


MEMORANDUM

To: Albemarle County Board of Supervisors
From: Gary O'Connell, Executive Director 
Date: October 21, 2020
Re: Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) Quarterly Briefing
cc: Mr. Jeff Richardson, County Executive; ACSA Board of Directors; ACSA Leadership Team and Managers

Thank you for the continuing opportunity to share with the Board of Supervisors what is happening at your water agency, the Albemarle County Service Authority. We pride ourselves on safe, clean, reliable Albemarle water. In this time of uncertainty with the Covid-19 Coronavirus continuing to impact our community, we at the ACSA have been focused on keeping the water flowing, keeping operations going, and staying safe. Here are some recent updates from the ACSA:

1. **Emergency Operations and COVID Plan** – We can continue to assure you that the ACSA and our water partner, RWSA, have done all in our power to continue to provide safe drinking water and meet customer service expectations. We believe we have been successful in doing so.
2. **Fall Customer Newsletter and Survey** – We are sending with the October bills to our 20,000 customers, a Newsletter as well as a COVID period customer survey (copy attached). We are using an online survey or a hard copy for our customers to complete and return with their bill payment. The online survey is now on our website.
3. **Customer Accounts and Customer Service** – We recognize this continues to be a difficult time for some of our customers financially. Beginning Monday, March 23rd we stopped any service disconnections, stopped sending out final notices, gave credit on on-line credit card payments, and waived some other fees. We will continue that policy for the next several months until economic conditions change. We are trying to be sensitive to customer concerns over job loss and business closings. We have encouraged customers to pay their bills on-line, as well as by postal mail and phone, and we still have a customer payment drop box at our

offices. We continue to maintain a very responsive customer service call center and on-line response, 24/7. The ACSA Board recently approved a no interest/no late fee customer 12-month payment plan to assist customers in economic distress. We are offering this program to customers who are behind in their monthly bill payment, which we estimate to be about 1% of our customers. Thanks to Albemarle County, we are promoting the availability of financial assistance for bill payment that could assist customers who are hard hit by the COVID economy.

4. **AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure)** – One of our Strategic Plan major initiatives is to utilize the various AMI technologies that are available in the water metering world. Most medium and large sized water utilities have already converted to the AMI technology. A tremendous advantage with AMI is near real time leak detection inside the customer's home or business, or water service line, a tremendous water conservation and cost savings tool. In our Customer Survey, over 97% of the respondents found it important to have leak notification. We also will be adding a new customer "portal" online feature for a customer to track their water use. We continue to work on this project to move it forward. The initial phase is underway to test the communications and software. The next phase will be in the fall and is to roll out 450 new meters and communications devices. The final phase (20,000 customers) will begin in early 2021. The meter/communications device is a quick 15 to 20-minute change-out for each customer. We will be offering an "Opt Out" for customers who do not wish to participate.
5. **CMMS – Computerized Maintenance Management System** – This system for customer service requests, work orders, inventory and asset management is part of our Strategic Plan to improve how we manage our day to day operations and will utilize the CityWorks software program. This is one of those projects that is not so visible but has the potential to greatly improve our operations to deliver better customer service, productivity and scheduling. We will also have a web portal for customer requests in place at the completion of the project. We will go live with the work order and inventory system on October 12th.
6. **Online Bill Payment** – We will introduce a modern on-line electronic bill payment platform this fall to take advantage of the latest technology. More of our customers have begun using on-line bill payment, and we want to improve our offering. This is one area from our customer survey customers requested we make. We also will be eliminating our credit card fee, in an effort to encourage electronic bill payment which is more convenient for our customers. We expect to make this new online bill payment system available to customers in early December.

7. **ACSA Capital Projects Update** – The adopted FY 2021 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) started July 1st and is a \$6.9 million program. Highlights and current major projects are detailed below:

- **Camelot Water Main Replacement** – Replacement of nearly 50-year-old water mains that are also undersized and deteriorating and becoming unreliable. Work has begun on this project.
- **Scottsville Water Main Replacements** – Replacement of an aging water main along East Main Street. Work is complete with all the water main installed and in service.
- **Madison Park Pump Station Upgrade** – Constructed 37 years ago, by a private development, and the original equipment is wearing down, building is undersized, and we are not able to install SCADA (computerized monitor). The plan is to replace this pump station on-site. Design work is at the 90% stage. Easement acquisition is underway.
- **Oak Forest Sewer Pump Station Abandonment** – This is an aging pump station in need of rehabilitation. With the adjacent Stonefield development, we now have the opportunity to extend a sewer main via micro-tunnel and eliminate this aging pump station and avoid an expensive upgrade. Work on the construction has begun, with about 5% completed.
- **Jefferson Village Water Main Replacement** – Replacing older (49 years) water mains made of inferior pipe product. Since originally part of a former well system, many of the mains are undersized. Design is at 95% completion. In the midst of acquiring easements.
- **Pantops Sewer Study** – Area study to reduce wet weather infiltration and inflow (I/I). This study will likely lead to targeted sanitary sewer system rehabilitation. Flow monitoring and manhole inspections have been completed, and the investigation portion of this project, including robotic televising of the sewer lines, has been completed. Rehabilitation work is being scheduled.
- **SCADA (computerized monitoring)** – A three phased project is nearing completion for over 40 water and wastewater facilities in the ACSA system. This is another of our projects to provide emergency alerting and monitoring to assure reliable water and wastewater service. We have completed the second phase of work, with the third phase design being completed. Easement acquisition is underway.
- **Crozet Phase IV Water Main Replacement** – Our Strategic Plan calls for the eventual replacement of all asbestos-cement water mains in our system, as they are older and made of a weaker material than the current industry norm. This project continues our systematic program to replace the aging and undersized water mains in the Crozet Water System. This is the fourth of five phases that have been defined to carry out these improvements and is currently in design phase at the 90% stage.

