortunate. I mean, this summer other areas were drier than we were so we did okay. And we started out with a great supply.

David:

You're right.

Stephen:

You never know who's going to have that, but it's fine to help other communities.

David:

As long as we make sure that our safe yield is there, we're protecting ourself, too.

Stephen:

Okay.

Brian:

Does safe yield calculations also take into account the well fields?

David:

I assume so.

Brian:

Or was that pretty much the surface water?

David:

No, no, no. It's all of it, right? Larry, I don't know if you're-

Sunny:

Yeah, I can probably take that.

David:

Okay. Sunny, take that.

Sunny:

Yeah. The safe yield is going to be only for, I would say, the surface water for the time being. So it doesn't take, I would say, groundwater sources.

David:

Thank you.

Mark:

Years ago I was under the impression where our well fields are [inaudible 00:18:04] and if the mill ever gets too low, they can only take X amount of well water out of that. But that depends how big a drought it is. And the water company does a hell of a job managing the water so I'm not concerned.

David:

Thank you for that vote of confidence, Mark.

Mark:

Isn't that unbelievable?

David:

No, it's great.

Mario:

Other questions on safe yield and/or stream flow? Okay.

David:

All right. Then I'll move on to the second part. We also met as a strategic planning committee and when we met as that we reviewed, with Prem giving a presentation, and Dana Bosham giving a presentation on business process improvements, and there was an update on six of them. The plan for the year called for improvements to four, three of which are already completed, three of which will be completed.

And they're business processes such as recruitment to retire, how do we make the process much smoother when it comes to the efficiencies and employee engagement? Meter to cash, field implementation potentially of ways to collect cash and save driving the vehicles out twice and saving us the money. Construction and job improvements and procurement, capital planning improvements and procurement, making sure we have what we need, making sure it's at the right price. IDR improvements with the customer service contact and labs improvements with the procure-to-pay that we're trying to have there.

So we're ahead of the goals for the year. That was going to be four business process improvements and there will be six and there may be more that gets started before the end of the year. [inaudible 00:19:59] while those are being done. Are there questions on that? Okay. With that, I'm going to turn the business part of the meeting over to Larry.

Larry:

Thank you. Good evening everyone. Good to see you all tonight. I'd like to have Liz Callow give us a quick overview on the COVID update for us before we get into the other parts.

Liz:

Sure. Hi everyone. Good evening. We had five additional cases since we last reported to you guys in October of the 18th, which brings us to a total of 124 cases. Everything else is status quo. We continue with all the safety and cleaning processes that we have been. Nothing has been isolated or work related. Everything has been sporadic, so nothing alarming to report. Thank you.

Larry:

Any questions of Liz?

Stephen:

This is Steve. I was just wondering about the virus that's going around, too, if you intend to track that or if you've noted any cases.

Liz:

We are not tracking that and we haven't noted any cases. Nobody has come to us and reported any other virus or symptoms. So no, we're just reporting the COVID cases, still.

Stephen:

Thank you.

Mark:

Let me ask you something. How do you [inaudible 00:21:30]? Do they have to bring a doctor's notice or something?

Liz:

I'm sorry, what was that again?

Mark:

How do you know they have COVID? Do you take their word for it or they have to bring a doctor's notice? Do they get paid when they have COVID? Is it against their sick time?

Liz:

Yeah, normally they call and report it and they bring us in a positive testing from a lab and then we move forward with it. They need to stay out of work for the five days. So as long as we see the results, then we pay them accordingly.

Mark:

It goes against their sick days or is it an additional benefit?

Liz:

We are paying them additional at this point.

Mark:

It's additional. So if somebody had 14 day sick days, they get an extra five, say, if they're-

Liz:

Pretty much, yeah. Yes.

Mark:

Wow, that's a pretty good place to work. Let me ask you something. Do they have to bring it from a lab?

Liz:

Yeah, we don't take the home test. So if they're out and they call out sick and we don't have proof of the lab test, then we are not paying them. They are using their own sick time. Correct.

