



MEMORANDUM

To: All Councilmembers
From: CURO
By: Shannon Oldfield-Blanks
CC: Paul Harang, Eric Granderson, and Theresa Becher
Date: July 6, 2020
RE: SWBNO Meeting 06.17.2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans (SWBNO) Board of Directors (the Board) met Wednesday, June 17, 2020, using Microsoft Teams. The full packet for the meeting may be found [here](#). The Board received updates on the general standing of the Sewerage and Water Board.

The agenda was read aloud by SWBNO Counsel Yolanda Grinstead.

Executive Director Report

A. June 10, 2020, Rain Event After Action Report

SWBNO claims to have made the necessary preparations for 1 to 2 inches of forecasted rain on June 10, 2020. However, the storm was purportedly under-forecasted, and over three inches of rain fell in parts of the city between 6:40 am, and 7:45 am. The National Weather Service issued a flood warning at 7:51 am, street flooding was already in progress.

Turbine 4 (“T4”), a significant power supply for the drainage pump station(s), tripped offline at 8:52 am. The floodwaters reached their peak by this time. SWBNO investigated the cause of T4 going offline and determined that a safety feature designed to keep the turbine from firing too quickly, automatically taking the turbine offline. SWBNO made adjustments to the power supply and returned T4 to service in approximately 2 hours. T4 is fully functional, and now no evidence suggests operator/human error. SWBNO has made operational changes to better prepare for under-forecasted rain events such as, preparing EMDs for medium predicted storms and using additional monitoring gages.

B. Power

SWBNO has developed criteria for a power system upgrade, including a replacement generator for turbine 5 (“T5”) and installing a frequency changer at turbine 6 (“T6”). SWBNO would like to have a fully operational replacement for T5 in 12 to 13 months. The investment will support the Power Master Plan submitted March 2020 and the needs of the utility for at least 20 years. .

SWBNO is considering a refurbished unit similar to T6, which will cost approximately \$9 to \$10 million. Funding options, such as “lease to own,” are under consideration. SWBNO is developing a funding proposal and will present it to the Board and the New Orleans City Council for review.

SWBNO is pursuing the installation of a frequency changer to maximize the use of T6 and provide additional resilience power supply.

A list of power resiliency projects may be found [here](#).

C. COVID-19 Reopening Plan

SWBNO’s director of special projects, D. Callahan, developed a reopening plan. The plan emphasizes safety procedures such as physical distancing, face mask requirements, and routine disinfection. Larger capacity reopening is scheduled for June 21, 2020. The departmental practices to date include:

- Customer Service Lobby - All in-person customer service business conducted by appointment with the lobby limited to 7 customers at a time.
- Hearings - SWBNO is working to provide digital documents and to install a private kiosk at 625 St. Joseph St. for virtual hearings.
- Plumbing/House Connections - All in-person business is done by appointment only.

SWBNO recognizes the challenges presented to non-English speaking customers and utilizes multi-lingual staff and language-assist software in supporting their needs. SWBNO will also continue to evaluate ways to better serve the community members who require language services.

D. Billing

- 1) *Customer Care Plan* - SWBNO finalized the Customer Care Plan. Emails were sent to customers informing them of the plan details. The additional payment amounts will show on bills effective July 1, 2020.
- 2) *Billing System* – An alleged successful update to the Cogsdale billing system was performed June 12 to 14th. The update should facilitate better account management, tracking and review, and provide better customer service.
- 3) *Meter Reading* - SWBNO seeks to reduce the number of estimated bills by increasing the size of the meter reading department. The department will expand to 60 positions, with 10 of those positions being surplus. The surplus will provide the department with flexibility during times of staff turnover and absences.

E. Public Awareness Campaign - Every Drop NOLA

SWBNO, The City of New Orleans, and the Greater New Orleans Foundation launched a public awareness campaign. This campaign is designed to motivate residents and business owners to join a collective movement to capture water on residential and commercial properties. More information on this project may be found [here](#).