

Albemarle County Service Authority Board of Directors

1 The Board of Directors of the Albemarle County Service Authority
2 (ACSA) met in a regular session on February 16, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. at the
3 Administration and Operations Center at 168 Spotnap Road in
4 Charlottesville, Virginia.

5 **Members Present:** Mr. Richard Armstrong, Chair; Mr. Nathan Moore; Dr.
6 Lizbeth Palmer; Mr. John Parcels; Mr. Clarence Roberts; Mr. Charles
7 Tolbert, Vice-Chair.

8 **Members Absent:** None.

9 **Staff Present:** Mike Derdeyn, Brendan Ganz, Jeremy Lynn, Michael Lynn,
10 Quin Lunsford, Alex Morrison, Gary O’Connell, Emily Roach (remote
11 participation from home), Danielle Trent, April Walker, Justin Weiler.

12 **Staff Absent:** None.

13 **Public Present:** Melanie Wemple, E-Source; Filomena Gogle, E-Source;
14 Brian Key, Bedford Water.

15
16 1. Call to Order and Establish a Quorum – Statement of Board Chair

17 Mr. Armstrong called the meeting to order, and a quorum was
18 established. He then read the opening Board Chair statement (Attached as
19 Page _____).

20
21 2. Approve Minutes of January 19, 2023

22 Mr. Parcels stated that he had one small correction on page 9, line
23 28. He stated that the word “ad” should be “and.”

24 ***Mr. Parcels moved to approve the minutes as amended,***
25 ***seconded by Mr. Tolbert. All members voted aye.***

26
27 3. Matters from the Public

28 There were no matters from the public.

29
30 4. Response to Public Comment

31 There was no response to public comment.

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1 5. Consent Agenda

2 **a. Monthly Financial Reports –**

3 **b. Monthly CIP –** Mr. Tolbert stated that he had a question about the
4 Four-Story Backflow project on page 64. He asked if all the customers
5 have been contacted and have responded, or if there are still some to
6 be contacted. Jeremy Lynn, Director of Engineering replied that the
7 staff has been in touch with most of them. He stated that regarding
8 Phase 1 of the project, 23 of 24 have been completed. He noted that
9 the last one is scheduled to be completed Monday. He mentioned that
10 he wanted to give credit to Alex Morrison and Angel Monterrozo, who
11 have both done a tremendous job in bringing Phase 1 to near
12 completion. He stated that if the Board approves the consent agenda,
13 there is a Board authorization included that will add Phases 2 and 3 to
14 the current contract with Foothill Irrigation. He stated that the staff
15 would be ready to begin with those phases almost immediately. He
16 noted that the staff will need to reengage with the property owners for
17 Phases 2 and 3, once there is a work schedule. Mr. Tolbert stated that
18 he thought he recalled the staff having some difficult reaching one
19 customer. Mr. Lynn replied that he would have to double check, but he
20 is sure they are close to having been in touch with every customer.

21 **c. CIP Project Close-Outs –**

22 **d. Monthly Maintenance Update –**

23 **e. Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) Update –**

24 **f. ACSA Board Policy Future Issues Agenda 2022 –**

25 **g. Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Project Update –**

26 **h. Holiday Schedule for 2023 –**

27 **i. ACSA Board Meeting Schedule for 2023 –**

28 **Dr. Palmer moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by**
29 **Mr. Parcels. All members voted aye.**

30
31

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1 6. Strategic Plan Development Report

2 Mr. O’Connell stated that he has scheduled three or four items to
3 discuss today that would not only look back, but also help move the ACSA
4 forward with the Strategic Plan. He stated that the staff did several things
5 back in the fall of 2022 to look at where the organization is going in the
6 future. He stated that he would first go over the interviews conducted with
7 the Board about the Strategic Plan and feedback on future issues. He
8 stated that the second item was the Customer Experience Project that
9 involved several surveys and interviews with customers and employees.
10 He mentioned that the ACSA engaged E-Source, a utility consulting firm, to
11 help with that project. He stated that the third item was the Best Practices
12 Review Panel that took place in the fall with three general managers from
13 other utilities, one of which is present at the meeting today to help with that
14 presentation.

15 **a. Board Strategic Plan Considerations – Summary-** (Attached as
16 Pages _____) Mr. O’Connell stated that from what he has heard, the
17 feedback from the Board seems to fall into seven categories, with the first
18 being the ACSA is operating well in difficult times. He stated that the prior
19 Strategic Plan happened during the pandemic but to everyone’s credit,
20 particularly the ACSA Lead Team, a lot was accomplished. He stated that
21 the other six categories are focus on our people, overall water system
22 improvements, stable long-term finances, good customer experience, new
23 billing system, and climate change and sustainability.

24 Mr. O’Connell stated that in terms of the ACSA operating well in difficult
25 times, some Board comments were that the organization “hums right
26 along,” and is well run, there is steady leadership, and they appreciate the
27 work the staff is doing. He stated that the Board likes the staff being
28 present at Board meetings and enjoys the operational presentations and
29 updates. He mentioned that the Board also commented on the ACSA
30 staff’s quick response to their requests and that great job the organization
31 has done with integrating new technology.

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1 Mr. O'Connell stated that the next slide outlines some of the staff
2 response to the Board's comments on operating well in difficult times. He
3 stated that the staff takes a great deal of pride in their work and likes
4 supporting the Board and ACSA customers. He stated that several
5 employees commented on the implementation of the larger technology
6 projects and the effort to integrate those systems.

7 Mr. O'Connell stated that the next category involves the focus on the
8 ACSA's people/staff. He stated that the Board highlighted succession and
9 keeping other employees involved, how well the ACSA has done in this
10 weird hiring market, training, high morale, low turnover, service and
11 employee recognitions, respect, tolerance, and acknowledgement, and
12 staying current with the salary market. He mentioned that the staff agrees
13 with the Board comments and have proposed a theme of the "Employee
14 Experience" for the next Strategic Plan. He noted that the goal is to retain
15 and recruit a highly skilled workforce and provide employees with
16 resources and opportunities for professional growth.

17 Mr. O'Connell stated that the next category is overall water system
18 improvements (infrastructure). He stated that it begins with the ACSA
19 having clean, safe, reliable, and affordable water service. He stated that
20 over the next five years, there are about \$300 million worth of infrastructure
21 projects between the ACSA and RWSA to deliver that vision. He stated that
22 RWSA will present their CIP program at the upcoming meeting at the end
23 of this month. He mentioned that there will be a significant increase in cost
24 from RWSA, which will require a double-digit increase in costs to ACSA
25 customers to support that. He noted that the staff will go through this
26 increase in depth at the April ACSA Board meeting, so the Board can see
27 the projects that are being discussed and the need for them. He stated that
28 part of infrastructure is reliability and Mike Lynn, Director of Operations,
29 has spent a lot of time working on the Emergency Response Plan. He
30 added that April Walker, Director of I.T., and her staff have done a lot of
31 work on the cybersecurity portion as well.

