




# MEMORANDUM

**To:** Albemarle County Board of Supervisors  
**From:** Gary O'Connell, Executive Director   
**Date:** January 20, 2021  
**Re:** Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) Quarterly Briefing  
**cc:** Mr. Jeff Richardson, County Executive; ACSA Board of Directors; ACSA Leadership Team and Managers

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Happy New Year! 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. Customer Accounts and Customer Service** – We recognize this continues to be a difficult time for some of our customers financially. Beginning Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> we stopped any service disconnections, stopped sending out final notices, gave credit on on-line credit card payments, and waived some other fees. We continue that policy today. 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. With the assistance of the Albemarle County staff, we applied for CARES Act funding for a Utility Relief Assistance Program totaling over \$180,000. This is to assist customers with account due balances greater than 30 days incurred after March 1<sup>st</sup>. We have had over 165 applications thus far, and we are going through the process to assure they meet the CARES Act guidelines. We have proactively been calling all eligible customers who have experienced COVID economic hardships and are behind in paying their utility bills.
- 2. Emergency Operations and COVID Plan** – As we have done throughout the

COVID period, 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. Our recent Customer Survey had 99.4% satisfaction during COVID.

3. **Winter Customer Newsletter** – A copy of our winter newsletter is attached for your information.
4. **Customer Survey/COVID Period** - The results of our end of the year customer survey show over a 95% satisfaction. For the few dissatisfied comments, we are following up personally with the customer to resolve or to provide additional information. See attached survey summary chart.
5. **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 January 2019 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 which has been very successful. The next phase will be in March to roll out 500 new meters and communications devices. The final phase (remaining 19,500 customers) will begin in late 2021, and all installations will take over a year to complete. Notices will go to each customer 30 days prior to installation, and then 10 days prior to the meter install. 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.
6. **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 went live with the work order and inventory system on October 12<sup>th</sup> and anticipate going live with the customer request portal in the spring.
7. **Online Bill Payment** – We will introduce a modern on-line electronic bill

payment platform this spring 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 surveys where customers have requested that we make improvements. We also will be eliminating our credit card fee, in an effort to encourage electronic bill payment which is more convenient for our customers.

8. **ACSA Annual Report** – We are about to complete our 2020 Annual Report and will be sending you a copy as well as posting on our website.

9. **ACSA Capital Projects Update** – The adopted FY 2021 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) started July 1<sup>st</sup> 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 is well underway with about 45% complete.
- **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. A major underground tunnel bore is planned for this spring.
- **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 100% completed. We have completed easement acquisition. The project is planned to be bid in the spring.
- **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 scheduled to begin in January.
- **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 now complete. 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. Work along Barracks Road and Georgetown Road will have to take place at night due to high traffic volumes during the day. Bids have been received and are under review.
- **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 95% of the study work has been completed.
- **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 under contract. The design of Priority 1 Improvements is at the 75% 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 and a portion of the Woodbrook Pump Station force main has been identified for replacement.
- **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 at the 30% stage and, as well as coordination with the Albemarle County Planning staff.
- **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 design now started at the 20% stage.
- **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:

- ACSA Winter Customer Newsletter
- COVID Customer Service Survey

# news & updates

## Working Toward a Better 2021

*Dear Customer,*

It goes almost without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected almost every aspect of our lives: where we worked, played, worshipped, and traveled. It decided where we ate, when we shopped, and how our children "went" to school.

What the coronavirus did not negatively impact was the safety and security of your water and wastewater services. Your water was always clean of COVID and our staff worked around the clock - as they always have - to make sure your lives weren't challenged even further during this trying time.

I do ask for you to consider for a moment what life would've been like if you had not been able to drink your tap water. Life would've been very different. For all of us.

In the middle of the pandemic, we fielded a customer survey because, like you, we were in uncharted territory and we wanted to hear how we were doing in your eyes. We were thankful to find out how satisfied you were with our services, our level of public information, and the availability of our staff.

While we were pleased with the results, we always discover room for improvement. And that is our hope for 2021, that we will continue to work together toward a better day for all of us.



Gary O'Connell, Executive Director



### January 2021 Update

The ACSA continues to make significant progress under our MyWater utility innovation program.

Our first effort involves the upgrading of our 20,000-plus water meters. As we enter 2021, we are pleased to report that: the meter reading software has been installed and is in testing; staff training is underway, and new business processes have been prepared for implementation.

