

**MINUTES OF COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE WATER WORKS BOARD OF THE CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
May 16, 2024**

A Communications Committee meeting of the directors of The Water Works Board of the City of Birmingham was held on Thursday, May 16, 2024 at 11:00 a.m.

The following Committee members were present: Committee Chairman Tom Henderson, Tereshia Huffman (via phone), and William Burbage. Director George Munchus was also in attendance.

Others present were: Michael Johnson, General Manager; Derrick Murphy, Iris Fisher, and Philip King, Assistant General Managers; Cynthia Williams, Board Administrator; Anitra Clark, Corporate Governance Specialist; Elyse Page, Executive Assistant to the General Manager; Rick Jackson, Michael Tartt, Joi Dulaney, Rosalind Jones, Colandus Mason, Jeff Wade, Charles McGee, Jessica Fadlevich, Marsha Hammonds and David Walker, BWB Employees; K. Mark Parnell, Parnell Thompson, LLC; Kelvin Howard, Kelvin W. Howard, LLC; Alan Kouns, State of Alabama Attorney General's Office; Bill Todd, and Angela Riley, O2 Ideas; Lindsey McAdory, CBG Strategies; and Clay Conner, InfoMedia.

Chairman Henderson declared a quorum in attendance.

Chairman Henderson called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. and Rick Jackson, Public Relations Manager opened the meeting with prayer.

Following, Chairman Henderson asked the Committee to approve the agenda. Director Huffman requested to add an item to the agenda, a proposal from Southeast Research to perform a Customer/Public Opinion Survey. She questioned whether the handout was distributed to the Committee. The General Manager responded yes. A copy of the handout is on file in Diligent. Director Huffman made a motion to add Southeast Research to the agenda and Director Burbage seconded the motion. Director Burbage questioned whether the item would follow the third agenda item and Director Huffman responded yes. Board Attorney Mark Parnell stated the votes taken by the Committee would need to be recorded via roll call since Director Huffman participated by phone. Chairman Henderson called for the vote, and it was recorded as follows: Director Huffman, Yes; Director Burbage, Yes; and Chairman Henderson, Yes. On a motion duly made and seconded, the addition of agenda item 4 was approved by unanimous vote. Next, Chairman Henderson made a motion to approve the agenda and Director Burbage seconded the motion. Chairman Henderson called for the vote, and it was recorded as follows: Director Huffman, Yes; Director Burbage, Yes; and Chairman Henderson, Yes. On a motion duly made and seconded, the agenda was approved by unanimous vote.

Following, the Committee moved to the first item on the agenda, Request Committee to approve the minutes from Communications Committee Meeting held February 9, 2024. Director Burbage made a motion to approve the minutes and Director Huffman seconded the motion. Chairman Henderson called for the vote, and it was recorded as follows: Director Huffman, Yes; Director Burbage, Yes; and Chairman Henderson, Yes. On a motion duly made and seconded, the item was approved by unanimous vote.

Next, the Committee moved to Reports of Officers. Chairman Henderson expressed his gratitude for BWWB Employees' hard work during the recent water outage at Western Filter Plant. Chairman Henderson stated everyone did a great job and he appreciates the Board. The General Manager expressed his gratitude for all the hard work from the community, community leaders, BWWB employees, and Western Filter Plant. The General Manager stated at the next Board meeting, scheduled on Wednesday, May 22, 2024, there would be an item to recognize everyone who participated in resolving the water outage.

