

Water System Advisory Council Meeting

May 16, 2022

Call to Order

Water System Advisory Council meeting was held on May 16, 2022, in the Flint City Hall Dome. The meeting began at 5:33pm and was presided over by Ben Pauli, Water System Advisory Council Chair.

Members in Attendance

Benjamin Pauli, E. Yvonne Lewis, Nayyirah Sharif, Lawrence Reynolds, Shawn McElmurry, Gina Smith, Laura Sullivan, Jamie Gaskins

Members Not in Attendance

Jaron Houston, Nancy Love, Wendy Braun

Meeting Details

Meeting begins with roll call of attendance.

Ben Pauli asks Water System Advisory Council members to approve the agenda for May 16, 2022. All members unanimously approve motion for the agenda and meeting minute approval.

Acting Chair Ben Pauli opens the floor for public comment.

Resident Claire McClinton makes a public comment regarding water affordability within the city of Flint. The resident stated for the record that water rates should be based on your ability to pay rather than water usage. Residents petition that there should not be shutoffs.

Councilmember Jamie Gaskins responds to the residents' comment by describing previous experience on a water rate council with fellow councilmember Dr. Lawrence Reynolds. Councilmember Gaskins agrees with the resident about water affordability and water being a human right.

Resident Roy Field Sr. makes a public comment and describes his issue with discoloration in his water due to black mold in his home. The resident described health effects from the mold within his home and explained his experience with City of Flint personnel. The resident has contacted the Environmental Protection Agency and the State of Michigan and is awaiting a response. The resident believes that there is a disconnect between the Water Department and the Building and Safety Inspection Department. The resident has found their neighbors are experiencing the same issues within their home and believes that this issue should be investigated further.

Councilmembers respond to resident concerns and have further discussion with the resident.

While discussing solutions to public comments, Councilmember Nayyirah Sharif suggested to make a motion for the group to write a letter of support for water affordability for residents for the city of Flint. Councilmember Lawrence Reynolds suggests the council advise the resident with black mold to contact their councilperson for their ward, which is Councilwoman Dr. Ladel Lewis, and the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy for more testing and further investigation of the home.

The acting Chair asks the council if a formal motion to move forward on assisting the resident dealing with black mold. WSAC Councilmember Lawrence Reynolds makes a motion for a formal process to assist the resident with contacting their councilperson, City Manager Arnold Brown, EGLE, and the State Water Advisory Council. WSAC Councilmember Shawn McElmurry asks that the council ensure that the resident is aware since the comment was made publicly that information about the situation would be shared publicly. Councilmember Shawn McElmurry believes confidentiality should be added to the process. WSAC Councilmember Lawrence Reynolds agrees and believes confidentiality should be added to the formal form for information obtained from residents regarding their concerns.

Councilmembers debate confidentiality and public comment when following up with resident concerns. Councilmember Shawn McElmurry believes that a conversation should be had with the Legal department for a formal reporting form with residents. Acting Chair Ben Pauli asks if there is a second for the motion on the floor which is for a formal reporting form for resident concerns. Councilmember Nayyirah Sharif seconds the motion. Acting Chair Ben Pauli asks the council to vote on the motion. The council unanimously approves the motion.

Councilmember E. Yvonne Lewis makes a comment regarding the motion about the importance of uplifting residents' voices and ensuring all concerns are answered. Councilmembers Lawrence Reynolds and Jamie Gaskins ask if an organization such as the Ombudsman office of State Water System Advisory Council has a reporting form to assist with resident concerns which could be adopted for the Flint Water System Advisory Council.

