

WEST MADISON UTILITY DISTRICT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING  
September 12, 2017

BE IT REMEMBERED that the regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the West Madison Utility District was duly convened, held and conducted on September 12, 2017, in the Kearney Park Community Center at 443 Livingston Vernon Road, Flora, MS, as follows to wit:

The President of the Board, Larry Bennett, presided and called the meeting to order.

Present:	Absent:
Commissioner Louvella Lawson	Commissioner Evelyn Brown
Commissioner Larry Bennett	
Commissioner Scott Colson	
Commissioner Letitia Reeves	

The Board President announced that the members of the Board present constituted a quorum and declared the meeting duly convened. Commissioner Larry Bennett opened the meeting with a prayer.

**In RE: Approval of the September 12, 2017 Agenda:**

Commissioner Colson motioned and Commissioner Lawson seconded, to approve the Agenda for the September 12, 2017 meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the West Madison Utility District, subject to the addition of the names of Miranda McDaniel, Jennifer Johnson, Calandra Ross and Anita Ross under Item 7, Customer Issues. The vote on the matter being as follows:

Commissioner Scott Colson	Aye
Commissioner Louvella Lawson	Aye
Commissioner Larry Bennett	Aye
Commissioner Letitia Reeves	Aye

The matter carried unanimously and the Agenda for the September 12, 2017 meeting is hereby approved.

**In RE: Consent Items**

Commissioner Colson motioned and Commissioner Reeves seconded to approve the Consent Items on the September 12, 2017 Agenda as follows:

3. Acknowledgement and Acceptance of EOM RVS Reports for August, 2017
4. Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Financial Statement for July 31, 2017
5. Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Financial Statement for August 31, 2017
6. Acceptance of the August 8, 2017 Minutes

The vote on the matter being as follows:

Commissioner Scott Colson	Aye
Commissioner Louvella Lawson	Aye
Commissioner Letitia Reeves	Aye
Commissioner Larry Bennett	Aye

The matter carried unanimously and the Consent Items for the September 12, 2017 are hereby approved.

## In RE: Customer Issues

- (1) Simmons Memorial Church (Richard Lang) - Dispute regarding Bill  
Not Present
- (2) Terry Hardin - Why is the sewer charge as high as the water charge?  
Not Present
- (3) **Sheila White** - Why was she overcharged for late fees?

Ms. White and her husband both addressed the Board regarding confusion as to how her bill appears to charge her twice for her late charges as she automatically adds \$20.00 to her bill when she mails it after the 10th and it shows up on the following month's bill. K.T. Newman explained in depth the billing process and also went over Ms. White's billing history that reflects her past due balances brought forward as well as her overpayment "credits" brought forward. Due to the fact that the printed bills appear different than the audit history, Mr. and Mrs. White were both extremely confused and both kept claiming that they felt they were being charged late fees twice. Board members also entered into the discussion trying to explain the billing. Mr. and Mrs. White appeared unsatisfied after all attempts to explain their bills were exhausted, and still maintained that they were being billed twice for late fees.

- (4) James Cable - Why is his bill so high?  
Not Present

At this time, Jennifer Johnson interrupted Commissioner Bennett and stated that this was also a concern of hers and many others in the area about their bills even though Mr. Cable was not present and she felt that the Board should address this issue. Commissioner Bennett tried to explain to Ms. Johnson that he did not intend to be rude, but that she needed to wait her turn on the agenda to speak, and that she could have her say at that time.