Following, the Committee moved to the second item on the agenda, Request Committee to hear an update on the 2024 J.D. Power U.S. Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study. Rick Jackson, Public Relations Manager gave an overview of their findings and stated the Board voted to approve a subscription with J.D. Power. Mr. Jackson stated the J.D. Power study measures satisfaction among residential customers of 92 water utilities across the U.S. that deliver water to populations of at least 400,000. He stated the results are reported for eight (8) geographic regions in two (2) size categories, and BWWB falls under the South Midsize geographic region. He stated the study examined customer satisfaction across six factors: Quality and Reliability, Price, Conservation, Billing and Payment, Communications, and Customer Service. Mr. Jackson gave an overview of BWWB's findings from the study, which also included a comparison to the other utilities in the South Midsize region and the study average. In the area of communications, Mr. Jackson stated BWWB does well with communicating to customers in several areas from media news stories, utility communications, and customers utilizing the online bill payment system. Next, Mr. Jackson gave an overview of how alerts are received. He stated BWWB does not utilize a text messaging service. He stated email is ranked in line with best in class and the study average. He stated phone calls exceeded the study average, and indicated BWWB utilizes the phone system regularly, that includes robocalls and messaging about water main breaks. He stated BWWB's social media presence could be improved in relation to the study average. Mr. Jackson stated BWWB currently does not have a mobile app; however, the website usage is ranked in line with the study average, as customers are utilizing their cell phones to access the website for bill pay. In the area of quality and reliability, Mr. Jackson stated BWWB showed improvement in terms of customers not experiencing service interruptions or water quality problems. He then brought attention to BWWB water quality, and stated his team plans to continue messaging, so that customers can trust the water is safe to drink and be the number one choice of beverage. Next, Mr. Jackson pointed out areas BWWB could improve including customer service, conservation, watershed protection, more positive stories from communications, and improvements to the website related to billing and payment. He stated conservation needs improvement with customers having an awareness of water conservation programs. In the area of customer service, Mr. Jackson stated BWWB is always trying to improve by solving problems with first contact resolution. Subsequently, Mr. Jackson reviewed the next steps with J.D. Power, and stated on Wednesday, May 15, 2024, his team participated in a webcast hosted by J.D. Power, and listened to the other utilities who scored high on this study. He stated he plans to participate at the Utility Client Conference, September 25-26, 2024, in Tampa, Florida, and indicated there will be direct communication with the representatives from J.D. Power and the high-ranking utilities to talk about best practices and how BWWB can move forward before the next study in May 2025. Also, Mr. Jackson stated he will facilitate a meeting with J.D. Power and the BWWB leadership team to incorporate improvement efforts within our communications strategy. Director Burbage questioned the previous slide under Customer Service. Mr. Jackson responded J.D. Power did not receive survey answers from our area regarding the Ease of moving in or transferring service and stated the last column of the chart was left blank.

Next, the Committee moved to the third item on the agenda, Request Committee to recommend to the Board to approve a scope of services with InfoMedia, to redesign the Birmingham Water Works website, www.bwwb.org, at an out-of-pocket cost of \$54,000.00; and to authorize the General Manager and/or the Assistant General Manager to execute the necessary documents. Director Burbage then made a motion to approve the item and Director Huffman seconded the motion. Colandus Mason, Information Technology Manager, provided a brief overview of the website design project. Mr. Mason stated the purpose of the project is to improve the customer service experience, enhance BWWB's online presence, and to create robust communication between customers and BWWB. He stated the team members assigned to this project are Information Technology, Public Relations, and Customer Service. Mr. Mason stated during this process, team members identified what is needed to enhance the customer experience, improve online presence, and increase communications. Mr. Mason gave an overview of revisions for the website including adding bios of the Board of Directors and creating more focus on the About Us section to tell a story about BWWB by utilizing more images and videos. Mr. Mason stated during the requirement gathering phase, the team demoed three vendors, and the preferred vendor recommended was InfoMedia. He stated InfoMedia proposed to offer unlimited documented pages, About Us video to include drone footage which would highlight the four water treatment plants and focus on website accessibility to help visual and hearing-impaired customers. Mr. Mason then recognized Clay Conner, InfoMedia Partner, to provide an overview of the design and development of the website proposal. Mr. Conner stated InfoMedia is a 30-year-old web strategy agency, one of the longest-running web development companies in the United States. He stated historically, the company has been able to serve several utilities, including Trussville Gas and Water, and Southeast Gas; and worked with some of Birmingham's biggest companies. Mr. Conner stated InfoMedia has a focus on strategy, building a website that meets the needs by speaking to the different customers that come to the website. Mr. Conner stated the team consists of 8-10 people working cohesively, to create a website that adds value to the organization. He then gave an overview of their approach in four phases: Strategy, Design, Development, and Support, and indicated tools will be provided to BWWB to manage all aspects of the website design content. Mr. Conner stated his team will redesign the home page and interior web pages with a design that is highly functional and accessible; and incorporate video/drone footage. Mr. Conner stated InfoMedia understands the utility landscape and would love to bring that experience to BWWB. Next, the General Manager questioned the timing of the project. Mr. Conner responded five to six months. Director Munchus questioned the usage of the drone and the safety of surveying the water plants. The General Manager responded caution will be used with any drone footage from a security standpoint. Director Huffman questioned whether there was any input given from the Committee Chairman Henderson, Public Relations, or Customer Service to see what changes needs to be made from those viewpoints before this presentation, to help make a decision. The General Manager responded there were meetings coordinated by Mr. Mason, and discussions with all staff that have activities that would impact the website, such as Customer Service, and each Assistant General Manager. He then stated he was unsure whether Assistant General Manager Philip King participated. The General Manager stated the website was reviewed, questions were asked, and the next step was to present to the Communications Committee. Director Huffman questioned whether this was the first time Chairman Henderson was presented with the website proposal, and if there was any input before this meeting. The General Manager responded no, and stated the proposal was not discussed with any of the Directors beforehand. Director Huffman stated when she and the General Manager met last year, this was an item that she wanted to move forward, but she was unaware of further discussions had taken place. She indicated that she did