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1 Mr. O’Connell moved to the next slide, which outlined the Boards
2 comments surrounding the category of stable long-term finances. He stated
3 that there was some discussion about the rates when talking about the
4 budget, and the idea of trying to hold increases to 5% is not feasible. He
5 stated that all the financial policies and approaches tie into the annual
6 submission of the budget and rates in March and April.

7 Mr. O’Connell stated that the next category focused on the customer
8 experience. He stated that the ACSA has a good reputation with customer
9 service that is reflected in the customer survey results. He mentioned that
10 one of themes in the new Strategic Plan will focus on the customer
11 experience and how to improve that. He noted that the goal will be to
12 provide best in class service ensuring the needs of the ACSA customers
13 are exceeded.

14 Mr. O’Connell stated that another category of focus was a new billing
15 system. He stated that about 70% of the ACSA’s customers are using
16 some type of electronic bill payment method. He stated that one of the
17 Strategic Plan items will be a new billing system. He mentioned that the
18 staff is in the midst of developing a request for proposals (RFP) for that
19 project. He mentioned that along with a new billing system will be the
20 integration of a new phone system and website enhancements, given the
21 amount of customer information that can be utilized.

22 Mr. O’Connell stated that the last category was climate change and
23 sustainability. He stated that this is a major part of the ACSA’s vision of
24 “serve and conserve.” He stated that there was a lot of work spent in the
25 last Strategic Plan on energy and water audits, and ways to conserve. He
26 mentioned that the ACSA is looking at solar power for the new satellite
27 facility being built on Avon Street. He noted that the organization is also
28 gearing up for electric vehicles when the market is right.

29 Dr. Palmer asked, regarding the new billing system, if the ACSA was
30 getting rid of Paymentus. Mr. O’Connell replied that Paymentus is attached
31 to the billing system. He stated that it may or may not stay, but the staff will

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1 have to get deeper into the procurement to see how it will work with a new
2 billing system, if at all. He mentioned that there have been limitations with
3 what the ACSA's Paymentus can do because of its connection to
4 BillMaster.

5 Dr. Palmer stated that she uses Paymentus to pay other utility bills and
6 one annoying feature she has seen is the requirement to use automatic
7 withdrawal to avoid a service fee. She stated that this is fine, however the
8 email that one receives regarding their bill does not show how much the bill
9 is. She noted that the customer must log into the system to see the bill
10 amount and look at usage. She stated that if the bill information showed in
11 the email, as opposed to having the extra step of logging into the system, it
12 would be more helpful to customers.

13 Dr. Palmer stated that she also had a question about the ACSA's
14 recycling. She asked what the ACSA recycles. Mr. O'Connell stated that
15 the ACSA recycles everything from office supplies to old meters. He stated
16 that the ACSA also participates in auctions where old equipment gets sold
17 and recycled. Dr. Palmer stated that she was curious as to whether the
18 recycling encompassed the entire organization. Mr. O'Connell replied that
19 the recycling happens across the whole organization. He noted that the
20 recycling shifts as the marketplace changes. He stated that there are bins
21 in the Maintenance shop full of the old brass meters for recycling. He
22 added that the recycling is comprehensive from what he has seen
23 elsewhere.

24 Mr. Tolbert stated that one of the items under Strategic Plan
25 considerations was how to improve the complaints about taste. He asked if
26 the ACSA was receiving a lot of complaints about the taste of the water.
27 Mr. O'Connell replied no and stated that this was a comment from the
28 Board. Mr. Tolbert asked if there was a question about taste on the
29 customer survey. Mr. O'Connell replied that there was a question about
30 taste and odor/water quality. Mr. Tolbert stated that he sees a difference
31 between quality and taste. Mr. O'Connell stated that there are very few

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1 complaints about the taste. He stated that most complaints about water
2 quality are related to discoloring of the water, which usually happens after
3 there has been some flushing or a water leak that causes it. He noted that
4 there has been a sediment issue in one or two places in the system, so
5 there has been a lot of flushing in those areas. He added that the taste
6 complaints almost always come from a customer that was previously on a
7 well system, and the water does not taste the same as well water.

8 Mr. Tolbert stated that the taste of the water, to a large extent, is
9 determined by the treatment process at the plant and the chemicals or
10 filters they are using. Mr. O'Connell stated that the water can pick up a bit
11 of a taste as it goes through the pipe network and if someone has older
12 plumbing in their house. He mentioned that the closer a customer is to the
13 treatment plant, the more they may be able to taste the chlorine in the
14 water as some people are very sensitive to that.

15 Melanie Wemple, consultant with E-Source, stated that there was not a
16 question on the survey specifically about taste, but rather quality, safety,
17 and reliability. Mr. Tolbert stated that it is important to make the distinction
18 between quality and taste because they are not the same thing. Mr.
19 O'Connell stated that most customers make that distinction, and the
20 comments they make are on what they are seeing whether it is air or some
21 discoloration in the water. Mr. Tolbert stated that discoloration would be a
22 change they notice, whereas taste is something that would have always
23 been there. Mr. O'Connell added that he gives a lot of credit to Tim Brown,
24 Environmental Compliance Specialist, who tracks and follows up on any
25 water quality complaints, which are few.

26 Mr. Moore stated that he recalls a discussion a few months ago about
27 the progress on the AMI project and the back-end system, and other
28 systems that the ACSA hopes to automate more in the future. He asked if
29 Mr. O'Connell could speak on that further. Mr. O'Connell replied that all the
30 water consumption information is part of the AMI project. He stated that on
31 the back end of AMI is a sophisticated program called Sensus Analytics

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1 and it is full of algorithms that create all types of reports. He mentioned that
2 there are reports that both the customers and staff can view. He stated that
3 part of the billing system will be integrated with the financial system as well.
4 He noted that part of the Strategic Plan is an item around data
5 management and optimization, to ensure all systems communicate with
6 each other and that the staff is getting the level of reporting necessary. He
7 added that most of the pieces are in place, so the next step is to ensure
8 that everything is connected, and the data is being used to its full potential.

9 ***b. Customer Experience Project – Summary/Recommendations***

10 (Attached as Pages_____) Mr. O’Connell stated that this next
11 item would be presented by Philomena Gogle and Melanie Wemple from
12 E-Source, which is a national utility consulting group. He stated that they
13 have a group that works in customer service/experience, and they were
14 involved in the ACSA’s Customer Experience (CX) Project. He stated that
15 many of their recommendations will come into play with the upcoming
16 Strategic Plan.

