



Detroit Water and Sewerage Department Meeting Minutes - Final Board of Water Commissioners

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Wednesday, September 21, 2016

2:00 PM

5th Floor Board Room, Water Board Building

Regular Meeting

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Einheuser called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: 6 - Commissioner Mary Blackmon, Commissioner Linda Forte, Commissioner John Henry Davis, Commissioner Michael Einheuser, Commissioner Lane Coleman and Commissioner Jane Garcia

Excused: 1 - Commissioner Pamela Rodgers

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Einheuser requested approval of the agenda.

Commissioner Rodgers joined the meeting at 2:01 p.m.

A motion was made by Commissioner Mary Blackmon, seconded by Commissioner John Henry Davis that the agenda be approved. The motion carried by an unanimous vote.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Einheuser requested approval of the minutes of August 3, 2016 Workshop and Special Meeting No. 3, and August 17, 2016 Regular Meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Mary Blackmon, seconded by Commissioner John Henry Davis that the minutes be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 minutes per speaker)

Director Brown stated time allows the department the opportunity to help make the drainage program better. The department is appreciative of all who are in attendance. He said his staff will work on implementing a plan that will not impact the churches. He reminded the Board the reason behind the implementation of the drainage charge is a class action lawsuit and the department's regulatory requirements from MDEQ, which requires changes to the handling of stormwater or be subject to building millions of dollars infrastructure. The liability will be passed to our customers. The majority of our customers are residential or non-residential, those who can least afford to pay are the churches non-residential accounts. This program is about fairness and equity and it remains our primary objective with regards to the drainage program. Legally, all parcels must be billed regardless of

class. Whether it be residential, commercial, industrial, non-profit, or governmental. We must charge everyone. DWSD can collect up to \$10 million in revenue to help all customers pay less. To date, DWSD billed 385,000 parcels and 22,000 of those parcels are not being billed drainage. If we collect from those parcels, we can pass the savings to those who are paying too much. There is little to no impact on residential accounts. Today, residential pay \$20.36 monthly and the amount will not change except in very few circumstances. The department will continue to review the methodology, consider all appropriate credits and payments assistance available to help churches from adverse impact. We understand the good faith-based work the organizations provide to our community and will work with the churches, on credits, payment assistance and green infrastructure.

Councilman Andre Spivey, District 4 came before the Board representing the churches and also as a clergyperson. He said that his church received several letters and will be paying an extra \$1000 in drainage fees. Mr. Spivey said he is aware of what is needed to keep the system operating professionally and adequately. He argued DWSD did not educate citizens on the roll out of the drainage process. He asked for more information, education, extension of deadlines, and assistance to help the men and women of the community.

Councilwoman Mary Sheffield, District 5 came before the Board on behalf of the Ecumenical Community, ministers and water advocates who have advocated for a fair system. We are aware of the role our churches provide in the communities and to have this extra burden facing the community means so much to us and DWSD should very sensitive to that. She also said she supports all the churches that are present and suggested public hearings be held at a time that the working class are able to attend. She also stated that this drainage fee should have come before Council and she is awaiting legal counsel opinion.

Pastors

[16-0156](#)

Communication-Pastor Tellis J. Chapman

Attachments: [Communication-Pastor Chapman](#)

Reverend Lawrence Glass, Council of Baptist Pastors came before the Board to demand immediate suspension of the drainage fee.

Reverend David Bullock, Greater St. Matthew Baptist Church came before the Board disappointed in the logistics of the meeting. The location does not accommodate enough space to house the amount of people concerned with the issue at hand. He asked how do we bridge the gap between those who cannot pay? Why does it take a long time to switch water service?

Pastor Larry Bell, Vernon Chapel A.M.E. Church came before the Board to state that this tax will close many of the churches and the African American Community will be at a great deficit. Please find another way to financial your goals. Don't tax the church out of Detroit, or is this your intent?

Pastor Terrance Garrett, Baptist Fellowship of Detroit came before the Board to state that the drainage charge is an unjust way of taxing churches. This will damage any future relationship with the local government and the faith-based community.

Pastor Curtis C. Williams, Owner of Stinson Funeral Home and Trinity Chapel came before the Board with concern for the business community. He said his water bills are extremely large and he would be unable to pay this enormous bills at all three

locations. He said this is another way to move African American businesses and people out of the City of Detroit.

Gerald Davis, President of the Thursday Business Luncheon Group stated that the department should be accurate for water shut; bill paid - water shut off in error. The department do door knockers for businesses - common courtesy; accountability - company who made the mistake on door knockers should be fired; community input - the community should be involved with discussion on the shut-off protocol and drainage fees. The process is insulting to small business, churches and ratepayers. The method of operation needs to change.

Pastor Wallace Mill Jr., New Ebenezer Baptist Church appalled at the unauthorized fees place upon the churches and community business.

Robert Brieze representative of Redford Theater, non-profit for 40 years in the community. Every dollar we bring in goes back into the theater, we're all volunteers. Redford Theater purchased parking lots, now being penalized. Nonprofits ought to be exempt.

