Aqua Illinois Advisory Council

Tuesday, September 17, 2024

7:00 PM

Attendees:

* David Carter, Aqua Illinois
* Michelle Buffenbarger, Aqua Illinois
* Areca Van Mill, Aqua Illinois
* Tracy Fullen, Aqua Illinois
* Andy Price, Aqua Illinois
* Keli Hodges, Aqua Illinois
* Alan Stark, Aqua Illinois
* Lyle Staab, Advisory Council Member
* Appaji Valavala, Advisory Council Member
* Susan Bauers, Advisory, Council Member
* Chrissy Williams, Advisory Council Member
* Nancy Gold, Advisory Council Member
* Somesh Surapureddi, Advisory Council Member
* Paul Zucker, Advisory Council Member

**Welcome and Opening Remarks**

* David Carter introduced himself and Aqua leadership. Advisory Council members (ACM) introduced themselves.

**Update**

* David Carter walked through an update forHawthorn Woods, Kildeer and Lake County. He covered system monitoring, emergency response, infrastructure and communications updates particularly in regard to the July 19th incident.

**July Hydrant Branch Break Case Study**

* David Carter discussed the hydrant branch break that occurred on July 19th which Aqua was able to remedy in one day. He covered the positives of the situation including how Aqua responded to the issue in less than an hour as they were alerted by the new SCADA monitoring system, water trucks were on standby and no customers lost water service.
* David Carter outlined the future improvements to implement in the aftermath of the break such as clearer communication, quicker updates to the outage map and website, and better information surrounding the criteria for a boil water advisory.
* David Carter showed a map illustrating where the main break occurred and shared a video of the water flowing out of the break. Carter showed a photo of the hydrant and where the break occurred within the pipes.
  + AC member asked how far the main line is off Midlothian.
  + Michelle Buffenbarger answered that the main is about 5 feet off the edge of the road; however, the pipe leading to the hydrant was approximately 30' +/-.

**Water Treatment Plant Project**

* Aqua leadership presented the construction timeline for the upcoming water treatment plant project. Construction began in July 2021 and is expected to be completed in Spring 2025, weather permitting and assuming no equipment delays.
* Aqua leadership shared the infrastructure investment into the second new water treatment plant which will include a 2,250 square foot building to house the ion exchange water filtration equipment. The project cost is estimated as $3 million invested in construction and $5 million for the total project.

**Rate Case Update**

* David Carter provided updates on the ICC hearings which occurred in Crystal Lake in July and Bourbonnais in August of this year. Carter discussed the impact in Hawthorn woods and how the new improvements made by Aqua will enhance system reliability through the new water treatment plant.
* David Carter discussed the next step is the ICC deciding on the rate case by the end of 2024.

**Open Forum and Discussion**

* ACM asked who initiated the public hearings and was it at the request of others?
  + David Carter responded the ICC does and it was done due to a request from someone at the central division.
  + ACM followed up asking if there was a reason the utility wouldn’t do it automatically.
  + David Carter responded that Aqua Illinois held a public meeting for Hawthorn Woods and conducts them in specific locations but not universally.
  + ACM asked about the new development near Old McHenry and whether Aqua will do the engineering for the proposed development.
  + David Carter replied that they have not started doing any engineering there and that it would be up to the village whether Aqua would support the project and move forward with it.
  + Tracey Fullen added that Aqua will not do the engineering, but that will be up to the developer. She also pointed out that the project would not be paid for by the rate payers.
  + David Carter adds that once the developer provides the engineering, Aqua will have to determine if it can provide water to the newly built homes.
  + ACM asked when the engineering and water resource decision would be made.
  + Tracey Fullen answered that if it is outside of the certificated area, there are several things that need to happen before Aqua can serve it.
  + ACM asked who does the permitting on this area and whether Aqua can accommodate this new large area. ACM asked would it benefit Aqua to have Michigan water?
  + David Carter answered that Aqua is doubling available capacity, building a new plant, so Aqua can serve many more homes. Carter said that Aqua would be willing to look at a Lake Michigan water supply, but it’s not a bottomless source. Every bit of water allocated must be spoken for and justified. Carter also said that water would be significantly more expensive if we used Lake Michigan water.
* ACM questioned why Aqua can’t send text message alerts after 9:00 p.m. and whether it applies to the information available on the app.
  + David Carter responded that customers can see the disruption map from the app, the communications blocks were for the water smart alerts.
  + Keli Hodges says it is company policy to follow the Consumer Protection Act, which prevents calls and texts to customers after 9:00 p.m.
* ACM questioned the location of the meeting minutes on the Aqua homepage.ACM followed up with when there will be flags on the hydrants at the Hawthorn Hills.
  + Michelle Buffenbarger answered that they are waiting on materials and plan for it to be completed before winter.
  + ACM asked if they could open council membership to interested people who missed the first round and want to join now.
  + David Carter answered that Aqua certainly could but want to manage the size of the council.
  + ACM followed up by asking if members can suggest items for meeting agendas and if the meetings will be on zoom moving forward. ACM asked how often the meetings would occur.
  + David Carter responded that members could suggest items for the agendas, the meetings will be on zoom moving forward and will occur quarterly.
* ACM noted that they appreciate the meetings being virtual. ACM questioned the cause of the notification blockage for outages from 9:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. and where does that come from?
  + Keli Hodges answered that that Aqua is looking into doing text message or email.
  + ACM noted that the calls that come in as “Unknown” and that it looks like spam. ACM asked whether Aqua can put a contact name on it because people might be ignoring the calls, thinking they are spam and not getting the updates.
  + Keli Hodges responded that she would find out if she could make a contact name for the number for it.
* ACM requested that the Zoom meeting links be sent to everyone on the council and not just those that RSVP.
  + Aqua leadership said they will do that going forward.

**Adjournment**