Representative Policy Board
November 17, 2022

Mark:

And do you count that as a COVID case anyhow?

Liz:

For if they don't bring us-

Mark:

If they say they have COVID and they don't bring in the labs?

Liz:

No, she doesn't actually track it because if we don't have the proof... So if they take the home and they're not getting a result out, we don't count it as a confirmed case.

Mark:

Only the confirmed cases.

Liz:

We do track it but... I'm sorry?

Mark:

Only the confirmed cases?

Liz:

Yes, the confirmed case that we have the document to support.

Mark:

Do we track the seriousness of the COVID or is it like, is anybody in the hospital? Has anybody died in the last six months from it, in front of us?

Liz:

No. Since I've started or since I've been working at the RWA, I haven't had any reports of that, no.

Larry:

That's correct.

Liz:

And yes, we would know if they're hospitalized as well because we're staying in touch, making sure that we know what's going on with the employee and that they're returning to work healthy.

Mark:

Do our RPB members get the same benefits? If we get COVID, do we get paid?

Representative Policy Board

November 17, 2022

Liz:

Sure. Just give a call. I'll put it in your paycheck.

Mark:

Thank you very much for pointing that out to me.

Naomi:

Elizabeth, I just have a question about that. Is this a special pay? Because I know where I am working and most jobs now they're no longer following that COVID protocol because most places now... back to work even though you... Because I know at the Health Department, we're not following that. The employees are coming back to work unless they're at the fact that they're very sick or in the hospital and we're no longer offering the COVID pay, they're using their own time, so [inaudible 00:24:44] the same thing.

Mark:

That's a good question.

Liz:

Yes.

Mark:

Good point.

Liz:

It's based off of, we're asking them to continue to stay out because they work in close contact with each other down in the trenches and in their areas that they're working. So they made the decision and that we continue to make that decision. If we're telling them to stay home longer than that three days now, that we are paying them.

Stephen:

Liz, this is Steve again. Two quick questions. One, the five people, have they been scattered through the organization? And two, how many total cases have you had in the organization?

Liz:

We have a total of 124. And they're five and they're scattered. Correct. They're not work related and they're not clustered.

Stephen:

Okay.

Mario:

Thank you.

Liz:

Any other questions?

Mario:

Thank you, Liz, for a good report.

Liz:

Thank you.

Larry:

Thanks very much, Liz.

Liz:

You're welcome.

Larry:

In other business that we covered today on the Authority agenda, we reviewed a revised proposed RPB dashboard and I think it was in the September meeting, the finance committee asked us to review whether or not the existing dashboard had the key metrics on it. Rochelle and I have worked together and we presented a version that we're going to recommend to the finance committee at the December meeting. So that was a good discussion.

And then we also had a presentation today by Prem and Dana Bochan, the Director of Customer Service, about our accounts receivable collection strategy. That was an executive session because it does concern strategy matters and that will be presented to upcoming Consumer Affairs committee, which I think they had requested recently. So both of those topics were covered today, had a good discussion around both of them.

So with regard to the operating results, after five months of actual results of October 31, our operating revenues are over budget by about \$4.1 million. And that's due to total water revenues being over budget by about 3.9 million. And that's due primarily to higher than anticipated or budgeted consumption, and other revenues, which is derived from our backflow testing outside the lab and pipe safe. That's over budget by about \$217,000.

The majority of that... Excuse me. Our operating and maintenance expenses are about \$3.5 million, under budget, and the majority of that are about \$3 million. Right now we are saying is timing, but of course that may change over the next several months until we get to the end of the fiscal year. But when you do all the puts and takes, we are projecting a coverage of 121% with no shortfall, compared to a budget of 114% without a shortfall. And that's three percentage points better than what we reported last month, so we're continuing to do better.

That higher coverage projection does reflect the higher interest that we are receiving on our investments. So that's one benefit of this higher interest rate environment, although it'll take its toll when we do our bond financing, more than likely, but also the increased water revenues. And also there is part of the higher coverage is due to lower than anticipated pilot and lower than anticipated debt service expense. So all good news from that standpoint.

