



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

735 Randolph  
Detroit, Michigan 48226  
(313) 224-4704 Office  
[www.dwsd.legistar.com](http://www.dwsd.legistar.com)

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Wednesday, November 15, 2017

6:00 PM

Roberto Clemente Recreation Center  
2631 Bagley Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48216

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## **Location and Time Change: 6:00 p.m. Regular Meeting**

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Einheuser called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

### **2. ROLL CALL**

**Present:** 4 - Commissioner Linda Forte, Commissioner John Henry Davis, Commissioner Michael Einheuser and Commissioner Pamela Rodgers

**Excused:** 3 - Commissioner Lane Coleman, Commissioner Jane Garcia and Commissioner Mary Blackmon

### **3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman Einheuser requested approval of the agenda.

Commissioner Coleman joined the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

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

**Excused:** 3 - Commissioner Coleman, Commissioner Garcia and Commissioner Blackmon

### **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chairman Einheuser requested approval of the minutes of October 18, 2017 and September 20, 2017.

**A motion was made by Commissioner John Henry Davis, seconded by Commissioner Pamela Rodgers that the minutes be approved. The motion carried by an unanimous vote.**

### **5. PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 minutes per speaker)**

1. William M. Davis with the Detroit Active Retirement Employee Association (DAREA) came before the Board about: 1) the lack of communication to employees and the union about the Hepatitis A incident at the Central Services Facility (CSF), 2) the drainage fee on Detroit citizens; why state and county roads are not impacted by the drainage charge, 3) are contractors utilizing water from fire hydrants contributing to citizens high water bills. Director Brown replied to the Hepatitis A incident and that he takes full responsibility for not communicating with the union.

2. Mamie Estes, 18015 Gruebner, asked the Board why it takes so long to post payment to an account; why is there a different charge for water, drainage and sewer; and how is drainage measured.

3. Arlene Douglas, 11838 Whitehill, came before the Board to ask are citizens that pay their water bill being charged more for those that do not pay? Chairman Einheuser replied rates are set according to the need of the department and those citizens that do not pay, are at the expense of those who do. Chairman Einheuser also stated the department's collection rate is much higher than its ever been and the rate increase is the smallest its ever been.

4. Lory Parks of the National Action Network came before the Board to ask when was the department aware of the hepatitis A incident, and when was the public informed? Chairman Einheuser reported that the hepatitis matter will be discussed later on the agenda. Ms. Parks also asked what programs and/or resources are available for residents in need of assistance when WRAP applications are closed?

5. Marie Thornton, Community Activist and Precinct Delegate 147, came before the Board with concern of the Hepatitis A incident and its effect on seniors.

6. Catherine Phillips with AFSCME and a retired 30 year employee with DWSD. She spoke of her relationship with DWSD for some 37 years in a union capacity. After the bifurcation the relationship had deteriorated. She said there is a total disregard and lack of communication with the union. The Hepatitis A is one of many incidences. The union had to file grievance to get witnesses heard. Our members and local leaders are very upset. Ms. Phillips stated the union has met with the Director and the HR Director but cannot get any results. The union should be made aware of matters that affect the people it represents. Ms. Phillips is asking the Board to intervene.

7. Tracy Reynolds with AFSCME Local 2920 came before the Board and read a statement about how the department is required to comply with the federal, state and local legislation as it relates to usage or storage of hazardous materials, incident, or contagious diseases in the work area. DWSD willfully neglected to inform the local president of any testing or precautionary measures.

8. Josephine Smith, 2232 S. Ethel, came before the Board to ask how the drainage fee is determined.

9. Mike Shane, 16815 Patton, came before the Board regarding high water bills and the associated discharged fees. He said it appears that rain water exceeds the amount of sewage charges. He also said it appears as if the discharge fee is a backdoor way for citizens to pay for expenses that should be charged in another manner. The landbank should pay their share of the discharge fee for homes they own instead of the poorest citizens of Detroit whose water services are being shutoff. We should not be subsidizing everybody else in the city or system. The discharge fee should be eliminated and we deserve a refund.

10. Don Johnson, 20501 Mark Twain, with the 12th Precinct Community Relations came before the Board for an explanation (layman terms) of the drainage fees and how they are calculated.

11 Renla Session, 14149 Rutherford St., came before the Board to oppose the drainage fee charge.

12. Russ Bellant, 19619 Helen, came before the Board regarding the drainage fee charge and to speak about the lack of response to years' of running water and blocked basins.