- **Hessian Hills Water Main Replacement** – The water mains in the Hessian Hills area have major deterioration, and they are also undersized throughout most of the subdivision. This project follows our Strategic Plan goal to replace aging and undersized water mains throughout our system. It will also eliminate a small amount of plastic pipe installed in the early 1980's. Design work is at the 90% stage, with project completion planned for 2021. Work along Barracks Road and Georgetown Road will have to take place at night due to high traffic volumes during the day. Easement acquisition is underway.
- **Hollymead Sewer Study** – ACSA staff has identified other large drainage basins to be evaluated for infiltration and inflow (I/I) to continue our efforts to maintain the integrity of our wastewater collection system. This study area includes the oldest portions of the Hollymead Subdivision, as well as, the offsite portion of the sewer main that serves the westernmost area of Forest Lakes South. The Forest Lakes Offsite Sewer will be the primary collector for the upcoming Brookhill development, and an evaluation of this trunk main will provide an excellent baseline of pipe integrity in advance of the future construction activities around this sewer. All of the manholes have been inspected, flow monitoring and smoke testing have been completed. About 90% of the study work has been completed.
- **Redfields Sewer Pump Station Abandonment** – This wastewater pump station was constructed 23 years ago by private development and the parcel is too small to add an emergency standby generator. The Maintenance Department must rely on a portable pump to operate this station during power outages. With the development of Wintergreen Farm Subdivision, ACSA staff saw an opportunity for a sewer main extension that could eliminate this pump station. Now that the sewer main extension is in place the timing is perfect for abandoning this wastewater pump station. All work has been completed on this project.
- **Vulnerability Assessment** – As part of an on-going emergency preparedness program, the ACSA is in a multi-phase effort to reduce risk and increase resilience. Projects include additional security measures, fencing and access gate enhancements, cybersecurity measures, additional tank protection, etc. The security fence has been installed at the Avon Park Tank site and the new security fence around our Maintenance Yard is out for bids. The design of the remaining Priority 1 Improvements is on-going (50% stage).
- **Sewer Force Main Condition Assessment** – This project utilizes a computerized "SmartBall" that is flowed through the force main capturing assessment data (via acoustic monitoring technology) to determine any problem areas that require correction or further detailed investigation. Final report submitted showing some gas pockets in three force mains. Recommended pipe wall thickness measurements in these areas have been completed.

- **Energy Audit** - This project will consist of a comprehensive energy audit of the Operations Center and all pump stations (20). It will evaluate current energy consumption and the factors that drive it, as well as, an analysis of utility rate structures to identify potential cost savings. Surveys are being conducted of all systems, including operation and maintenance procedures to determine where energy conservation can be improved.
- **Avon Street Maintenance Yard** - The Avon Street property has long been held as a future location to build additional facilities in a central location, as needed. The current Maintenance Yard at our Pantops Operations Center is becoming overcrowded with equipment and materials, causing us to relocate some equipment and larger materials to the former ACSA Maintenance Yard at the Crozet Water Treatment Plant, which we lease from RWSA. This project will begin to develop the ACSA owned Avon Street property into a much larger vehicle and materials storage facility. Design of the site is underway.
- **Ragged Mountain Phase 1 Water Main Replacement** - This project will replace the oldest active water main remaining in our system, which was part of the water main that served customers out Reservoir Road. This cast iron pipe is over 90 years old and is severely tuberculated, which greatly reduces the flow capacity in this section. Design work is 90% complete. We are coordinating with VDOT where their road improvement project overlaps with ours.
- **Northfields Water Main Replacement** - This project addresses the goal in our Strategic Plan for the eventual replacement of all asbestos-cement water mains in our system. The existing water mains are approximately 54 years old and have reached the end of their useful life. As a former well system that was connected to public water, most of the mains are also undersized. Field surveying is complete, with preliminary design now started.
- **Exclusion Meters Replacement** - In the mid 1990's with the development of Glenmore, many new customers installed irrigation systems for their properties and wanted to have their sewer bills reduced by the amount of water that was diverted to irrigate their properties. Private meters were installed behind their ACSA meter to record this volume and it was "excluded" from the calculation of their sewer charges and these became known as exclusion meters. On January 1, 2006 the ACSA Rules and Regulations were modified to no longer allow exclusion meters and required that all future irrigation meters would be tapped separately off our water mains, to be owned and controlled by the ACSA. This project is a multi-year replacement program by our in-house CIP Crew to install dedicated, ACSA owned irrigation meters that will eliminate all remaining private exclusion meters in our system. The number of exclusion meters in the ACSA system has been reduced to 443, with about 55 replaced thus far.