- (5) Doris Wilson - Can the Board lower her bill?  
Not Present

Items Added at Meeting:

- (6) **Miranda McDaniel**

Ms. McDaniel again appeared before the Board and stated that according to her meter she had already used 20,600 gallons of water so far, but that she had someone checking her meter and it had not moved in three days. She turned the water on and the needle turned, but the numbers did not turn. She stated that her August bill is \$200 and she cannot afford a \$200 water bill. She has 2 children and is not home a lot and her children stay with someone else who keeps 6 children and that person only reflects a water usage of 4,000 gallons of water per month so she knows something is wrong. Her landlord, Sammy Brown, has checked everything and cannot find any leaks. She stated that she has not paid her bill yet and realizes she will be charged a late fee, but does not want her water cut off and wants the Board to try to find out what is going on with her water meter. K.T. Newman stated that it's difficult to say where the water is going as we are reading the numbers that are reflected on the meter. Commissioner Colson stated that if the meter was not working that her usage should show less rather than a larger amount. Older meters tend to slow down and do not turn as often so that they do not meter for every bit of water going through the system. Ms. McDaniel again stated that she could not afford this high of a water bill and that it was \$300 last month and \$200 a month is simply too much to afford. K.T. Newman agreed to install a new water meter at this location. Commissioner Reeves also asked K.T. Newman about the fact that didn't this property have a toilet leak and K.T. Newman shook his head "yes." Commissioner Bennett assured Ms. McDaniel that her water would not be cut off, and that the Board would consider her issue in Executive Session.



(7) **Jennifer Johnson**

Jennifer Johnson had Commissioner Bennett's July 26, 2017 letter to the WMUD customers regarding the increase in water/sewer rates and required improvements, etc. to the WMUD system. Ms. Johnson asked about why 70 percent of the customers were not paying for their water. Commissioner Bennett explained that this was not correct; our reports at the end of each month indicated that 70 percent of the water pumped was not being paid for and that only 30 percent was being paid for. We did not know where the other 70 percent was going and have been trying to determine that and fix all leaks that we can locate. Ms. Johnson then asked why the sewer rate was so high. Commissioner Bennett explained that it had to do with maintaining the system and reiterated the water/sewer history of the area. Ms. Johnson then asked if WMUD would check into having online payment services. Commissioner Colson stated that he had questioned Bankplus about that and they had mentioned that it would be possible, and that the customers would have to fill out forms to have automatic drafts taken out of their accounts. Commissioner Reeves asked Commissioner Colson to please check into the matter and, if possible, obtain the forms from Bankplus so that WMUD could provide those to the WMUD customers that were interested in paying their water/sewer bills online. Commissioner Colson agreed to check into this matter. Ms. Johnson also stated that she thought the office staff should be more knowledgeable about late fees and people's bills, and that it's frustrating when you try to find someone to talk to and there's no one in the office who can help you understand your bill. K.T. Newman stated that if anyone had any questions about their bill that all they had to do was call him and if he could not explain it to them over the telephone that he would meet with them to explain it. Ms. Johnson thanked the Board and specifically thanked the Board for checking into online payments.

(8) **Calandra Ross; 117 Virginia Avenue**

Ms. Ross stated that her bill was \$200 each month beginning in July and she had requested a re-read of her meter. No one ever came by and she requested a re-read twice. She saw Tony Battle come down her road and she went outside watching him in his truck and asked her neighbor if he had read her meter and her neighbor who had been working in the yard said, "no." Tony saw them looking at him and never got out of his truck and drove on down the road. He never stepped out of the truck to read the meter. K. T. Newman told Ms. Ross that meters were typically read around the 23rd and 24th of the month. She could read her meter herself on or near those dates, even take a picture, and then compare her reading with what turns up on her bill. In this way, she can keep up with making sure that the bill should accurately reflect what she sees is on that meter near the time it was read. K.T. Newman then informed Ms. Ross that he would read her meter in the morning and call her.