13. Rick Robertson, 2122 Prince Hall Drive, came before the Board regarding the drainage fee.

Commissioner Blackmon joined in the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

14. Will Taylor came before the Board to voice his concern of the unfair water tax on residence. He asked how are seniors on fixed income expected to pay this additional fee.

15. Pastor Bullock of Bethany Baptist Church came before the Board regarding the drainage fee. He wants to know how this fee came about. The citizens should be appraised of any fee or tax that burdens our ability to pay. This tax will cause citizens to flee and will diminish the place where we desire to reside.

16. Pastor David Bullock of Greater St. Matthew Baptist Church in Highland Park came before the Board to echo many of the comments. He spoke of how Greater St. Matthew church has redeemed about 100 lots and being taxed per lot, per month. He believes the drainage fee is an unfair and unauthorized tax. The citizens should have an opportunity to decide if we want to pay for rain and snow. We are given opportunity to decide on medical marijuana and adult clubs. The citizens of Detroit already have difficulty paying their water bill. Adding the drainage fee will increase the difficulty. Seniors are on a fixed income and cannot pay. Delinquent water bills are placed on your property taxes and can cause home foreclosure or rent increase. The city has lost thousands of residents. Pastor Bullock asked if Ford Field, Olympia Entertainment, the landbank, and financial institutions pay a drainage fee.

17. Kathy Montgomery, 14421 Warrick, with Change Agent Consortium came before the Board about the unfair drainage fees imposed on residents and churches. The people that live in the city support the churches. Without the contributions the churches and businesses will not survive. Ms. Montgomery asked why Detroit is the only city paying the drainage fees. She opposes the fee and believes they should be eliminated. She also asked if all residents and churches being charged these fees or our certain one exempted.

18. Wendell Hardaway, 14864 Stout, came before the Board to oppose the drainage fee and how it's affecting the citizens of Detroit. Everything continues to increase. We are dealing with high insurance costs. The city encouraged homeowners to purchase lots adjacent to their homes now we're being taxed. The citizens are asking for reconsideration of this tax.

19. Eric Porter, 1615 W. Canfield St., came before the Board to ask about 1) unauthorized tax, 2) bad tax for the city; 3) who authorized this tax?

20. Lavinia Mateo, 788 Randall Dr., came before the Board to ask why vacant lots are being charged a water bill.

21. Demeeco Williams, Chief Director of Hydrate Detroit came before the Board to address the Hepatitis A syndrome and the public health of our city. He asked what has the City of Detroit and the Water Department done to address this matter. Mr. Williams expressed that he cannot pay and will not pay. He asked had there been any

consideration on the impact of this fee on citizens. Shutoffs are devastating the community. The fee need to be abolished.

22. Brenda Elam, 8286 Kentucky, came before the Board to ask how the drainage fee is calculated.

23. Heidi Knox came before the Board to dispute the drainage fee. It's a human right.

24. Christie Allen came before the Board for an explanation of the drainage fee.

25. Brenda Hilton came before the Board to express her concern for the citizens who love their city. She believes the city will live like Flint. How does an entity go from solvent to insolvent? Citizens are living like a third world country. It's unlawful and illegal.

26. Ms. Gillford came before the Board to state for the record that the drainage tax is illegal and suggest that the Board do an audit and inform the citizens as to where this money is being used. She asked if the Board members were Detroit residents.

27. Ms. Gideon came before the Board regarding a \$269 bill; she is not getting a bill.

28. Twanda Morris came before the Board to ask why the citizens are being charged for God's water; is the pipeline that runs from Canada to Detroit being monitored? She also requested the BOWC's contact information.

Director Brown stated that the next community meeting will focus on the budget and drainage.

## 6. COMMUNICATIONS

### A. [17-0174](#) F.O.I.A. Request

Sponsors: Pospiech

Attachments: [FOIA Requests to Date-Redacted](#)

**This Communication or Report was received and filed.**

## 7. ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

### A. Committee Updates

There were none.

## 8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were none.

## 9. NEW BUSINESS

**A. Hepatitis A Vaccination**

Director Brown reported there was not an outbreak of the Hepatitis A in the City of Detroit. Detroit has the safest water in the City and the world. On November 9, 2017, DWSD was notified by the Health Department that an employee had tested positive for Hepatitis A. Out of precaution, staff was directed to provide the vaccine to DWSD and GLWA employees. There were 82 DWSD and 16 GLWA employees vaccinated. Seventy-six DWSD employees declined the vaccination. The flu vaccination was also offered. There is no outbreak of Hepatitis A and no correlation that it comes from the water. Our employees work in a sewer environment and we thought the best measure was to offer the vaccinations. Director Brown apologized to the union for not informing them of the matter. There are written policies and procedures in place to ensure this does not happen again. There has been a cordially relationship over the many years that we have worked together and look forward to strengthening that relationship.