Brian Relford, Lomax Temple purchased several lots of land to help in area of blight, dumping, and safety. He asked that lots be tax-exempt.

Reverend Dr Steve Bland, Council of Baptist Pastors, requested the department put a moratorium on everything you're doing until we talk.

Pastor Roderick Richardson, Conventional Missionary Baptist Church-oppose to the tax fee.

Reverend Franklin Garrison of Grace Temple of God and Christ-asked the board to rescind this act. It is too much to put on the church. It is an ungodly act. Grace Temple feeds over one hundred families every month for the last eighteen years. If this tax is imposed, think about what happens to those people who have come to us for assistance if we have to close our doors.

Reverend Eleazar Merriweather, St. Paul A.M.E. Zion - the churches are anchors in the communities, provide many services and need as many resources as possible to stay at the local church level. Rescind this legislation.

Rick Barley, St. Paul Church stated we love the City and this drainage tax increase will not help us that are already struggling to maintain. We must come together and find the resources needed without breaking the backs of those who already service the City on a financially stretched budget.

Pastor Ronald L. Bailey, Clinton Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church-We have twelve churches that are located in poverty stricken areas. It is a disgrace and seems like it is a plan to force churches to close and move out the City. Why should pay for something that is an act of God? Appalled at the meeting place.

Pastor James Crowden, President Westside Minister Alliance-Why are churches and businesses being told to pay drainage? It is an act of God. Rescind fee.

Bishop DB Walker, Eastside Pastors -seniors have lost their homes because they cannot pay the water bill. Rescind fee.

William M Davis, Nurse Michelle George spoke on his behalf, National Action Network Public Health Nurses - this is about genderfication. Water is an act of God. If we have to file a civil lawsuit we will.

Pastor Nathan A. Proche, This drainage - snow and rain is an act of God. Our church had to close one building because of the Water Board. shut water off at the meter, the department told him there was a leak - how, if water is shut at meter? Please reconsider. There is a better way.

Bettie Blanden, resident complained of water in her basement.

Creighton Rippy, Greater Detroit Community Outreach asked how can a struggling non-profit organization sustain these exorbitant increases? What type of relief will be provided for churches and non-profits?

Alton Gunn, resident received a letter regarding drainage fee. Mr. Gunn is asking the department to check the account number and parcel number.

Bishop James A. Jennings, Shield of Faith Church asked whether consideration is being given to exempt churches and non-profit organizations?

Lila Cabbill, Peoples Water Board, argued this approach for paying the debt down is on the backs of the City. The citizens need to have a voice, the interest of corporations are being served; step up to allow us to come up with a win-win situation

Elder Roy Whitaker, Hope Presbyterian Church, their church has two meters and two bills. Each bill has a drainage charge. Is that double-dipping for the same building? How can this be addressed?

Nancy Kuykendall, Wayside Missionary Baptist Church, if the City operates on a unilateral system, what measuring device was utilized to separate sewage from water? How are rates determined and compared to rates imposed on suburban residents? If meters are being utilized to impose cost, how often will they be calculated and how often will the storm drains be cleaned out to insure we are not paying for drainage of other areas? Reveal the actual cost, the rates, and what sewage lines. Where are the holding tanks located within the City? What is the volume of the holding tank and how do the holding tanks figure into the costs that are being imposed on each area.

Sylvester Davis, resident asked why didn't the City state this drainage fee would be added to the property before the Mayor made the offer to buy vacant lots next to your property.

Tabitha L. Goodner, General Manager, Second Ebenezer Church, has worked for four years with DWSD with on-going excessive increases; attended planning and strategic meetings for education. Lets communicate, educate and disseminate the plan.

Pastor David Yarber, Davison Missionary Baptist Church, spent the last 20 years cutting vacant lots around the city, given the opportunity to purchase land, now being penalized. Please reconsider this approach.

Pastor Traci Blalock Phillips, Mt. Calvary A.M.E. Church - Ask for mercy on the exorbitant sewer fees and shut-offs. Their congregation has 20-25 senior citizens on fixed income; advocating for the people that I serve.

Pastor Matthew Cripps, Metro Life Church/Good News Gang -Have been in Detroit for over 25 years providing food assistance, after school tutoring, creative arts programs, basketball leagues, summer school, camps, etc. All free to hundreds of children in Detroit. The sewage/drainage charges will impact our programs severely.

Paster Clyde Jones, Faith Redemption Center Church, struggling to take care of business at hand, especially the water bill. Why such a mammoth increase? We provide food and clothing to the community and it is an unfair tax on the churches. Give us an opportunity to come to the table to provide our input.

Reverend Charles Daniel, Antioch Missionary Baptist Church asked the Board under what provision was this decision or law made? Its not legal, its an injustice. Reconsider.

Cora Linley, resident the drain behind the Saratoga Liquor store has a sink hole in the alley.

Pastor Leonard Jackson, Beth-el Community Church of God in Christ. Churches should be tax exempt.

