

City Council and Water and Sewerage Authority of Peachtree City
Minutes of Meeting
July 12, 1999
6:00 p.m.

The City Council of Peachtree City met with the members of the Water and Sewerage Authority in a special session, Monday, July 12, 1999, at 6:00 p.m. at the Peachtree City Library.. City Council members present were: Mayor Robert Lenox, Annie McMenamin and Carol Fritz. Jim Pace and Bob Brooks were absent. Those present from the Water and Sewerage Authority were: John Gronner, T. Edward Taylor, John Williams, Ray Helton, and Jim Cole.

Lenox called the meeting to order and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss recent problems and spills from the sewer system and to establish a good working relationship between the City Council and WASA.

Gronner explained that the latest spill was due to roots growing into the pipe. He said that when it rained, the pipe filled with water and overflowed. He also said the height of manhole was shallow and that WASA was in process of having it corrected. He said roots growing into the 150 miles of sewer line were a common problem. He said since the lines were buried in the ground problems would obviously not be apparent until an overflow occurred. Gronner explained that the sewer system had not been maintained properly prior to WASA's acquisition. He admitted that until recently WASA had been reactive to problems rather than being proactive to them. He said WASA was currently in the process of purchasing equipment to be aggressively proactive in the future.

He said WASA was spending over \$6 million to make improvements to the system. One recent purchase was a special truck to clean out roots and blockages of all kinds from the sewer lines. He said they were also in process of purchasing new television equipment that could be put into the sewer lines to see what was down there. He felt systematic inspections would greatly reduce spills by allowing WASA to repair problems before spills occur. He said it would be an ongoing process to locate and address problems.

Turner said that the TV equipment had been delivered earlier that day. He estimated that up to 50 miles of sewer lines could be inspected each year. Turner felt that historical data was important, but WASA did not have any data on spills prior to their purchase of the system. He said that recently they used a GIS system to locate every sewer line that crossed a creek or stream. He said several hundred areas were identified and inspected. Turner said that grease in the sewer lines was also a problem that needed to be addressed.

McMenamin felt their meeting that night would greatly benefit and calm the concerns of citizens. She appreciated WASA's role and said she was sure that they, as residents, were just as concerned about the safety of the water. She said her primary concern was for the health and safety of the citizens. She felt that citizens had the perception that City officials had a relaxed attitude about sewerage spills. She also noted that the last spill had been preceded by another spill near same place. She said she was not familiar with how sewerage systems worked, but she could not understand why the problem was not corrected before the second spill. She asked for a more proactive role from WASA. She said she would like for them to hold open meetings in the future to explain future sewerage spills before too much false information could be disseminated among the public. She felt it would be better for everyone to hear the same information at the same time.

Gronner said the City insisted that information be released as soon as spills were discovered, and many times WASA would not know the cause for several days.

Fritz said she did not have a problem with WASA announcing a spill had occurred and admitting they did not know the cause. But, she expressed concern that the most recent spill was from the same manhole as a spill just weeks prior. Turner said that the manhole in question had only been 2 feet deep and that it should not have been less than 4 feet deep. He said materials had been ordered to raise it, but that the second spill occurred before the materials were delivered.

Gronner felt that the percentages of spills were relatively small compared to other sewerage systems. He said WASA did not condone spills. He said they would not have spent \$ 6 million on repairs if they were not concerned, but he did not feel there was a major problem

Turner said he wished there were statistics to show the number of spills that occurred in the two years prior to WASA's acquisition. He said he knew that the pump station behind City Hall, which was no longer in service, used to overflow regularly into Lake Peachtree. He said Jim Basinger had witnessed the spills on a number of occasions. Turner said that no current management personnel had been employed by the previous owners; however, some of the other employees had been. He said he had talked to those employees off the records and had been told that there had been spills often when ever there was a heavy rain. He said he was also told that the same pump station that had a recent spill due to a lighting strike, had once experienced a bypass that continued for over three days before it was noticed.

Helton felt WASA's goal should be "no more incidents." He felt it was their responsibility to be proactive. He compared the situation to industries that had

goals of not having on-the-job injuries. He said that incidents would happen, but that it was important to always strive to avoid them.

McMenamin felt the meeting had been informative and was glad to know WASA had a zero tolerance policy and would be proactive.

Jim Stienback inquired about the training of personnel to operate the new equipment. Turner said that he had experienced employees and that the equipment was similar to equipment that they had used in the past.

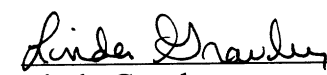
Turner said that sewerage spills were not a local issue, but rather a national issue. He said the EPA was in the process of having legislation passed to address spills on a national level. He said while the EPA did recognize that some spills were unavoidable, it was difficult to define. Turner said there would be a final meeting on the issue in Washington, DC on July 28 and 29 to finalize the legislation.

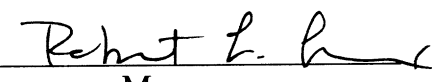
Turner also said there was a problem with how to treat water that had been contaminated by fertilizers and pesticides.

McMenamin asked that WASA use the City's UPDATE to assure citizens that they were being proactive and that they had a zero tolerance policy. She felt citizens expected accidents to happen, but that they did not expect them to happen in the same locations. She said they expected answers as to how repairs would be made to ensure accidents did not happen twice.

Lenox felt WASA had a good working relationship with the City's Public Works Department and that the City was quick to respond and help when needed. Gronner commented that the City was also quick to bill WASA for its services. He also said that there was a problem with some people directing down spouts from roof drains to send water runoff into the sanitary sewer system. He felt that citizens did not realize they were robbing the sewerage system of its capacity. Fritz said she was not aware of that problem. Turner said that it was not a major problem in Peachtree City as it was in other areas.

Lenox made a motion to adjourn the meeting. McMenamin seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.


Linda Gravley

Attest: 
Mayor