17 Melanie Wemple stated that E-Source works with utilities in the United
18 States and Canada mostly, including electric, natural gas, and water. She
19 stated that they led the ACSA’s Customer Experience Project mostly in the
20 third and fourth quarter last year to help the organization reassess where
21 things are in terms of customer experience. She stated that she would give
22 the Board a quick overview of the project, discuss some of the key insights
23 and recommendations, and any questions the Board may have.

24 Ms. Wemple stated that she felt it would be helpful to level set and
25 define what customer experience is at the beginning of the project. She
26 stated that most people think it just involves customer service and phone
27 calls, but customer experience is everything related to the business that
28 affects a customer’s perception including service quality, customer service,
29 and the price of service. She mentioned that service quality relates to the
30 quality of the water, reliability, pressure, safety, taste, and odor. She noted
31 that customer service includes the image and branding of a company,

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1 which is important because a lot of customers do not directly interact with
2 ACSA employees. She stated that the price of service is made up of things
3 like rates, fees, and one-time payments. She added that one of the
4 objectives of the CX project was to identify gaps and opportunities by
5 understanding these key CX interactions across the ACSA and make
6 recommendations based on those areas.

7 Ms. Wemple stated that in September, E-Source started a current state
8 assessment, working with ACSA staff to pull in some existing CX insights.
9 She stated that they also held small group interview sessions with the staff
10 and leadership team. She noted that E-Source likes to work from the inside
11 out, to gain an understanding of what the employees feel the organization's
12 strengths are in terms of customer experience. She mentioned that this is
13 where the voice of the employee really comes into play. She stated that
14 they also conducted a survey with ACSA customers and used this tool to
15 recruit a few customers for virtual interviews. She stated that all this
16 information was compiled to create their recommendations and develop a
17 CX action plan for the ACSA.

18 Ms. Wemple stated that next she would walk through the Board through
19 some of the findings and key insights, beginning with the voice of the
20 employee. She stated that when speaking with the staff, it was clear that
21 there is a strong understanding of what it means to be a good steward of
22 customer experience. She stated that there was also a strong alignment on
23 how ACSA employees want to serve customers, despite not having a
24 formal CX vision. She noted that this is a strength of the organization, as
25 most utilities have a disconnect between what it means to deliver a good
26 customer experience and the employees charged with doing so.

27 Ms. Wemple stated that when looking at the voice of the employee,
28 there was also the strong sentiment that leadership exemplifies the desired
29 behaviors. She stated that when employees were asked about having the
30 tools, skills, and resources needed, there was a strong positive response.
31 She mentioned that there was also a strong sense that leadership clearly

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1 communicates to their staff the idea that customers are a priority. She
2 noted that there may be an opportunity to think about goals and metrics,
3 which may not currently be designed with the customer experience in mind.

4 Ms. Wemple stated that a lot of employees did express that the
5 workforce is lean and there are a lot of manual processes, which can both
6 create CX risk. She mentioned that employees felt some of the internal
7 systems are not optimized to make it easy to provide that good customer
8 experience. She noted that another challenge employees saw is attracting
9 and retaining a strong workforce. She mentioned that turnover in the
10 Maintenance department specifically was noted as a challenge. She stated
11 that training on CX expectations is a bit informal, so there is an opportunity
12 to solidify that.

13 Ms. Wemple stated that E-Source graphed the evolution of the ACSA's
14 customer relationship, based on the interviews they conducted. She stated
15 that what they saw was employees tended to break up the customer
16 experience into three buckets. She stated that the first one was
17 paternalistic, which was pre-2005, and took the stance of the ACSA knows
18 what is best for its customers and will give them the solutions that the
19 organization thinks they need. She mentioned that more recently, between
20 2005-2010, the customer relationship turned into a more facilitative one,
21 where the ACSA focused on building relationships in the community and
22 being more responsive to customer requests. She added that in the last
23 decade or so, the relationship has been more transformational, with a more
24 enthusiastic partnership with the customer.

25 Ms. Wemple stated that she would now switch gears to the voice of the
26 customer. She stated that one can see the positive things going on at the
27 ACSA when looking at the customer survey results. She stated that there
28 were two key questions asked in the customer survey last year, which were
29 overall satisfaction and the ease of doing business. She noted that 85% of
30 customers were either satisfied or very satisfied overall, and a similar
31 percentage felt it was easy or very easy to conduct business with the

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1 ACSA. She stated that there was also an open-ended question asking
2 customers to explain why they gave the response they did. She noted that
3 most of the positive statements were related to employees and reliability of
4 service. She mentioned that there were only two customers that
5 commented on the taste of the water, out of about 200 total responses.

6 Mr. Parcels asked if there were any comments or takeaways from the
7 customers that gave a response of dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Ms.
8 Wemple replied yes. She stated that most of them were about rates, fees,
9 and billing which, not to discount the comments, is common. Mr. Parcels
10 stated that the ACSA's marketing makes the point of how the
11 organization's rates and fees compared to the broad range, so perhaps the
12 customers are not seeing or understanding that.

13 Mr. O'Connell added that it could just be the customer(s) had a high bill.
14 He stated that one of the things the staff tried to do was capture the
15 dissatisfied responses, track them, call the customers, interview them and
16 follow up, and in a few cases, go out into the field. He stated that it
17 surprised him that a couple of customers that chose "dissatisfied" as a
18 response on everything had small changes in their bill from one month to
19 the next. Ms. Wemple stated that the ACSA did a lot of extra work. She
20 stated that a lot of utilities do not use the survey to close the loop. She
21 stated that this coordinating nicely with the E-Source customer interviews.

22 Mr. O'Connell stated that the survey was answered by 800 customers
23 out of 22,000, so the results reflect a certain voice. He noted that almost all
24 the surveys were hand-written, even though they were given the option to
25 fill it out online. Ms. Wemple agreed that most of the surveys were done on
26 paper, which is uncommon. She stated, however, that it worked out nicely
27 being able to insert them with the monthly bills. She added that there was
28 the option to scan a QR code and fill it out online, and e-bill customers
29 were encouraged to use this method as well.

30 Ms. Wemple stated that the customer survey was on a simple 1-5 scale,
31 with 1 being the lowest rating and 5 being the highest. She stated that

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1 everything was put in to one of two main categories. She stated that the
2 first was interactions, which looked at a few key customer interaction areas.
3 She mentioned that the online interaction area ranked a bit lower when it
4 came to ease of interaction. She stated that making an online service
5 request is a relatively new functionality for the ACSA, thus some customers
6 had not had the opportunity to use it. She mentioned that participation in a
7 water conservation program, reporting a water or service issue, starting, s
8 or transferring services, reaching a customer service representative, and
9 understanding the bill were other items in this area that increased in ease
10 according to the scores. She added that this trend is similar to other
11 utilities, except for starting or transferring services. She noted that this
12 tends to be on the lower end of the scoring.