Mark:

Excuse me, Larry. On the \$3 million over on budget on water revenue, what is the percentage over that we figured out? Have we figured out what kind of flow rate versus what's coming in?

Larry:

Well, our operating revenues were over budget by about 7%.

Mark:

Oh, so does that mean you think the water's up 7%, the amount of flow of water going out?

Larry:

No, because it's due to a lot of different things. It's not only water consumption, but it's also due to some of the other revenues.

Mark:

You said the water rates money was up three million. Three million, right?

Larry:

Yeah, it's bill consumption. So sending out bills and getting paid for that. So the water revenues are up by about \$3.9 million.

Mark:

Does that represent flow or is that just an increase in-

Larry:

That's an increase in billings, due to... and the storage was at 71%. That compares to a longterm average of 66% for this time of the year. So with that, I'll be glad to take any questions you might have.

Mario:

Thank you Larry.

Larry:

Mario.

Mario:

Just for the Board's information, before Steve, I'll get to you. The dashboard discussion, Finance is going to take that up and I'm going to ask Jennifer if she would send that out to everyone so that if anyone wants to attend the Finance meeting in December to listen to the discussion on the dashboard and then obviously provide input so that Finance isn't operating just on their own so you have a chance to look at it. And since you get that on once a quarter basis, the whole RPB does. Steve?

Stephen:

Yeah, I have a question for Larry. I was just wondering if you've had a chance to compare collection rates or what the experience is with monthly billing compared to the quarterly billing?

Larry:

I don't have that at the top of my head. Rochelle, do you have that?

Rochelle:

Yeah, I would just say, I mean we are seeing cash receipts earlier, some monthly billing versus quarterly billing, like a higher percent of cash receipts on current-month billing.

Stephen:

Okay. What I'm asking is, have you seen, just because of monthly billing sort of making it supposedly easier for customers to pay, if that's really worked that way? Would you have a sense about that?

Rochelle:

I would. Go ahead.

Larry:

I'll go ahead. I think we are still discerning the pattern of payment for the monthly billing, number one. Number two, we're still in this COVID environment where people are having financial difficulties paying in some cases, and we just started our fall collection strategy, meaning that we're doing shuts and things like that in October this year. We stopped doing shuts in March of 2020 and then shortly after that, during [inaudible 00:32:58] last fall while utilities... collection. There's some noise in the background there.

The attorney general ask utilities to suspend their collections during the COVID. So we did not start that up until October. So we are behind in terms of overall accounts receivable past due versus where we were pre-pandemic. And we're still discerning the payable and collection rhythms based on the monthly billing. So I think we'll have a better handle of that after we have a full fiscal year and we can look back on that and see how that's tracked.

Stephen:

Sure, thank you.

Prem:

And Steve and Larry, if I may, one of the things as we mentioned earlier is we will be talking about the collection strategy overall in terms of the payments, Steve, and I think we'll be coming into the Consumer Affairs, that's the plan next month. So we'll talk more. Some of the answers might already be there, but we can talk in detail.

Stephen:

Okay, thank you.

Mark:

Larry, I just had one question, to go back on this COVID thing. Is there any plans in the future to go back to a regular medical thing on the COVID, not to track it anymore? Are other companies tracking it like we do?

Larry:

Well, from what I'm reading in the press, first of all, I understand from an article in the New Haven Register recently that Connecticut is in the top 14 states that are allowing people to work from home. So we're at the top 15% of the states within... that are allowing their employees to work from home. All of our office people are working from home. The field people of course have to come in to work every day.

And we have been achieving all of our metrics that we have set and we watch those on a monthly basis. And so right now our plan is to continue to let employees continue to work remotely, because as long as they can do it without impacting their performance. And then having reasons for them to come into the office, whether it's an event or a collaboration effort or something like that.