Commissioner Garcia asked what precaution is the department taking? Director Brown reported the department took action because it was a DWSD employee. It is the health department responsibility to inform the public on health issues. It is not DWSD's responsibility to inform the public about any facts related to health issues. This did not come from the water, if it had, we would have taken a stronger public stance on notification.

**B. [17-0179](#)****Water Assistance Program Presentation**

**Sponsors:** Brown

**Attachments:** [DWSD Becoming an Anchor Institution in the Community](#)

Director Brown reported the majority of Detroit customers are paying their bills on time. There are twenty thousand customers receiving assistance. There is less than one percent of the 175,000 customers that are currently at risk of shutoff. We have made progress in the shutoff aspect, but there is still a lot a work in communicating the drainage fee to customers. Wayne Metro is the department's Community Action Agency that delivers services to our customers. They provide other services and are here to help assist with light, gas, or other needs. Staff are on-hand to assist customers with appointments.

Louis D. Piszker, CEO of Wayne Metro Community Action Agency provided the agency's call center number at 313-388-9799; hours of operation: Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The organization help customers with a variety of programs and services, Wayne Metro provide programs in three major areas: 1) Utility Assistance-Wayne Metro is the administer of the WRAP program since inception in March 2016. Approximately 7,000 customers are enrolled in the program and we have administer approximately \$6.5 million to keep citizens out of shutoff. We help with heating bills. There is approximately \$2 million designated for utility assistance (e.g., THAW). We offer conservation classes. 2) Community and Economic Development provide foreclosure/eviction prevention. We assist with the state benefits program. We help with case management assistance for customers in the LSP program-payment plan with DTE. 3) Youth and family services, community gardens, and feeding programs. All programs are free. We are IRS certified and provide financial assistance for credit issues, and income taxes. We are here to serve the citizens.

Jerome Drain, Wayne Metro Community Relations Director was also present.

## Wrap Program

Director Brown reported that about eighteen months ago there were approximately 44,000 customers shutoff. There were 50,000 eligible for shutoff. Today, there are about 2,000 (less than 1 percent of our customer base) eligible for shutoff. There is a 95 percent customer base in the PPA. There are currently about 7,000 customers enrolled in the program. The average customer arrears is \$663. The average bill is \$72. There is one qualification for enrollment in the program. Customers must be 150 percent at or below the poverty level (\$36,000 for a family of 4). The department provides plumbing assistance (fix plumbing up to \$1000). Customers above the poverty level will be placed in a payment plan arrangement (first-time PPA at 10 percent down).

The Chair called a five-minute recess at 7:43 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 7:48 p.m.

**This Communication or Report was received and filed.**

**C.      [17-0181](#)      Prime Midtown Redevelopment Opportunity-90 Stimson**

**Sponsors:**      Brown

**Attachments:**      [90 Stimson Marketing Package 2 printout](#)

**This Communication or Report was received and filed.**

**D.      [17-0182](#)      The Board of Water Commissioners for the City of Detroit, Water and Sewerage Department authorizes the Director to grant **an increase of \$180,960.00 in the contract price and an extension of two (2) years for Contract No. PS-1785 “Individual Personal Services Contract” with Leslie King (Consultant)**, and also authorizes the Director to take such other action as may be necessary to accomplish the intent of this vote.**

**Sponsors:**      Financial Services

**A motion was made by Commissioner Pamela Rodgers, seconded by Commissioner Lane Coleman that this Contract be approved. The motion carried by an unanimous vote.**

**10.      DIRECTOR'S METRICS**

**A.      [17-0180](#)      Director's Metrics**

**Sponsors:**      Brown

**Attachments:**      [Board Report - Metrics - 11152017F](#)

**This Communication or Report was received and filed.**

**11.      COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS**

**There were none.**

**12. COMMENTS BY THE CHAIR**

Chairman Einheuser on behalf of the Board thanked everyone for attending and was appreciative of the participation.

**13. OTHER MATTERS**

There were none.

**14. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Einheuser requested a motion to adjourn.

**A motion was made by Commissioner John Henry Davis, seconded by Commissioner Lane Coleman that this meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by an unanimous vote.**

**There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.**