

TAYLOR COASTAL WATER & SEWER DISTRICT

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MINUTES OF REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

October 17, 2024

1. The meeting was held at the District Building at 6:00 PM on October 17, 2024. Commissioners Mike Hunter, Michael Lynn, Jan Walker, Gayle Lundy, and Randy Hathcock were present. TCWSD Staff present were Kristi Hathcock and Lynette Senter. The Board's attorney, J.D. Durant was also present.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. There is no phone or internet service to the District Building so no recording or call in is available.

2. Vice-Chairman Hathcock led us in prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
3. Welcome guests and open the floor for non-agenda items. There were six guests, Roger Weste, Henry Lundy, John Cruce, Julie Story, Glenn Senter and Willi Huxford. There were no non-agenda items.

Mr. Cruce expressed his thanks for all of the hard work the District is doing despite the negativity that is being expressed by the public. He explained that a lot of the thinking was short sighted and people need to look at the long term outlook. Mr. Cruce asked the Board to consider pausing the \$1,000 disconnect fee to be determined at a future date. Chairman Hunter explained that due to the amount of disconnects we were experiencing the Board had an emergency meeting to review the financial impacts to the District and determined that the current \$200.00 disconnect and \$300.00 reconnect would not cover the costs of the District for future work as no income would be received during the time the service was disconnected. Mr. Cruce said he understood that and he thought that the reconnect fee might need to be even higher. Commissioner Hathcock explained that at the Emergency Meeting an even higher amount was discussed.

4. Update on the Water Improvements Project – Ms. Senter explained to the Board that at this time it would be best to postpone the project and discuss it again at our January meeting. We can postpone the funding for a short time.
5. Approval of the Minutes from the July 18, 2024, Board Meeting. **Vice-Chairman Hathcock made a motion to approve the Minutes for the July 18, 2024 Board Meeting. Commissioner Stanton offered a second. Chairman Hunter asked for further discussion. By unanimous vote, the motion was approved.**
6. Consent Items – The consent items were presented. **Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the Consent Items. Commissioner Lundy offered a second. Chairman Hunter asked for further discussion. By unanimous vote, the motion was approved.**
8. New Business

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- a. Approval of District Meeting and Holiday Calendar. **Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the 2024-2025 Board Meeting and Holiday Calendar. Commissioner Stanton offered a second. Chairman Hunter asked for further discussion. By unanimous vote, the motion was approved.**
- b. Audit and Presentation Letter. Ms. Senter per the Board's instruction asked for a letter from the Auditor instead of appearing at the meeting. Ms. Senter explained that we had another clean audit. **Commissioner Stanton made a motion to approve the Annual Audit and Presentation Letter. Commissioner Walker offered a second. Chairman Hunter asked for further discussion. By unanimous vote, the motion was approved.**
- c. Hurricane Helene Reconnection Fees. At our last meeting, Chairman Hunter made a recommendation that we continue to waive the \$200.00 disconnect fee and that we roll back the \$1,000.00 disconnect fee to \$300.00. The Board voted unanimously to continue the waiver of the \$200.00 fee and the implementation of the \$1,000.00 disconnect fee. A few days after that meeting, Chairman Hunter explained that County Commissioner Pam Feagle reached out the White House and spoke with President Biden and his aides who assured Commissioner Feagle that we would get money to cover our grinder pumps and associated costs. Dawn Webb who is with the State Emergency Management is going to be contacting us regarding this. Chairman Hunter again made the suggestion that we roll back the \$1,000.00 reconnect fee back to \$300.00. Commissioner Walker asked Ms. Senter for her opinion. Ms. Senter explained that because we have been promised funding for the grinder pumps and funding help from the State Emergency Management for putting the grinder pumps back in which will help minimize the costs to the District. She explained that we will still lose income because many customers have no idea what they are going to be doing with their properties and will go ahead and disconnect. Ms. Senter said that she agreed with the recommendation of Chairman Hunter to roll back the disconnect fee, but the Board reserves the right to revisit in the future at any time. Chairman Hunter said that Representative Jason Shoaf made a promise to him that he would help with whatever we needed. Ms. Senter also mentioned that when speaking to Suwanee who had waived their reconnect fees, they highly regretted doing it. They received no income from customers who then came back and wanted to be put back into service. Commissioner Hathcock asked how the expenses were going to be paid and Ms. Senter said from the income that is received each month or perhaps the reserves. Ms. Senter told the Board that we have had 26 disconnects and 115 customers who have decided to keep their services on. We have 13 undecided who are waiting to see if the fees will be rolled back. Commissioner Hathcock explained that if we cut our fees back the resulting drop in income may cause cut backs to have to be implemented. He does not believe that raising the disconnect fee was a bad thing and may encourage customer retention. Commissioner Walker said that she hoped that if they roll back the fee customers will see it as a good faith effort and will leave their accounts active. Commissioner Hathcock said that as a property owner he most likely will turn off his account if he doesn't know what he is doing with his property. Ms. Senter explained that the majority of the opinions expressed to the District Office was that if we keep the disconnect fee at

