

Augusta Water

Called Board Meeting - Retreat, Thursday, February 15, 2024, at 9:50 a.m.

Frontier Culture Museum Lecture Hall

PRESENT: Andrew C. Middleton, Chairman, North River District
 Garry R. Gordon, Vice Chairman, Middle River District
 Harvey Almarode, South River District
 Allen Dahl, Beverley Manor District
 Matthew Egeli, Wayne District
 Michael L. Shull, Riverheads District
 Timothy Simmons, Pastures District
 Phil Martin, Executive Director
 Brent Canterbury, Board Treasurer
 Jean Marshall, Board Secretary

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CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:50 a.m.

Freedom of Information Act, Conflict of Interest Act, and Governance History

Mr. Randy Perdue, legal counsel for Augusta Water gave a PowerPoint training presentation on the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Conflict of Interest Act (COIA), and Governance History to Board members and Staff.

The Freedom of Information Act

This act affords the public the right to access public records from governmental agencies, including authorities, and requires such agencies and authorities to disclose any information requested unless the information is protected by mandated exclusions included in the Act.

Mr. Egeli asked if there are any consequences in using a personal email account to conduct Augusta Water business. Mr. Perdue stated both personal and business email accounts are subject to FOIA requests, if used for conducting Augusta Water business. He recommends each Board member utilize their official Augusta Water email account to conduct Augusta Water business. Using the official account avoids the need for personal or business emails to be accessed in response to FOIA requests.

Mr. Simmons asked what the retention period is for emails and text messages. Mrs. Marshall stated it depends on who sends or receives the correspondence. Most correspondence is required to be retained for three years.

Mr. Egeli expressed concern regarding Board members certifying matters discussed in closed sessions and feels the certifications by each Board member may not be specific enough. Dr. Middleton and Mrs. Marshall explained how the certification process is handled after each closed session. Mr. Perdue stated he will research Virginia code and verify the process is being handled correctly.

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The Conflict of Interest Act

This act assures public officers and employees of governmental agencies, including authorities, will be guided by a law that defines and prohibits inappropriate conflicts and requires disclosure of economic interests.

There were no questions or comments by the Board members regarding COIA.

Governance History

Mr. Perdue presented the Governance History of Augusta Water since its creation in 1966 and any Articles of Amendment, By-laws, and Resolutions created, adopted, or changed since then. Mr. Perdue also cited state codes which regulate the creation and operation of an Authority.

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Records Management

Mrs. Marshall gave a PowerPoint presentation on Records Management. She discussed the objectives of a Records Management program, the importance of having a Records Management plan in place, and the consequences of not having such a plan. She also cited and explained several state codes regarding records management and retention of records. She explained what a record is as defined by state code, and the difference between the Official Record and “copies” of the record.

Mr. Egeli expressed concern regarding the absence of a written Records Management policy at Augusta Water.

Mr. Egeli asked what the retention period is for emails between Board members. Mrs. Marshall explained the retention period for emails between Board members, except Chairpersons, is three years. The Chairperson’s emails are permanent records.

Mr. Egeli asked if a written records management policy requiring the Board members to conduct business using the Augusta Water email would assist in retention matters for email records. Mrs. Marshall stated, it would be beneficial if a written policy was in place outlining email requirements for Board members. Casey McCracken, Director of IT at Augusta Water, pointed out while email is a media for correspondence, the content in any particular email is what will determine the type of record it is.

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2024 Draft Strategic Plan

Mr. Martin presented the draft version of the 2024 Strategic Plan to the Board. He discussed the existing Values, Vision, and Mission statements, as well as any suggested revisions to these statements as outlined in the presentation. The suggested revisions are based on input from the Augusta Water’s departmental directors and the Executive Director, as well as guidance from Mr. Perdue. The only revisions to the Vision and Mission statements is the organization name change from Augusta County Service Authority to Augusta Water.