The first customers to receive the upgrades will be notified before the work takes place and informed when the improvements occur. The full project will take approximately 18 months to complete.

We invite you to visit the MyWater section of [serviceauthority.org](http://serviceauthority.org). You will find details about the full program, as well as information on the meter upgrades.



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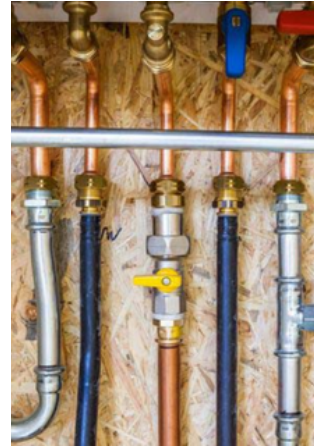
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# Protecting Your Plumbing

Beginning in December 2019, the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority, in partnership with the ACSA and Charlottesville Utilities, changed its corrosion inhibitor to better protect customer pipes and plumbing fixtures. The effort was approved by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and was made in addition to the installation of granular activated carbon (GAC) to provide advanced treatment at all of the water plants.

Extensive testing confirmed the new inhibitor is being successful without adversely impacting our water quality. The two-year process began at the Crozet and Scottsville Water Treatment Plants in 2020; it is starting at the Urban Area Water Treatment Plants in early 2021.

A list of Frequently Asked Questions about the transition and the new corrosion control inhibitor can be found by visiting [serviceauthority.org](http://serviceauthority.org).



## Winter Weather Water Wisdom

**As we make our way through this winter, the ACSA wants to remind you of some helpful tips to protect your pipes when the weather turns its coldest.**



**Tightly close doors & windows.  
Insulate pipes in unheated areas.**



**Shut off & drain pipes leading  
to your outside faucets.**



**Mark your main shutoff valve.  
Teach everyone how to use it.**



**During cold snaps, open cabinets  
to allow heat to reach the pipes.**



**When the weather turns its coldest, allow the faucet farthest  
from the shutoff valve to drip to keep the water moving.**



**If you find a frozen pipe, turn up your heat & make sure it  
reached the pipe. Use a hair dryer or hot towels on the  
problem area. Never use an open flame.**

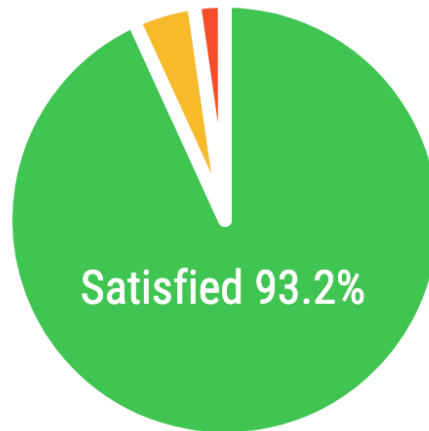


# COVID CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY

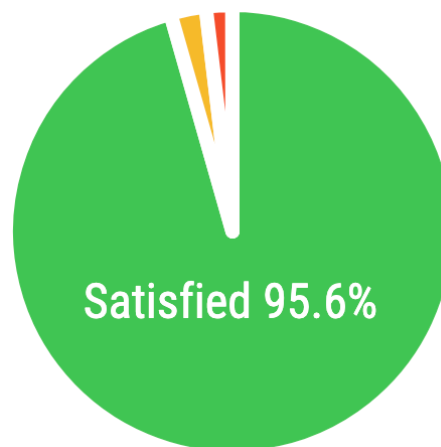
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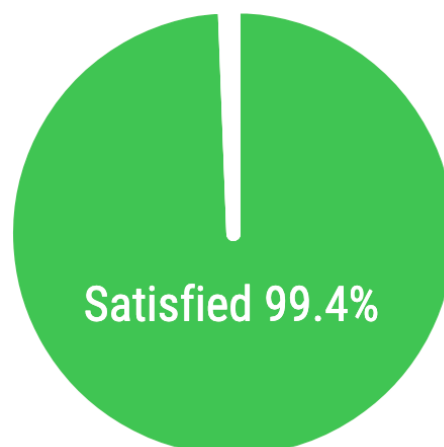
After contacting the ACSA during the pandemic, how satisfied were you with the service you received?



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



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



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During May, the ACSA experienced a COVID-related 5.4% drop in water consumption.