(9) **Anita Ross - Shamara Ross, Anita Ross' daughter (who pays the bill) spoke, 144 Ellis Rd**

Ms. Ross stated that her daughter got lead poisoning and she knows it's from WMUD's water because the only other water she's drinking is at school and it's definitely not from there. Commissioner Bennett asked K.T. if the results were back from the Health Department regarding the lead samples recently sent off. K.T. informed him that it usually took several months before those were returned. Ms. Ross then stated that she wanted to know why her bill was \$180 when everyone else around her was paying \$34. She also said she did not want Tony Battle, who is her cousin, sent to tell her that she owes any money on her bill because he tells everybody what anyone owes and he went and told her aunt what she owed on her water bill. That's not the way to do business. K.T. was shaking his head "no," and said that he would explain to the Board later. Commissioner Reeves asked K.T. if he could get a lead sample taken from Ms. Ross' location and he said he could order one and make sure that it was taken from the water inside the house.

**Mary McField** (not on the agenda) addressed the Board about her uncle's water bill (Walter McField 108 Norris Street). Apparently there was some misunderstanding as Ms. McField expected the Board to address Mr. McField's previously high bill prior to the one K.T. Newman spoke with her about;



he had contacted her about last month's bill letting her know that the outside faucet had been left on for about 2 days and after it was cut off the water usage went down to normal. She wanted to know where the previous month's water had been going. K.T. Newman and the Board informed her that it was impossible to say where that water had been going. Then she asked "How do ya'll read the meter? That zero does not move on the end, do you read it too?" K. T. Newman explained to her that the end zero was read as well and that it stood for ten-gallon increments. She asked "How is it that when it's only the 627 moving that that's 6,270 gallons when the zero does not move? How is it I use that much water? Somewhere my stuff's just not right. I look at Madison and Ridgeland and their zeros move. Why does mine not move. When you live in a poor neighborhood you check around and pay attention. I read my meter every day. We need help. " Then Ms. Fields addressed Commissioner Bennett directly and stated that "I noticed that you changed your attitude and I really respect that."

#### **In RE: Operator's Report**

K.T. Newman gave the Board his report and addressed each item on the report per the attached. All items were briefly mentioned with actions being taken for the following:

- Item No. 1: K.T. did state that Allen Scott was concentrating on the 592 program regarding the relocation of the lagoon instead of the bank stabilization program and that there would be matching funds required for this program as well.
- Item No. 3: Commissioner Colson stated that the Board has a policy in place that addresses this issue and it should remain in place. Therefore, for anyone owing any type of balance after the 10th, they are assessed the \$20 late fee.

Shelia White interrupted at this time and stated it was not fair if these people did not pay the late fee because you should always pay what was due. She asked if people were paying a partial payment shouldn't they be assessed late fees? Commissioner Bennett stated "yes."

Brenda Cole (103 Compress Street) then mentioned something about a "short pay" program that had been in place in the past where people were given additional time to pay their bills when they had issues arise. Ms. Cole stated that she had a water pipe burst and he already spoken to K. T. Newman about not paying her bill until Friday and did not want to encounter any issues regarding a late fee and would be speaking to the Board about a reduction in her bill due to the water pipe breakage. She will have an invoice showing where she paid someone to fix her pipes.

Shamara Ross then interrupted and mentioned that she had been cut off on the 13th instead of the 15th before.

Item No. 5: The Board stated "no."

Item No. 7: Commissioner Lawson stated that he would try to contact Ms. Rita Swan.

Item No. 8: K. T. stated that this was the first time Ms. Grant shows no payment received but she swears she paid it and they do not show anywhere where it was ever received. Commissioner Colson made a motion to write off the debt; it was seconded by Commissioner Reeves. Commissioner Lawson disagreed and stated that it should be up to Ms. Grant to prove she paid the payment. After discussion, Commission Colson withdrew his motion, and it was agreed that Ms. Grant needs to provide proof of her payment. She needs to try to go to wherever she purchased her money order and try to locate a copy or have it reissued. WMUD will not write off the debt.