13 Mr. Parcels stated that this alludes to a comparison and asked if Ms.
14 Wemple could be more specific. Ms. Wemple stated that some utilities are
15 very poor at starting or transferring services. She stated that in this case,
16 reaching a customer service representative is scored high because it is
17 very person-driven. She noted that these are not self-service transactions
18 that are being scored. She noted that she thinks if the question asked how
19 easy it is to start service on the website, the score would be lower.

20 Mr. Parcels asked, on the flip side of that, if there was an
21 overwhelming of customer requests that tax the system or is it tolerable.
22 Mr. O'Connell replied that in a world of post-pandemic customer arrears,
23 the system has been greatly taxed. He noted that it has gotten better over
24 the last few weeks. Mr. Lunsford added that the staff can readily manage
25 the volume of requests pre- and post-pandemic, but there is the opportunity
26 to help the customer service team better serve customers in the manner
27 they wish to be able to.

28 Ms. Wemple stated that the second category of questions the survey
29 asked customers were a set of agreement questions. She stated that the
30 areas that ranked the highest were providing safe and reliable water
31 service and communicating useful information about the water. She noted

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1 that the challenges are in the areas of reasonable prices and keeping
2 customers informed about service disruptions. She noted that the ACSA
3 also scored well on having helpful employees who are quick to respond,
4 which applies to those employees in the field as well.

5 Ms. Wemple stated that looking at all the information, E-Source came
6 up with six key recommendations for the ACSA's customer experience.
7 She stated that one of them was about establishing what is known as a CX
8 vision. She stated that this will help to set customer experience priorities
9 and shape future enhancements, which should tie in nicely with the ACSA's
10 mission, vision, and values. She added that having a CX vision is also
11 helpful for onboarding and training, as it will help set the expectation for
12 how employees are to serve customers.

13 Ms. Wemple stated that the next recommendation was to enhance the
14 website, increase self-service, and create a preference center to support
15 automation. She stated that this is an opportunity for the office staff to
16 focus on other important items, rather than fielding so many phone calls.
17 She noted that a preference center, like what may be seen with online
18 banking, will help customers customize how they interact and communicate
19 with the ACSA.

20 Ms. Wemple stated that the third recommendation was to "right-size"
21 customer service to ensure effective operations. She stated that the ACSA
22 Customer Service team is a small one that does a lot. She stated that with
23 a new billing system and the AMI system, it is important to look at how the
24 team is organized because those technology changes will impact how they
25 interact with customers.

26 Ms. Wemple stated that on the note about customers not having an
27 awareness of, or understanding how the rates are established, the fourth
28 recommendation is for a customer communication strategy. She stated that
29 this includes a focus on customer experience, rates, value, and reliability to
30 help them connect the dots. She mentioned that it is challenging, especially
31 if there is an expected rate increase.

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1 Ms. Wemple stated that the fifth recommendation focuses on new
2 connections. She stated that there is a lot of construction in the area, which
3 impacts whole communities and individuals alike. She noted that it also
4 affects contractors and developers, who are essentially customers of the
5 ACSA as well. She mentioned that the ACSA makes it easy for water and
6 sewer customers to pay their bills, and it is important to think about how the
7 organization can make it easy for contractors and builders as well.

8 Ms. Wemple stated that the sixth, and final, recommendation was to
9 assess opportunities to attract and retain workforce, particularly in the
10 Maintenance department. She stated that part of this is focusing on how
11 the ACSA looks to someone in the job market. She mentioned that this
12 may be something to think about when developing a customer
13 communication strategy.

14 ***c. Best Practices Review Panel – Summary/Recommendations***

15 (Attached as Pages _____) Mr. O’Connell stated the Best Practices
16 Review Panel is a combination of things that other utilities around the
17 country practice. He stated that the ACSA conducted a Best Practices
18 Review Panel for the last Strategic Plan and found it very effective. He
19 stated that he would walk the Board through the process and some of the
20 recommendations.

21 Mr. O’Connell stated that the in-person panel took place over the
22 course of two days last fall. He stated that the goal was to conduct the
23 panel in preparation for the new Strategic Plan for 2023-2025. He stated
24 that three panelists were invited and attended- Brian Key, Executive
25 Director of the Bedford Regional Water Authority, Bill Mawyer, Executive
26 Director of the RWSA, and Phil Martin, Executive Director of the Augusta
27 County Water Authority. He mentioned that number of ACSA staff were
28 involved in the panel as well.

29 Mr. O’Connell stated that in terms of the panel agenda, the first day
30 consisted of presentations and providing background information, and then
31 follow-up conversations. He stated that the second day was focused on

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1 more strategic areas, gaps, challenges, and opportunities. He mentioned
2 that the panel then developed takeaways and recommendations for a
3 summary report, which is what he will be sharing with the Board today.

4 Mr. O'Connell stated that the next couple of slides show the ACSA's
5 identified organizational gaps, challenges, and opportunities. He stated that
6 these came out of the staff work and focus on items that the ACSA should
7 be addressing for the next couple of years. He mentioned that some of the
8 items have been included in the new Strategic Plan as well. He noted that
9 some of these are items that the staff has given Board presentations about,
10 such as the Lead Inventory and Documentation.

11 Mr. O'Connell stated that all three of the utilities that participated in the
12 panel are similar in size, but they all do treatment which is different from
13 the ACSA. He mentioned that a couple of them do solid waste, some have
14 direct bill customers, and some are wholesalers. He stated that he feels
15 they all understand the utility world, and the ACSA staff wanted to get their
16 perspective on what it should be focusing on. He stated that he and Brian
17 Key from Bedford would present the next portion of the presentation
18 together. He mentioned that Mr. Key would present the summary
19 comments on behalf of the panel, and then they would go back to the
20 recommendations to discuss those as well.

21 Mr. Key stated that he is the Executive Director of the Bedford
22 Regional Water Authority, or Bedford Water as they refer to themselves.
23 He stated that Bedford Water is not only very similar in size and approach
24 to the ACSA, but it also has similar challenges and strengths. He
25 mentioned that he has been with Bedford Water for 23 years, and the
26 Executive Director for 12 years, and he has seen many of the same
27 challenges the ACSA has faced.