Pastor Sylvester Sartin, New Canaan Baptist Church, 35 years city service. The church added a new parking lot, bought the lot across the street and farmed the property for the community. We are not a large church and cannot afford to pay a \$500 monthly water bill. Reconsider.

Pastor Homer Jamison, Baptist Missionary and Educational and State Convention representing over fifty churches. Appealed to Board to consider the hardship that it is placing on the church.

Harry T. Jolliffi Sr. Jefferson Chalmers requested a fair and honest meeting. Please provide a meeting location that will accommodate all who would like the opportunity to voice their concerns.

Cynthia A. Johnson, 1440 WMKM Radio Talk, Please don't appease us. Asking for honesty. The drainage fee is unfair. Suggested that public officials give up some of those cars that the taxpayers pay for. Give up the credit cards, give up exorbitant salaries. Eliminate those top-heavy positions.

Robin Partmon, concerned citizen, asked if the nonprofits are forced to close who will service the population that they service?

Paster J. Blacksher of EBD Ministries, A lot of homes have been demolished. It was documented that American Axle owed over \$3 million to the water board and was uncollected. Henry Ford Hospital owed millions of dollars to the water board-water is still running. DWSD is putting the weight on the people least able to help themselves.

Bishop John B Willis, Christian Liberty Community Church, this additional cost will affect businesses, lot owners, and cause a financial burden on the churches. I'm confident that this Board will do what is right.

Benita Willis, First Lady of Christian Liberty Community Church, wife of Bishop Willis who has stood firm and strong and has carried on his father's vision. Churches congregation is mainly seniors, retirees, and low-income. Barely surviving and cannot afford this increase.

Delores Turner, Wayside Missionary Baptist Church as a result of these increases many businesses will be lost; more crime.

Lynn Taylor, Buena Vista Net Properties, LLC- for 15 years fighting blight before it was a big deal; purchased four homes; needs help measuring the actual impervious

acre for home.

Chairman Einheuser stated that the words are not falling on death ears. Director Brown added that this was not a foregoing conclusion. Your comments have been heard and we are going to find ways in which the churches will not be adversely impacted. DWSD cannot use the rates to solve the poverty issues although we provide assistance. There are other City resources that can help the churches feed and clothe the hungry. We are going to find ways to help offset these costs. Any church that has purchased property out of the landbank should not be burden with paying the drainage charge. We have to find a creative way to solve the problem for churches. We have to work within the law on how we allocate rate dollars. Affordability- it's understood that there is a 40 percent poverty rate and we have to find ways to provide to the churches and non-profits green infrastructure credits that reduces the costs of the increases to the churches.

6. ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Davis reported that the HR committee discussed the plans for standup, policy book, organizational chart, providing emails and moving forward.

Commissioner Forte noted that the Finance committee will comment on the items that are presented on the agenda that are subsequent recommendations.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were none.

8. NEW BUSINESS

16-0119

The Board of Water Commissioners for the City of Detroit, Water and Sewerage Department **delegates its final approval authority, up to a maximum settlement amount of \$50,000.00 per claim, to the Director and the General Counsel for the settlement of all claims paid by DWSD**, and also authorizes the Director to take such other actions as may be necessary to accomplish the intent of this vote.

Sponsors: Office of the General Counsel

Attachments: [Dec 14 2012 Order](#)

amend motion delegate final authority to \$50,000

A motion was made by Commissioner Lane Coleman, seconded by Commissioner Linda Forte that this Resolution, BOWC, be approved as amended. The motion carried by an unanimous vote.

16-0138

The Board of Water Commissioners for the City of Detroit, Water and Sewerage Department **recommends adoption of the “Resolution Relating To Issuance By The Great Lakes Water Authority Of Water Supply System Revenue Bonds For The Benefit Of The Detroit Local Water Supply System,”** and also authorizes the Director to take such other action as may be necessary to accomplish the intent of this vote.

Sponsors: Hudson

Attachments: [Reimbursement Resolution\(27201993_8\)Att.](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Linda Forte, seconded by Commissioner Jane Garcia that this Resolution, BOWC, be approved. The motion carried by an unanimous vote.

9. DIRECTOR'S METRICS

[16-0143](#)

Director's Metrics

Sponsors: Brown

Attachments: [Board Report - Metrics - 09212016](#)

10. COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Blackmon said one comment she heard was the department's inability to get the information to the churches. She hopes the department will find a way to communicate to the communities and churches our plan of action and how the department will make this work for everyone.

Commissioner Forte said based on comments she heard, we haven't done our best job educating. Consider it a lesson learned - go out early, often and repeat message.

Commissioner Garcia said no matter what we would have done, it would not have mattered. She is requesting that we reconsider and look at how to make this work for all the residents, not just the churches or non-profits.

Director Brown stated that of the 200,000 accounts 175,000 resident accounts are not affected. We have to do a better job of educating; we will find a solution.

11. COMMENTS BY THE CHAIR

There were none.

12. OTHER MATTERS

There were none.

13. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Mary Blackmon, seconded by Commissioner Jane Garcia that this meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by an unanimous vote.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.