That said, I don't think that should necessarily dictate what the boards decide to do based on what the positivity rate is within the state. So I think that's something that Mario and David are talking about periodically about when and if they switch to in-person meetings and whether that is a hybrid model or whatever. But right now we're planning to continue with working remotely as long as we are meeting our metrics, with an eye to maybe having a way for employees to come in periodically for a reason.

Mark:

No, that's not what I was talking about. I understand that part. It's about tracking employees that have COVID. In other words, were we going to continue to do that? Are we going to continue to give them a bigger severance pay, or bigger pay for them having COVID? Or are we just going to go and say, "This is the flu-like symptoms and you got to stay home?" I mean, when does that part end? When do you see the future of that ending? I understand the hybrid part.

Larry:

Yeah. My view is that I think as long as we have the COVID virus as prevalent as it is and as high visibility as it gets, we're going to continue to track it and we'll continue to administer our sick pay accordingly.

Tim:

May I ask a follow-on of Larry? This is Tim.

Larry:

Go ahead, Tim.

Tim:

So in three years, for example, Larry, there's a good likelihood then that 20%, 30% of the staff could be home based. Basically, that's suggestive of what you're stating, so that it's really an economic thing more than it's a virus thing. It's just a new way of understanding how the world works, and Connecticut's in one of those states, probably because of the prevalence of insurance-based industries and things of that nature that can function easily at home. Is that what you're suggesting?

Larry:

Yes. I would say that for now, the outlook is that we'll continue to work remotely as long as we meet our business metrics and our goals and objectives. But there's no reason why somebody can't work at home with as long as they can do their job as effectively as they do it in the office. That said, we do need to consciously develop opportunities for employees to engage with one another. That's something that we haven't solved yet. And we need to honestly look at ways that we can have employees come together and engage periodically so that we do keep that live collaboration going.

Tim:

Because I see a whole host of issues that could arise over time. And also I see imperatives that arise over time for the organization in terms of all kinds of issues with what's spent on where you are and everything else. But I know we're tackling some of those issues almost simultaneously, or concurrently anyway. So anyway, lots of things to think about.

Larry:

Absolutely.

Prem:

Tim and Larry, and just something to add here, a little bit more color on... There were recent surveys that was done by Gartner and CB and I think the way that survey talks about is how do we really look at attracting talent? When they did the survey, flexibility happened to be on the top of the list. So new employees, as you're trying to bring people on board, one of the things is, as you know, compensation is pretty important for everybody, but I think flexibility is on the top of the list.

So it will be hard for us to attract talent if we do not have a way of having the flexibility in a hybrid model. It's prevalent, and I can share if anybody's interested in any of those reports, but it is coming out as a big strategy as we go forward. To your point, about 30% working remote. It's a norm and I think every employee, in the future, realistic employer is looking for that kind of flexibility. I just want to add that.

Tim:

No, I think that's important to include in the conversation, but I think it's also interesting to include that a lot of tech companies are now massively laying off people. But that's just getting rid of people. That increases talent pools. And it maybe increases the employee's interest in being seen in the workplace. I think this thing's going to settle out differently over time, and maybe some of it stays, some of it doesn't, but there's two sides to every paradigm, if you will.

Prem:

Absolutely. Yep.

Larry:

To your point, I think this is a phase that US business is going through and eventually I think you'll probably see a circling back, but right now, to Prem's point, it is definitely a factor when people are considering joining the RWA in the office versus another organization.

Tim:

Right, right. Thank you.

Mark:

They call it the post-pandemic world. It's like the post-9/11 world, post-pandemic.

Naomi:

I just want to add to what Larry and Prem said. I think that, judging from the companies that I talk to all the time during the day, most companies are working a hybrid schedule. It's just the way that they're going now. Because even my job, it's the exact same thing. We work a hybrid schedule, it's here. It's here to stay. Everybody has laptops they go home with now, so it enables everyone to be able to work from home. And I think it's just a wave of the future because a lot of people are looking for that. We just did an interview and that was one of the first things yesterday, the person inquired about, having that flexibility

Larry:

And we've had employees actually leave the RWA to go somewhere else and take a cut and pay because they could work at home 100% remote, when we had a policy of requiring people to be in the office three days a week. We had two employees, as a matter of fact, very good performers. They were considered some of our up and comers in the organization. So Naomi, I agree with you, that's becoming increasingly an important factor. That's part of what's going into our decision making on this. It's something that we're monitoring and continuing to talk about.