28 Mr. Key moved to the next slide which outlined some of the summary
29 comments from the panel. He stated that the first comment is that the
30 maintenance staff is amazing. He stated that they have a lot of work to do
31 on any given day, which is difficult when you have vacancies and issues

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1 with filling them. He mentioned that they are seeing the same thing at
2 Bedford Water.

3 Mr. Key stated that the Administration department is also amazing. He
4 stated that Emily Roach and her team deal with public relations, human
5 resources, and administration. He noted that their team does a lot with very
6 few people, which ties into the customer experience. He mentioned that the
7 panel felt there was an opportunity for some help in that department,
8 whether internal or external. He noted, for example, that Bedford Water has
9 a full-time employee dedicated to public relations and another that assists
10 with that. He stated that this ties in with the third bullet point, which would
11 be to reduce the items one department is doing, which frees up more time
12 and enhances productivity. He added that this not only provides a better
13 customer experience, but a better internal employee experience as well.

14 Dr. Palmer asked if Bedford Water did all its own water and sewer
15 treatment and provided the water and sewer services. She stated, in other
16 words, that Bedford Water is not the customer but the provider. Mr. Key
17 replied yes, for the most part. He stated that Bedford does have
18 agreements in place to buy water from the City of Lynchburg and Western
19 Virginia Water Authority. He mentioned that Bedford also sells water to the
20 Western Virginia Water Authority. He stated that Bedford is a wholesale
21 customer and wholesale provider but does perform water treatment and
22 sewer collection for the vast majority of its customers. Dr. Palmer asked
23 how many connections Bedford has. Mr. Key replied that Bedford Water
24 has 15,000 customers, serving about 32,000 people.

25 Mr. Key stated that all the ACSA's departments are very strong, and
26 the department heads are very engaged with the community. He stated Mr.
27 Lunsford spoke earlier about the desire for customers to have the capacity
28 to do more online, and Bedford would like that as well.

29 Mr. Key stated that some of the training opportunities that the ACSA
30 has such as BizLibrary and the video SOPs is great and is leading the
31 industry on training and providing guidance and direction to its employees.

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1 Mr. Key stated that the Hydrant and Valve Maintenance program is
2 also a leader in the industry. He stated that his wish would be for Bedford
3 to have a person that solely maintained their fire hydrants, but currently
4 they rely on the local fire departments. He stated that the ACSA's proactive
5 approach to maintaining hydrants and valves is very impressive. He
6 mentioned that valves must be exercised on a regular basis, or they will not
7 work when you need them. He added that the Unidirectional Flushing
8 Program is great as well to maintain the water quality at a high level.

9 Mr. Key stated that the ACSA's technology is very good. He stated that
10 he was so impressed with the Board room setup, he spoke with April
11 Walker, ACSA Director of IT, about how it worked. He mentioned that
12 Bedford has now set up their board room to mirror what the ACSA does.
13 He stated that the pandemic really drove the need for hybrid meetings, and
14 they have become the new normal.

15 Mr. Key stated that in terms of safety, Mike Lynn, Director of
16 Operations, does a great job. He stated that Bedford has two safety
17 employees, one full-time and one part-time. He mentioned that he feels this
18 is the right staff size for Bedford because they have a few more risks with
19 the water treatment plants and wastewater plant. He noted that there may
20 be an opportunity for the ACSA to add another safety person in the future.

21 Mr. Key stated that the ACSA has a great confined space training
22 team. He mentioned that Bedford's full-time safety employee ensures that
23 the organization is compliant with OSHA, which is a lot to put on someone
24 who is trying to do taps, fix leaks, or perform preventative maintenance on
25 the system. He stated that this is something that possibly the ACSA could
26 have its safety employee take over in the future.

27 Mr. Key stated that the last bullet point refers to the Hydrant Meter
28 Program. He stated that the panel thinks it is great that there are only six
29 hydrants designated for the program. He mentioned, however, that these
30 programs are a hassle to maintain and there is a huge liability for potential
31 cross-connection. He noted that there is a lot of trust put into whoever is

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1 using the hydrant. He stated that Bedford Water operates on the idea that
2 hydrants are meant for fire suppression and are not a meter system to sell
3 water out of. He stated that it is a great service to the customer, but it
4 comes with a fair amount of hassle and a huge risk. He added that he is
5 not sure how, but the ACSA has navigated this very well thus far.

6 Dr. Palmer asked what Bedford does to provide water to contractors.
7 Mr. Key replied that there are a couple of things. He stated that firstly,
8 Bedford encourages contractors to install a frost-proof yard hydrant as a
9 temporary connection until they get their permanent connection, which
10 works in most cases. He stated that this does not work for something like
11 filling a swimming pool. He mentioned that in those cases, there are two
12 automated fill stations where customers can put in a code which will open a
13 valve with a backflow prevention device, and they can fill up their tanks and
14 haul it where they need to. He noted that the disadvantage to this is that
15 there are only two filling stations and Bedford County is 765 square miles.
16 He added that the other challenge with the fill stations is that there is only a
17 two-inch meter in the structure that houses the backflow prevention device,
18 which means the water flows very slowly. He stated that it would take about
19 45 minutes to fill a tanker truck, as opposed to about 25 minutes from a fire
20 hydrant. He added that they feel it is a good price to pay to keep the
21 system safe and they do not have to track them down.

22 Dr. Palmer stated that Albemarle County is similar in size to Bedford.
23 She stated that there is only one place in Albemarle County for people to
24 empty septic systems, and there is only one commercial place to dispose
25 of trash.

26 Mr. Key moved to the next slide, which outlined a final summary of the
27 panel's comments. He stated that the ACSA's e-bill and e-pay systems
28 have greatly improved in the last three years. He mentioned that when he
29 was at the ACSA for the last panel three years ago, the organization did
30 not have that functionality. He stated that the ACSA leadership team is very
31 competent and collaborative. He stated that they think outside of the box,

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1 as opposed to doing things a certain way because it is the way they have
2 always been done. He noted that this type of open approach is huge, as
3 utilities generally tend to be very traditional. He stated that this type of
4 thinking must change and become more customer focused. He stated that
5 the ACSA's facilities are very nice. He stated that the panel was able to
6 tour the building and the maintenance warehouse on their last visit, but
7 they did see a video slide show of several of the ACSA's other facilities this
8 time. He stated that he touched on the ACSA's technology earlier, and AMI
9 is a huge change in three years also. He stated that Bedford Water has a
10 combination of AMI and AMR for their system, so some of the meters are
11 radio reads, some are drive-by, and some are older, larger meters that
12 must be physically read. He stated that Mr. Lunsford and his staff have
13 repeatedly won awards for the budget and GFOA awards on the audit. He
14 stated that Bedford Water has a long history of receiving GFOA awards for
15 their audit, but not for the budget document. He noted that it is very easy to
16 read and understand both the ACSA's budget document and the audit
17 report.