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Mr. Martin reviewed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified in the draft plan. Strengths include good customer service and customer interaction; Board commitment to competitive salary and benefits; skilled employees exhibiting knowledge, reliability, dedication, confidence, flexibility and ethics; commitment to regulatory compliance and good inter-agency relationships; prioritizing safety and providing all employees with the necessary PPE and equipment; stable water sources and available treatment capacity in designated growth areas; effective landfill management for extension of landfill life.

Dr. Middleton suggested the strengths should also include the fact many of Augusta Water's employees hold licenses which are essential to their work. He also suggested adding the wording "other equipment beneficial to the performance of employee's activities" be added to the strength regarding PPE. He requested the wording "stable water sources" be changed to "stable and pristine water sources".

Weaknesses include challenges of a wide-spread service area with limited communication; continued confusion of identity and roles between Augusta County and Augusta Water; insufficient staff, technology and planning to allow for analyzation of data; limited resources to support long range and emergency planning; outdated website for Augusta Water and no dedicated website for Augusta Regional Landfill; and inability to take credit card payments at the Landfill scales or accept online Landfill payments.

Mr. Martin explained the opportunities in the Strategic Plan include increasing and enhancing employee development; cohesion and appreciation; increasing public education on the roles, duties, and functions of Augusta Water as an independent organization; increasing and enhancing capabilities and usage of technology resources and software; continue to promote a safe work environment where employees feel empowered to speak up about safety issues; continue training for supervisors; develop additional water treatment capacity; negotiate and develop additional Middle River WWTP capacity; continue to enhance workforce understanding of their part in the organization; and assist financially distressed customers and potential customers.

Mr. Martin stated the threats outlined in the Strategic Plan include loss of employees to competing employers and inability to hire new employees; loss of key or tenured employees with critical responsibilities; cyber-attacks on technology or financial systems and physical attacks on water and wastewater facilities; regulatory changes; potential for violent incidents involving the public; volatile pricing and availability of critical commodities and loss of marketplace competition; aging or unsupported infrastructure and equipment; and intrusion of politics.

Mr. Martin stated the goals of the Strategic Plan are to budget and deploy necessary infrastructure and resources to improve communication connectivity where possible and support emergency responses; budget and deploy more networked cameras, automated gates, access control, and remote monitoring and control of sites; evaluate options for hybrid remote work and flexible scheduling; budget for and implement an updated website for Augusta Water and dedicated website for Augusta Regional Landfill; form an "Augusta Water Stakeholders Committee" comprised of both Staff and Board members; develop and schedule annual new supervisor and refresher trainings and evaluate developing or purchasing on-demand training content; develop master plan/life cycle plan for replacing aging infrastructure and equipment

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with supporting budget; develop master plans, incorporating data use cases around technology systems, emergency responses, and necessary support functions; increase training for software systems; and evaluate purchase of in-house grade control technology for the Augusta Regional Landfill.

Mr. Martin state, the next steps will be to incorporate any changes or recommendations made by the Board into the plan; organize the goals into categories and assign specific staff who will be responsible for specific goals; submit the final plan to the Board for approval; publish the final plan and present it to all employees at quarterly meetings.

There were no further questions or comments by the Board members regarding the proposed 2024 Strategic Plan.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Board members thanked Mr. Martin and Staff for organizing today’s event and felt it was very productive and informative.

Mrs. Marshall clarified to the Board members Augusta Water staff is following state code regarding records retention, even though there is not a written Records Management policy in place. Progress is being made towards the management of records in departments and at the off-site facilities.

Mr. Egeli stated, regarding his earlier expressed concern regarding records management, he was not implying Augusta Water is in violation of the law, but feels it would be beneficial to have a written policy in place.

Mrs. Marshall explained the process for a written policy was started about four years ago, but due to staffing changes, the process has been stalled.

Mr. Martin stated, with an organization the size of Augusta Water, records management is a huge undertaking, as records are being created every day. He reminded the Board until about four years ago, there had not been any records management processes in place.

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There being no further discussion, Mr. Gordon moved, seconded by Mr. Egeli to adjourn the meeting at 3:15 p.m.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas:	Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Dahl, and Egeli
Nays:	None
Absent:	Shull and Simmons

Motion approved.

Board Secretary

Chairman