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\$1,000.00, they would turn off their account. Commissioner Hathcock said that those customers would eventually have to come back for service at some point in the future. Commissioner Hathcock asked the Board's Attorney for his opinion. Mr. Durant said that from a legal perspective the Board could set fees and make decisions now and in the future. Public perception may be that we are trying to be good stewards of the District's funds. Chairman Hathcock stated that we raised the reconnect fees to help the District financially not to hurt or punish anyone. Commissioner Lundy stated that she would disconnect her house account as it is not livable at this time but her business account would remain active as she needs the income. Commissioner Hathcock asked about the status of the water and Ms. Senter explained that the water had passed all the tests and was available. The problem with getting grinder pumps back in the ground depended on a few factors. Power is not yet available for most customers and we are at the mercy of the suppliers. The District has approximately 20 pumps in stock and will begin with that equipment until shipments are received. Commissioner Hathcock asked if anyone had paid the \$1,000.00 reconnect fee and Ms. Senter said no. Ms. Senter explained that a lot of the customers are still in shock and unable to make a decision about what to do with their properties. Guest Henry Lundy asked about pumps that did not have damage because his was sealed in a vault. Ms. Senter explained that the field staff would check it and if no debris or salt water cause damage it would be fine, however the wiring and control panel would have to be replaced as it was all under water. Chairman Hunter directed the discussion back to the \$1,000.00 disconnect fee. Commissioner Stanton said he agreed with Ms. Senter and give the people more time before making any changes. If necessary another special meeting could be held to discuss it further. Chairman Hunter said that the people would eventually come back but Commissioner Stanton said that he agreed with Commissioner Hathcock that the income was really needed as we only have so much of a cushion. Commissioner Walker said for the benefit of the people it would be better to roll it back to the \$300.00. Commissioner Hathcock said the restrictions being placed by the County will also keep customers from hooking back up anytime soon. **Commissioner Walker made a motion to roll back the reconnect fee from \$1,000.00 to \$300.00 with the option of revisiting it in the future. The motion died for lack of a second. Commissioner Hathcock made a motion to keep the reconnect fee at \$1,000.00. Commissioner Lundy offered a second. Chairman Hunter asked for further discussion. Commissioners Stanton, Lundy, and Hathcock voted in favor, Commissioner Walker voted against. The motion was approved 3-1.**

- d. Hurricane Helene Minimum Billing – as the District is unable to read meters due to the amount of debris and inability access the properties. Ms. Senter proposes using a minimum billing procedure and look at possible service credits at the January meeting. **Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the Minimum Billing process without reading meters. Commissioner Lundy offered a second. Chairman Hunter asked for further discussion. By unanimous vote, the motion was approved.**

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- e. Hurricane Helene Service Credits – the Board asked that this be discussed at the January meeting.
 - f. Hurricane Helene Water Service Update – As of Thursday, October 17, 2024 we have cleared our bacteriological testing and the boil water notice has been rescinded. Water is available to all customers. The debris cleanup process is continuing to cause problems.
 - g. Hurricane Helene Sewer Service Update – We are waiting on equipment as we do not have a huge stock on hand. Wascon has volunteered to get us a container to store the grinder pumps. We are getting questions about replacing all the pumps. We are doing this because all of the electrical components have been under water and need to be replaced. If we replace all of the electrical components and a pump burns up, it will damage the electrical components as well. A lot of the pumps were damaged by debris intrusion in the tank, the tank filled up with sand, or the wires pulled out of the motor when the house or camper or power pole were destroyed by the high water. We have no way of testing the pumps in the field as very few customers have power. Also, the pumps will have to be pulled and the tanks washed and cleaned as a high percentage of them are full of debris. It was the recommendation of Florida Rural Water after their survey that we replace everything. We will not discard the pumps that might be used again. They will be taken out to the wastewater plant and tested at a future date. We were told that that Florida Emergency Management will cover the cost of this. We will use the triage system to service full time residents in homes first, full time residents in campers second, part time residents in homes third, and part time residents in campers fourth.
9. Closing Remarks – Commissioner Hathcock asked about the rate history provided by Ms. Senter. The Board discussed that the rates have not gone up very much over the past 20 years. Ms. Senter explained that her support of the reconnect fee rollback was based purely on the overwhelming hatred and vitriol the District Staff have received through the past few weeks in person, on the phone and on the internet.
- Caleb from Representative Shoaf’s office called Chairman Hunter at the end of the meeting to ask about the reconnection fees. Chairman Hunter explained the motions that were presented and the votes that occurred. At this time the reconnect fees will be staying at \$1,000. Commissioner Hunter explained that he called in because Representative Shoaf’s office had been receiving a lot of calls about the fee increase.
10. Motion to Adjourn - **Chairman Hunter requested a Motion to Adjourn. Commissioner Hathcock made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Lundy offered a second. The meeting adjourned at 6:53 PM.**

Board Actions:

- 1. Approval of the Minutes from July 18, 2024
- 2. Approval of the Consent Items.
- 3. Approval of the 2024-2025 District Meeting and Holiday Calendar
- 4. Approval of the Annual Audit and Presentation Letter

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5. Approval of the Hurricane Reconnect Fees to continue at \$1,000.00
6. Approval of Hurricane Helene Minimum Billings

BY: Lynette Taylor Senter, Board Secretary
Taylor Coastal Water and Sewer District