18 Mr. Key stated that he and Mr. O'Connell would play off each other to
19 present the next few slides. He stated that he would go through some of
20 the panel recommendations, and Mr. O'Connell would touch on the ACSA's
21 follow-up comments to those recommendations. He stated that the first
22 recommendation was a public relations staff member or consultant. He
23 stated, as he mentioned earlier, that Bedford Water has an employee that
24 does nothing but handle public relations. He mentioned that they post to
25 social media about two to three times a week. He noted that this can be a
26 challenge, but it is important to enhance the customer experience.

27 Mr. O'Connell stated that the ACSA has a contract with Water PIO,
28 who assists with items such as newsletters, press releases, social media
29 postings, and website postings. He stated that part of the new Strategic
30 Plan and customer experience efforts over the next few years is to take
31 another look at all of that and decide how to take it to the next step.

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1 Mr. Key stated that the next recommendation was for the ACSA to
2 consider using additional consultants. He stated that the organization has a
3 lean staff and if they cannot staff up, they can source work out to
4 consultants.

5 Mr. O’Connell replied that this is one of the items that will be
6 considered in the new Strategic Plan. He stated that there will be some
7 requests before the Board soon for a few new staff members to deal with
8 day-to-day issues, as well as some of the Strategic Plan items. He
9 mentioned that the ACSA is also rethinking several areas currently to see if
10 a consultant or third-party can help with some of the workload.

11 Mr. Key stated that the next recommendation was for the ACSA to
12 designate a safety coordinator. He stated that the reason he emphasized
13 this earlier is because Bedford Water had a chemical incident last April. He
14 stated that a staff member was unloading a truck and unfortunately put the
15 chemical into the wrong tank. He stated that the two chemicals mixed and
16 created a small chlorine gas release. He noted that they have lots of SOPs
17 in place, but staff had not been trained as well as they thought. He stated
18 that, more importantly, there were no checks and balances in place either.

19 Mr. O’Connell replied that the ACSA plans to address this item in a
20 couple of ways. He stated that periodically, the ACSA brings in its
21 insurance carrier to perform safety reviews. He noted that there will be a
22 retirement in administration within the next year or so, and the plan is to do
23 some reorganization to have someone take on the role of safety
24 coordinator. He mentioned that the ACSA has a strong safety culture, and
25 the supervisors are responsible to ensure work practices are handled in a
26 safe manner.

27 Dr. Palmer asked if, in the areas where additional staff is being
28 recommended, the ACSA has looked at opportunities to work with the City
29 and RWSA. Mr. O’Connell replied that the ACSA has regular conversations
30 with RWSA, and Ms. Roach meets with their HR personnel regularly as
31 well. He stated that RWSA does have a full-time safety employee. He

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1 mentioned that the ACSA had a conversation this week about doing a joint
2 video with the City and RWSA on the upcoming infrastructure
3 improvements, water quality, lead and copper, and other items.

4 Mr. Key stated that the next recommendation was about winter sewer
5 limits and the exclusion meter program. He stated that the ACSA puts a lot
6 of effort into adding the deduct meters and dealing with the challenges that
7 come along with the billing. He stated that the panel felt there may be an
8 opportunity to minimize some of that effort and still give the customer the
9 experience of not paying for what they do not use during the winter.

10 Mr. O'Connell replied that the staff has been exploring policy
11 alternatives. He stated that the exclusion meter project has taken a lot of
12 time and they are looking for a different approach that will still capture the
13 exclusion meter reading without the extensive piping.

14 Mr. Key stated that the next recommendation was to continue the
15 good, proactive work with the CCTV program. He stated that Bedford
16 Water does have a trailer mounted system, but the challenge is finding the
17 staff to go out and do the work. He noted that the ACSA is doing more than
18 most in being proactive and finding issues before they become a larger
19 problem.

20 Mr. O'Connell replied that the staff's takeaway from this
21 recommendation is that they need to look at the data that is being collected
22 and how it is being managed and reported. He stated that it is amazing
23 how the ACSA is a newer utility, but there are several issues that pop up in
24 the sewer system. He mentioned that the organization spends a lot of time
25 and effort on capital projects and repairs to ensure they are up to speed.
26 Mr. Key added that the data management piece may be something that
27 lends itself to a dashboard system. He stated that Bedford is currently
28 evaluating one that will allow them to connect to multiple databases. He
29 stated that it can even be taken a step further and hosted on the website so
30 that customers can see certain information as well.

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1 Mr. Key stated that the next recommendation was to utilize a firm to
2 assist with easement negotiations. He stated that negotiating easements is
3 something that takes an enormous amount of time, and it is something that
4 can be sourced out to a consultant.

5 Mr. O'Connell replied that engineering is exploring this option. Mr. Lynn
6 added that they have developed a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) but
7 have not made any decisions yet. Mr. O'Connell stated that one of the pros
8 with the ACSA handling the negotiations is that the staff can address any
9 concerns the property owner may have. He noted that the process can
10 become long and drawn out, and sometimes outside firms can become
11 aggressive because they want to conclude the matter. He stated that this
12 could lead to legal action in a situation that the ACSA probably could have
13 worked through.

14 Mr. Key stated that the next recommendation, which was a comment
15 from Bill Mawyer, is to expand Cityworks for "life cycle" use. He stated that
16 a life cycle analysis using the asset management system will help to put
17 together a CIP program for pipe maintenance and replacement.

18 Mr. O'Connell replied that Cityworks has a module called Operational
19 Insights that the ACSA is in the midst of implementing. He stated that this
20 will be the asset management, which will include that life-cycle approach.

21 Mr. Key stated that the next recommendation, or comment, is that the
22 ACSA is a member of Sourcewell, a cooperative procurement organization.
23 He stated that it is a great system that Bedford uses as well. He noted that
24 their organization just purchased a skid steer and saved about \$12,000
25 using the cooperative procurement.

26 Mr. O'Connell replied that the ACSA also takes advantage of state
27 contract pricing, particularly on vehicles. He stated that the organization
28 has also been able to take advantage of contract the City of Charlottesville
29 and Albemarle County have as well.

30 Mr. Key stated that the next recommendation was to focus on diversity.
31 He stated that he went to San Antonio, TX this year and half of the

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1 sessions he attended had some component devoted to diversity and
2 inclusion. He mentioned that this is a big challenge that he feels all utilities
3 will need to address in the future.

4 Mr. O'Connell replied that part of the Strategic Plan focus will be
5 centered around recruitment, so diversity and inclusion will be a part of that
6 as well.

