

## MEMORANDUM

**TO: RIVANNA WATER & SEWER AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**FROM: THOMAS L. FREDERICK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: RESPONSES TO PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**DATE: JULY 27, 2010**

This report provides brief clarifications on a couple of topics discussed last month during public comments:

**Wet Weather Wastewater Flow:** Ms. Betty Mooney referred to some recent correspondence among RWSA, City, ACSA and Virginia DEQ regarding our collective efforts to improve the sewer system to avoid sanitary sewer overflows during heavy rain events and described the matter as “extremely serious”, suggesting the public has not seen any plans and costs associated with this “threat to health and safety”. She was apparently unaware that RWSA initiated a Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Study after it was approved in RWSA’s 2005 Capital Improvement Plan, and that every update of the CIP, including the 2010 version being introduced on today’s agenda, has included projects to improve the wastewater infrastructure’s capability to properly manage wet weather flow. RWSA has also communicated its efforts regularly to the Board through the On-Going Projects report and other Board reports. It would be a fair statement that for too many years in the not-so-recent past, the utility infrastructure in this community was not properly maintained. The public record is also very conclusive that since 2005 RWSA has been the strongest advocate in this community for rehabilitating and properly maintaining the wastewater system; at times that advocacy has faced some public opposition.

The two projects that will have the most positive impact on remediation of this “extremely serious” issue, the Moores Creek WWTP Upgrade and the replacement of the Meadow Creek Interceptor, are now both under construction. Ironically, in prior public comments Ms. Mooney had opposed both of these projects. With respect to the Meadow Creek Interceptor, RWSA urged the importance of “fast tracking” the replacement of this pipeline at a time during 2008 and 2009 when some citizens were successful in influencing policy decisions that delayed the project several times such that when construction did start a few months ago, it was a year later than the original project schedule had predicted. How “extremely serious” was this issue during those delays?

It is no small feat that RWSA announced in March 2010 that a consensus was reached with the staffs of the City of Charlottesville and the Albemarle County Service Authority on comprehensive goals to reduce inflow and infiltration throughout the regional wastewater collection system. Few communities achieve such a goal voluntarily, without being pressured to do so by regulatory agencies. The final report, reflecting these ambitious yet important goals, is

on today's agenda. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the City Council and ACSA Board for their recent decisions, as both boards as well as the RWSA Board are significantly stepping up efforts on sewer maintenance, in budget documents and on the ground.

**Hazardous Spills:** Ms. Collette Hall expressed a concern that toxic chemicals could spill from I-64 and enter the water supply if the Ragged Mountain Reservoir is expanded. RWSA shares her concern, but does not agree that this concern is avoided by simply not expanding the reservoir. I-64 was built within the Ragged Mountain watershed in the late 1960s and the same risk we are discussing now has been in place for the past 40 years, as the stream that enters the existing reservoir passes through a culvert within the same highway embankment. Spills should also be a concern at other locations, the most significant being the Earlysville Road bridge over the South Fork Reservoir, the most vulnerable location within the present water system. RWSA is presently improving its capability to protect the local citizens from multiple locations, should, heaven forbid, such a spill ever occur.

At recent public meetings we have heard comments suggesting that the new expanded reservoir would cause a spill hazard (as described above, the hazard already exists), and we've also heard that expanding Ragged Mountain is putting "all eggs in one basket". Everyone is entitled to a personal opinion, but we disagree with these statements. The Community Water Supply Plan approved in 2006 would ultimately provide a new pipeline that would directly connect the system's primary source of water (South Fork) with the largest reservoir storage (Ragged Mountain). Under that system, if the Ragged Mountain Reservoir had to be removed from service for an emergency, both the Observatory WTP and South Fork WTP could be served directly from the South Fork Reservoir and the water system reliability is sustained. Likewise, if the South Fork Reservoir had to be removed from service for an emergency, both the Observatory WTP and South Fork WTP could be served directly from the Ragged Mountain Reservoir and the water system reliability is sustained. The redundancy and reliability would be significantly better than what exists today.