not receive a follow-up on this discussion, and this was the first time she's heard of anything regarding this item. She reiterated she wanted to know whether Chairman Henderson received information regarding this item since last year. The General Manager responded the process would be for the Committee to review the website and see if there are questions. Chairman Henderson asked for Mr. Conner to point out the significant differences with the current website. Mr. Conner responded BWWB's current website is not user friendly, and it needs to be simplified and clarified. He stated there is a need to elevate the aesthetic to meet the different needs. Mr. Jackson added to Mr. Conners' comments and stated Public Relations has received feedback from customers regarding difficulties navigating the website. Mr. Jackson stated upgrading the website would be a great platform for Public Relations, in terms of continuing to tell a story, and recruitment opportunities for Customer Service, Public Relations, and Human Resources. He stated there were several discussions leading to the decision of recommending InfoMedia to elevate the current website. Chairman Henderson questioned whether a plan is in place to communicate with customers about the changes to the website and prepare them for the change. Mr. Jackson responded yes, and indicated going forward with InfoMedia, BWWB will have the ability to continue maintenance by communicating with the vendor to make adjustments, as feedback is received from customers. He stated Public Relations will send out a communication plan as the website is being updated. Mr. Conner stated every tool will be available to the internal team to be able to communicate information to customers. Subsequently, Chairman Henderson called for the vote, and it was recorded as follows: Director Huffman, Yes; Director Burbage, Yes; and Chairman Henderson, Yes. On a motion duly made and seconded, the item was approved by unanimous vote.

Following, the Committee moved to the fourth item on the agenda, Request Committee to recommend to the Board to approve an agreement with Southeast Research to perform a Customer/Public Opinion Survey at a total out-of-pocket cost to the Board of \$69,000.00. Director Huffman made a motion to approve the item and Director Burbage seconded the motion. Director Huffman stated the recommendation came to the Committee after recent events at BWWB that include the Employees' Association vote of no confidence, recent water outage, and the survey findings by J.D. Power. She indicated the importance of the Board having a more detailed survey conducted. She stated this survey not only involves customers, but also local leaders, such as the Mayor's Council and other elected officials. Chairman Henderson called for the vote, and it was recorded as follows: Director Huffman, Yes; Director Burbage, Yes; and Chairman Henderson, Yes. On a motion duly made and seconded, the item was approved by unanimous vote.

Next, Director Huffman made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Director Burbage seconded the motion. Chairman Henderson called for the vote, and it was recorded as follows: Director Huffman, Yes; Director Burbage, Yes; and Chairman Henderson, Yes. On a motion duly made and seconded, the motion was approved by unanimous vote, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:39 a.m.

Michael Johnson
General Manager

/s/

Thomas Henderson
Communications Committee Chairman

/s/

Tereshia Huffman
Director

/s/

William Burbage
Director