7 Mr. Key stated that the next recommendation was for the ACSA to
8 evaluate a call-out system for outages. He stated that the staff mentioned
9 that the ACSA was teaming up with UVA and the City of Charlottesville to
10 discuss training or opportunities to work together. He noted that Bedford
11 Water uses their county's emergency response system called Reverse 911
12 that has all the customer's data. He stated that users can go into the
13 system, draw a map around the service disruption area, and the system will
14 call out to all the numbers in that service area.

15 Mr. O'Connell replied that the setup here is a bit different, so the staff
16 is not sure if that would be an option. He mentioned, however, that the
17 ACSA does want to look at some type of emergency notification and that
18 entire process, not just the electronic notification itself. He stated that part
19 of it will be having quality data, such as phone numbers and email
20 addresses.

21 Mr. Key stated that one of the things he is constantly talking about is
22 communications. He stated that his mantra is that the right information
23 must be given to the right person at the right time, or it is useless. He
24 stated that Bedford uses SWAY, which is an online communication tool. He
25 mentioned that each manager types something into a newsletter every
26 week. He stated that he reviews this and sends it out to all their Board
27 members, employees, and stakeholders in the community. He stated that
28 this serves as a quick snapshot of what Bedford is doing each week and is
29 much quicker.

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1 Mr. O’Connell replied that part of the customer experience project was
2 to look at the employee experience, which includes communication to
3 employees.

4 Mr. Key stated that the final item was similar to the previous one, but
5 with a focus on external communication. He stated that there are a lot of
6 players in the community that like to be informed about what is going on,
7 and it is important to find a vehicle to provide that information.

8 Mr. O’Connell replied that he feels the ACSA is doing this very well. He
9 stated that there is always room for improvement, but he thinks there is a
10 good relationship between the ACSA, RWSA, the City, and UVA.

11 Mr. O’Connell state that the next slide highlighted some of the ACSA
12 staff’s takeaways and observations from the panel. He stated that the
13 organization is very proud of its employee group and how much they
14 accomplish. He stated that the ACSA sees itself as a leader in best
15 practices with the need to continue making improvements. He mentioned
16 that there was some good discussion and the staff left feeling as if the
17 ACSA is working on the right issues. He noted that, given the size of the
18 staff, the challenge will be phasing all the capital projects and strategic
19 initiatives over the next three years. He mentioned that one hope is to finish
20 the AMI project in 2023. He stated that the staff will give the Board an
21 update on that project next month. He noted that the delay in receiving
22 meters slowed down the project, but the meters are now starting to show
23 up. He stated that the ACSA will continue to assess the lean side in its
24 staffing. He mentioned that there are a couple of new positions that will be
25 proposed in the budget that will help with this, but it will probably be an
26 ongoing issue. He stated that he feels the Best Practices Panel was a very
27 effective process overall and helped the ACSA to focus strategically. He
28 added that many of the recommendations will be included in the Proposed
29 2023-2025 Strategic Plan.

30 Dr. Palmer stated that she wanted to thank Brian Key for taking the
31 time to come and present with Mr. O’Connell today. Mr. Key said that he

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1 learned just as much from this process as he contributed. He stated that it
2 has been rewarding for him to take home a lot of new ideas.

3 Dr. Palmer stated that in the beginning of the presentation, Mr. Key
4 mentioned that Bedford Water has Board members that regularly
5 participate in meetings virtually. She asked if the Board members that
6 participated virtually did so because of a health or scheduling issue, or if
7 they just decided to participate that way. Mr. Key replied that Bedford's By-
8 Laws were revised during the pandemic to allow for virtual attendance at
9 two (2) meetings per year for no particular reason. He noted that if there is
10 a medical issue, the member can attend remotely as long as necessary to
11 accommodate that. He stated that there still must be a quorum for the
12 Board to take action on an item.

13 Mr. Moore stated that he also wanted to thank Mr. Key for joining the
14 meeting today. He stated that the presentation was a deep dive into all the
15 operational processes and themes. He mentioned that it did not occur to
16 him how different service authorities would communicate and talk, and he
17 thinks it is fantastic.

18 ***d. Discussion of Strategic Plan Process & Next Steps***

19 Mr. O'Connell stated that next month, the staff would spend some time
20 going through the proposed Strategic Plan. He stated that the ACSA is
21 focusing on four theme areas with the new plan – data optimization,
22 business continuity, the customer experience, and the employee
23 experience. He stated that on top of that, there are 12 workplan items that
24 fall within those themes, and the thought is the staff will give quarterly
25 reports to the Board.

26 Mr. O'Connell stated that with data optimization, the ACSA will be
27 looking at data mapping, integration, data classification, document
28 management system, data dashboards, and reporting. He stated that in
29 terms of business continuity, the organization is looking at a formal
30 business continuity plan. He mentioned that a lot of the components are in
31 place, but the plan is not in writing. He stated that the staff will also be

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1 conducting an audit of operations, which will look at space, staffing, the use
2 of consultants, and workloads. He stated that the customer experience
3 includes the CX vision, new billing and phone system, website
4 enhancements, customer engagement events, and useful customer
5 communication. He stated that the last area is the employee experience
6 and items such as recruitment, retention, engagement, training, and
7 succession.

8
9 7. Security Assessment Updates/ IT Report

10 April Walker, Director of IT, stated that she would begin her
11 presentation (Attached as Pages_____) with a recap and updates since
12 last February. She stated that in 2021, the ACSA contracted with Synigent
13 Technologies to assess the organization’s security. She stated that at that
14 time, the ACSA adopted the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security
15 Agency (CISA), AWWA, and FBI standards to follow. She mentioned that
16 the IT staff reported its findings to the Board last February and where they
17 were on the implementation of recommendations.

18 Ms. Walker stated that as a recap, the next slide outlines the
19 Security Assessment. She stated that the ACSA was assessed on 102
20 controls, based off 22 categories. She stated that the next slide shows an
21 example of one of the categories that the ACSA was graded on, as well as
22 the subcategories. She noted that the example in the slide is asset
23 management, and the ACSA was graded on whether it was in place,
24 partially in place, or not in place at all.

25 Ms. Walker stated that at the time of the assessment in June 2021,
26 the ACSA had 32% of the controls in place, which meant there was a lot of
27 work to be done. She mentioned that when the IT department updated the
28 Board in February of last year, that number had increased to 67%. She
29 noted that today, the ACSA has 94% of the controls in place.

30 Ms. Walker stated that the next slide outlines some of the
31 recommendations that were implemented. She stated that the learning

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1 management system is BizLibrary, which the staff will be presenting on in a
2 few months. She mentioned that the staff conducted a third-party
3 penetration test to see if someone was able to get into the ACSA's system,
4 which they were not. She stated that the ACSA hired an ISO Systems
5 Engineer who handles the cybersecurity and monitoring. She noted that the
6 ACSA updated its SCADA system, as well as its physical security system.
7 She stated that there were also some firewall changes, multi-factor
8 authentication was implemented, and the ACSA purchased a Security
9 Event and Incident Management software solution (SEIM).