Item No. 9: It was agreed that Commissioner Reeves would contact Lawrence Morris to find out what

was his problem with his sewer. NOTE: Subsequent to the meeting, Commissioner Reeves spoke with Lawrence Morris and he stated that there was a hole near where his line intersected with his neighbor's and during the rain you could hear the rainwater pouring into the hole into the sewer line. Commissioner Reeves spoke with K. T. Newman who stated that he would contact Mr. Lawrence and look at the situation.

Item No. 10: It was agreed that \$255.25 should be charged to 3001 Madison Street as an additional assessment for the cost incurred by WMUD for the customer causing a sewer blockage.

Item No. 11: K. T. Newman did mention that it was apparent that the flap had been removed at some point from the service line at Sadie Heard's location (the line would have had to be physically dug up and the flap removed by someone) and a new one had been reinstalled

Item No. 12: Commissioner Bennett asked K. T. Newman if the grinder pump station would be installed prior to the next Board meeting and K. T. assured him that it would be.

Item No. 16 : requires Executive Session - possible litigation

#### **In RE: Dorothy Smith; 109 Pine**

Prior to going into Executive Session Ms. Dorothy Smith addressed the Board and stated that her bills had been \$45, \$65, \$140 and then \$101 this past month, and it's just her and her grandbaby at the house and that she works at night. Commissioner Bennett asked her if she had checked her faucets, toilets, etc., for leaks and she said "yes, but something's not right" for her water bill to be that high. Commissioner Bennett stated that he would have K. T. "pull her billing record and that K. T. will check her meter." K. T. stated that he would check her meter and print out her billing record.

As Shelia White left the meeting, she told the Board that she would be back at the next meeting with all her bills and wanted the Board to prove to her she was not being double-billed for the \$20 late fee.

#### **In RE: Entering Into EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Commissioner Larry Bennett stated that the Board would now enter into Executive Session to discuss a matter that may involve potential litigation.

#### **In RE: Exiting EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Commissioner Larry Bennett stated that the Board was now out of Executive Session.

K. T. Newman asked the Board what they wished to do about Miranda McDaniel's bill. The Board agreed that Ms. McDaniel should be expected to pay her bill, but she could be placed on a payment plan.

The Board agreed that WMUD needed to contact their insurance carrier regarding Joyce Taylor's claim regarding the sewer water flowing under her back door on June 23, 2017 and causing damage in her home due to comments made by the engineer during his visit at the site in August wherein he mentioned that the cause of the backflow into her line came from WMUD's main line. It was agreed that Commissioner Reeves would contact the insurance carrier. NOTE: The insurance carrier stated that there is a \$5,000 deductible to be paid by WMUD.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Commissioner Bennett asked if there was any new business. None was stated.



## OLD BUSINESS

### In RE: Community Center

Commissioner Lawson mentioned that on the past three rentals of the Community Center that whenever someone used the plug-in at the dais that it would not work and that they could not get to the breaker box. Ray had informed her that the breaker box was in the locked closet. Commissioner Colson and Commissioner Bennett both stated that to their knowledge that placement of a breaker box within a closet, let alone a locked closet, was against code. Commissioner Colson stated that he would try to find the key to unlock the closet door to reset the breaker.


Commissioner Bennett mentioned that he had ordered the front doors for the Community Center, but he did not know when they would arrive.

Commissioner Lawson also mentioned that the curtains on the 4 windows looked bad and she was going to try to wash them. Commissioner Reeves asked her how old the curtains were as they may fall apart when they were washed and Commissioner Lawson agreed. Commissioner Reeves stated that she would check around to see if she could locate some curtains somewhere to replace the older curtains.

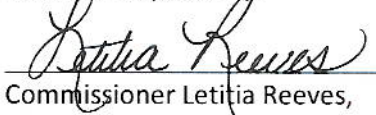
There being no further business to discuss, Commissioner Lawson made the motion that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Colson with all voting "aye." The meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED:

West Madison Utility District

By:   
Commissioner Larry Bennett, President

Minutes Prepared By:

  
Commissioner Letitia Reeves,  
Vice President