WSAC acting Chair Ben Pauli transitions to Water Billing presentation by Amanda Trujillo. Water Department Director Amanda Trujillo presents about how water bills are calculated and how meters are read. **Residents can download the app, Eye on Water, to view water usage. Residents can find their 6-digit account ID on their water bill and will use the account ID on the app to create an account.** Councilmember Jamie Gaskin asked if there are other methods being used to create more awareness about the app and need for meter change, such as the City Hall Information Desk. Councilmembers ask about status of meter changes, app usages among residents within the city, and shutoffs within the city. Water Department Director Amanda Trujillo responds to these questions and explains the strategy for meter changes which is now focused on the Westside with almost 100 meters changed a week. Department Director Amanda Trujillo states residents who have received a shutoff still have their water and must call the Water Department to have the meter changed and water will be turned back on after an appointment is completed. **The minimum payment suggested by the water department for past due bills is the current bill payment plus 10% of the last two past due bills.**

Councilmembers ask if this information can be provided in writing for distribution to Flint residents. **Residents have the option to mail payments, complete electronic payments, and/or come into the Customer Service Center at City Hall to pay their water bills and ask questions.** Councilmembers ask if they can have calculation questions answered. The Water Department Director Amanda Trujillo states that the Chief Financial Officer Robert Widigan can respond to those questions.

Councilmember Nayyirah Sharif motions for the group to write a letter to council and support parties to advocate for water affordability. WSAC Councilmember Jamie Gaskins makes a point about the wording of the motion and the purpose of the council.

Councilmembers discuss the future of council and the need for appointing more members who are Flint residents due to the resignation of a councilmember. WSAC can continue meetings due to the City Attorney allowing meetings to continue although the ratio of non-residents and resident member is not in compliance with the City Charter.

WSAC Councilmembers discuss their concerns regarding water quality and the purpose of the council. Councilmembers agree on the intersectionality between water access, affordability, and water quality. Members discuss what can be done moving forward for Flint residents within compliance of the WSAC terms created by the State. Councilmembers agree they would like to support a resident drive water affordability plan and to oppose water shutoffs. Councilmember Laura Sullivan seconds the motion proposed by fellow councilmember Nayyirah Sharif. All WSAC members unanimously vote to support a water affordability plan.

WSAC Acting Chair Ben Pauli asks for two volunteers to guide the plan for support for the water affordability plan. Councilmembers E. Yvonne Lewis and Nayyirah Sharif will work on the plan together and bring updates to the group at next month's meeting. Councilmember Gina Smith states that water affordability and advocacy could be placed on a subcommittee for communications. WSAC members agree and WSAC acting Chair believes that the council can support efforts and create realistic points for the council.

WSAC Acting Chair Ben Pauli provides updates from organizations that were unable to attend the meeting. D.P.W. Director Mike Brown provided an email update for the secondary pipeline. WSAC Acting Chair opens the floor for follow-up questions by WSAC members which will be emailed to the contact for the organization. WSAC members ask for Water Quality reports to be sent each month and want to know the service charge for the secondary source pipeline. WSAC Acting Chair presents the emailed update from MDHHS regarding sampling efforts. While providing updates, the **WSAC Acting Chair informs the council about the Water Infrastructure Forum on May 17, 2022, at 5pm until 7pm. The Water System Advisory Council will be present and will explain the purpose of the council to residents.**

WSAC Acting Chair asks members if they have any recommendations about what should be discussed during the presentation. WSAC member Shawn McElmurry suggested recruiting members for the council and inviting residents to attend meetings. WSAC Acting Chair asked if

the Communications Director, Qiana Towns-Williams, could provide information about councilmember qualifications.

WSAC Acting Chair transitions the meeting to discuss improving the Consumer Confidence Reports (CCR) sent by the City to Flint to residents. WSAC Acting Chair offers an update to members about the City Manager taking resident recommendations and conversating with the State about revisions which can be made to future reports.

WSAC Acting Chair asks members for topic suggestions for the June meeting for the Water System Advisory Council. Councilmember Lawrence Reynolds states that members still need to contact Environmental Justice Advocate Regina Strong about forms used to document resident concerns regarding water quality and should provide an update at the next meeting. Councilmember Nayyirah Sharif recommends that the Chief Financial Officer is available to attend next month's meeting to explain water service charge costs. Councilmember E. Yvonne Lewis states that transparency about water sources and infrastructure should be on the next agenda.

While discussing increasing community engagement, the WSAC Acting Chair believes that the council should be advertised to the community and is currently collaborating with the EPA for possible solutions.

Councilmember Lawrence Reynolds motions to adjourn the meeting. WSAC Member E. Yvonne Lewis seconds the motion. Meeting is adjourned at 7:47pm.