10 Ms. Walker stated that at the time of the assessment, the ACSA
11 had 25% of the controls partially in place. She noted that currently, only 6%
12 of the items are partially in place, which is due to factors such as project
13 timelines or funding. She stated that the first of those items is data
14 mapping, classification, and dashboarding. She stated that this is part of
15 some projects that are included in the Strategic Plan as well as the CIP
16 program. She stated that the Avon property development that the Board is
17 familiar with, is currently in the design process. She stated that the firewall
18 upgrade is one that the staff could have completed, but it was not fiscally
19 responsible because it had just been purchased. She noted that instead,
20 the staff just performed some firewall changes in the system.

21 Ms. Walker stated that at the time of the assessment in 2021, 43%
22 of the controls were not in place. She stated that last February, that
23 number was 12%, but today it is 0% as there is nothing that is not in place.
24 She stated that the IT department has developed a multi-year Technology
25 Plan to help them stay on goal. She stated that the plan follows the
26 Strategic Plan and its included projects.

27 Ms. Walker stated that the next slide shows a picture of the IT staff.
28 She stated that she wanted to give a huge thanks to Solomon Wondimu,
29 who is the ACSA's ISO Systems Engineer. She mentioned that he did most
30 of the cybersecurity initiatives, but the entire team was involved. She
31 mentioned that the IT staff also could not have done it without the ACSA

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1 Lead Team who championed and supported their project. She added that
2 she also wanted to thank the ACSA staff and the ACSA Boar for their
3 support as well.

4 Ms. Walker stated that even though the assessment is closing out,
5 IT's work is not done. She stated that even though the ACSA adopted new
6 standards in 2021, the IT department has begun implementing stricter
7 standards from the Center of Internet Security (CIS). She mentioned that
8 the IT staff is also reviewing all its policies and updating them for
9 enhancements. She added that the ACSA has also subscribed to several
10 notifications, such as the most recent one yesterday for Apple devices.

11 Mr. Tolbert stated that under implemented recommendations it lists
12 "lowered incident thresholds." He asked what type of incidents does the
13 ACSA encounter. Ms. Walker replied that this comment refers to the
14 firewall. She stated that the organization lowered the threshold for when it
15 is notified. She mentioned that previously, the staff would not be notified if
16 someone attempted to hack into the system, but it was lowered so the staff
17 is notified if someone even attempts to get in or pings the system looking
18 for an open port. Mr. Tolbert asked if there were people trying to get in. Ms.
19 Walker replied yes, all the time. She stated that it heightened during the
20 pandemic, as people were at home and bored. She noted that everyone
21 has it happen, as hackers are just looking for open ports to get into the
22 system.

23 Mr. Parcels asked how long and how involved the Android and
24 Apple updates are. Ms. Walker replied that the ACSA does not have any
25 Android devices. She stated that for mobile deployment, such as the field
26 staff, the ACSA uses all iOS devices such as iPads and iPhones. She
27 mentioned that the process involves collecting all of them to be updated.
28 She noted that the ACSA does have a mobile device management (MDM)
29 software that they are implementing. She stated that this would make the
30 process seamless, as the updates would occur automatically. She

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1 mentioned that it is not implemented on all devices yet, so the staff did
2 have to physically collect a lot of them to push those updates.

3 Mr. Parcels asked if Ms. Walker could explain more about the
4 firewall update and replacement. Ms. Walker replied that at the time of the
5 assessment, the firewall was new. She stated that the assessor was not
6 familiar with the ACSA's firewall or its capabilities. She noted that when
7 Solomon was hired, he had extensive knowledge about the type of firewall
8 the ACSA has, and he was able to make it do what the assessor wanted.
9 She mentioned that the recommendation was to replace it with a more
10 commonly used type of firewall, and the staff is planning to do that next
11 year. Mr. Parcels asked why the staff would want to replace it, if it now
12 does what the ACSA needs it to do. Ms. Walker replied that it is due for
13 replacement. She stated that the maintenance schedule is every three to
14 five years, and the service contract will expire as well. She noted that they
15 have the option to either renew the firewall or replace it.

16 Dr. Palmer asked why something like the firewall needs to be
17 replaced. She asked if it becomes obsolete after a certain amount of time.
18 Ms. Walker replied yes. She stated that it is like a phone or computer. She
19 mentioned that after a certain point the updates and firmware are no longer
20 available for them, and the firmware is what brings the security
21 enhancements.

22
23 8. Items Not on the Agenda

24 Mr. O'Connell stated that the budget process will begin next month
25 with the presentation of the proposed CIP program. He stated that RWSA's
26 CIP budget will be before their Board soon, which will be the biggest driver
27 of the ACSA's budget and rates. He stated that the staff will be back in
28 front of the Board in April to present the budget and rates. He stated that
29 there will be a budget and rates workshop in May, followed by a public
30 hearing and consideration of the budget and rates for adoption in June. He
31 stated again that AMI will be starting in April, after much frustration and

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1 delay. He mentioned that the staff has to perform installation of the meters
2 and radio devices, but the goal is a mid-April startup.

3 Mr. Parcels asked if the staff would go into more detail about the
4 lean staffing and third-party consultants when they do the initial budget
5 presentation. Mr. O’Connell replied that the focus would probably be on the
6 new positions that are being proposed. He mentioned that some of them
7 relate directly to different Strategic Plan items. He stated that the ACSA
8 has a lean staff, which is the model he comes from. He noted that it does
9 help to keep customer rates affordable, but the ACSA wants to ensure that
10 it provides good service with appropriate staff. He noted that regardless of
11 the staff size, the ACSA needs to focus on the phasing of projects and
12 ensuring staff is ready for whatever the next step is.

13 Mr. Roberts stated that when he was appointed to the Board, the
14 strategic plan was “we do what we have to do.” He stated that then along
15 came Dr. Palmer, and the two of them worked on a committee to start this
16 whole Strategic Plan process. He stated that it has come a long way. He
17 stated that there is a tremendous amount of development, just on his street
18 alone, which should help to pay for the additional staff. He thanked Mr.
19 O’Connell and his staff for all they do.

20
21 9. Adjourn

22 ***There being no further business, Mr. Tolbert moved that the***
23 ***meeting be adjourned, seconded by Dr. Palmer. All members voted***
24 ***aye.***

25 _____
26 Gary B. O’Connell, Secretary-Treasurer