- **Pipe Saddles Replacement** - The ACSA Maintenance Department has discovered in recent years that pipe saddles used to make water service line connections to PVC water mains have been failing. Either the zinc-coated straps or the cast iron saddle bodies are deteriorating. This project is a multi-year replacement program to be undertaken with our in-house capital project crew.

Let us know if you have further questions or comments. We are more than glad to meet with you or hold a virtual meeting to talk about any of our projects, or facilities, or provide a tour if that would be useful.

Attachments:

- Fall ACSA Summer Customer Newsletter and Customer Survey

news & updates

Continuing Our Work During COVID-19

Dear Customer,

Six months ago, I wrote to you about the Albemarle County Service Authority's efforts to closely monitor and prepare for the COVID-19 pandemic, a public health crisis unlike anything we'd previously experienced. Six months later, we remain in uncharted territory, still trying to limit the impact of the virus on ourselves, our families, and our neighbors.

As time passes and we move through our daily lives, some basic truths can become muddled. I'd like to remind you that the safety of your drinking water remains our highest priority and that the coronavirus did not, and will not, affect the quality of your drinking water. Multi-barrier treatment and disinfection processes like the ones used to produce your water remove or inactivate viruses.

Since the pandemic hit our community, the ACSA has tried to act thoughtfully, with flexibility and responsibility. We've done our best to learn and adapt as new information became available. On the back of this newsletter, you will find a brief survey that gives you the opportunity to provide us with feedback about how we've carried out our responsibilities during COVID-19. I ask you to take a minute to tell us how we're doing so we know where we are being successful and where we can improve.

Since March, we have watched our communities take on COVID's unimagined challenges with strength and resiliency. As we prepare for the possibility of more difficult times ahead, we can take solace in knowing that we'll emerge stronger than before.

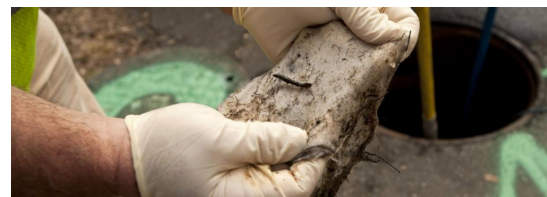
Sincerely,



Gary O'Connell, Executive Director

"Flushable Wipes" Are NOT Flushable!

You see the ads all the time now. "Flushable wipes are incredible!" Let us be as perfectly clear: these wipes are NOT flushable!



As you can see, they do NOT break down in your wastewater system like toilet paper, leading to clogs of sewer pipes and essential plant infrastructure. Don't flush these wipes!

Only flush the Three P's down your toilet.
Poop. Pee. Paper. (Toilet paper, that is.)



The CodeRED Community Emergency Alert system is used by Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville to notify residents and businesses of critical situations – like ACSA emergencies – and provide information regarding necessary actions.

You can register to receive phone messages, text messages and e-mail messages by visiting www.communityemergency.org.



ACSACoconnect



ACSA_connect

www.serviceauthority.org



CUSTOMER SURVEY

Survey also available online at www.serviceauthority.org

The Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) would like to take this opportunity to thank our customers again for your continued patience and resiliency during these unprecedented times as we all deal with COVID, and to request feedback on your water and sewer service. We greatly appreciate your assistance and look forward to receiving your responses.

1. Within the past six months, what service(s) have you been in contact with the ACSA about (check all that apply):

- My water service ☐
My sewer service ☐
My utility bill ☐
Other ☐

If other, please specify: _____

2. Overall, how satisfied were you with the service received?

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Very
Satisfied | Somewhat
Satisfied | Neutral | Somewhat
Dissatisfied | Very
Dissatisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If dissatisfied, please explain why so we can address: _____

3. How satisfied are you with the information provided by the ACSA about your water?

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Very
Satisfied | Somewhat
Satisfied | Neutral | Somewhat
Dissatisfied | Very
Dissatisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If dissatisfied, please explain why so we can address: _____

4. Has the closing of the ACSA office to the public had an impact on your water or sewer service?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

If "yes", please explain how so we can address: _____

5. Below, please provide any comments or suggestions on how the ACSA can better meet your needs.

6. If you would like the ACSA to follow-up with you on your feedback, please provide your preferred contact information below:

Name: _____
Email: _____
Phone Number: _____

Please mail back the survey with your payment or go online to complete a survey.