Stephen:

And, Prem, if I could make a comment on this topic, too. To Naomi's point, I think that's fine if you can work from home, but the RWA has employees that are required to be there in the field or in the processing plants and maybe resentful that they don't have that opportunity. So you kind of have to balance all those things in terms of morale and how people feel about working for the organization.

Larry:

Well Steve, right to that point, we did a survey and 87% of the employees that could work at home certainly said they wanted to. There is some us versus them with the employees that are in the field that have to come into the office every day, or the treatment plants, that have to be there. And we're trying to be as flexible as we can with their schedules, number one, to accommodate their needs. And secondly, that's one of the reasons why we gave everybody the day after Thanksgiving off, was to express appreciation to those that have to come in every day and be there when the others can work at home. But it was also an appreciation for all the great work that was done this past year.

Stephen:

Larry, I get all that, but one of the reasons I like going to work is to have collaboration with other employees and that contact, and I think you lose a lot when you don't have that.

Larry:

I agree. And Liz and I have had those conversations.

Liz:

Yeah, we had this.

Larry:

It's something that we're continuing to figure out, what will be our policy going forward in terms of in the office and getting unanimity among the leadership team to follow the policy uniformly.

Mario:

Okay, very good. Yes, definitely changing times. And as we get new people coming into the workforce, they're definitely looking for flexibility, which is a great thing. Other questions? Brian.

Brian:

Well, there's just one quick comment on the same thing. I mean, with certain jobs, when you take a certain type job, sometimes you take it with the expectation that you're going to have to be doing these things. I mean, I worked in a lab until I retired through COVID and it was expected. I mean, you can't run an instrument in a lab from home. So you're coming in. And if you're taking that type of job and you know that you have that type of job, you're not going to have that expectation of being able to work from home. So it goes both ways.

Mario:

All right. Other questions for David or Larry?

David:

Thank you very much. I want to wish everyone a happy Thanksgiving on behalf of all of us.

Mario:

Okay. David, take that from me again. Go ahead.

David:

That's just on behalf of the Authority, you're going to be on behalf of the Board.

Greg:

There you go.

Mario:

I don't believe we have any additional items on the agenda other than everyone to have a good holiday, a good Thanksgiving. Be safe, be warm. Think of others. Jeff, anything to add?

Jeff:

I would like to reiterate the comments that you made, Mr. Chairman,, in the beginning portions of the meeting about the significance of the Lead and Copper Rule. As you indicated, the Consumer Affairs Committee, which meets remotely 5:30 PM on Monday, will have a presentation from the Authority that's already been shared with the finance committee and with me previously. So it'll be my third time seeing it. And it's a lot. There's a lot there. And it's extremely important that the RPB members and that

Representative Policy Board

November 17, 2022

the Office of Consumer Affairs be well educated about it because there's going to come a point in time where we're going to be asked to participate in the public outreach effort and perhaps beyond that, to try to help get some funding for it.

So I would really encourage everybody, if you're available on Monday night and you haven't seen it yet, to make an effort to be there. I mean, I've talked with Sunny and Larry and Rochelle about it offline, and they've provided me with some resources and I've done my own research and read the original rule. There's a long history to this thing and when you read the history of it, you see it evolving in a certain way and it's not going to be less expensive as time goes on, let's put it that way. But that's it. Other than that, everybody have a great Thanksgiving.

Mario:

Yeah. No. If you did not attend the Finance committee meeting, please attend Consumer Affairs, or attend Consumer Affairs even if you went to Finance, learn something new. Jim does a very nice job with Rochelle on presenting what is clearly, I think, the biggest project that any of us will be asked to the look at. Mr. McDermott, anything you have to add to our meeting? Oops.

Thank you all and have a great Thanksgiving.