



**THE VILLAGE OF HAWTHORN WOODS
SPECIAL VILLAGE BOARD MEETING
ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH
24500 N. OLD MCHENRY ROAD, HAWTHORN WOODS, ILLINOIS
MONDAY, JULY 31, 2023
6:30PM – 9:30PM**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Mayor DiMaggio called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Roll call indicated the following members were present: Mayor DiMaggio; Trustees Kaiser, McCarthy, Bayer, Hurst, and Laman. Trustee Rychlik was absent.

Also present were Chief Operating Officer Pamela Newton, Chief Administrative Officer and Village Clerk Donna Lobaito, Chief Financial Officer Katreina York, Director of Public Safety/Interim Chief of Police John Malcolm, Public Works Director/Village Engineer Erika Frable, PE, Parks and Recreation Director Brian Sullivan, and Director of Community Engagement Amy Mason.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. INTRODUCTIONS AND MAYOR DIMAGGIO'S OPENING REMARKS

Mayor DiMaggio welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided background information on the history of the Village's relationship with Aqua Illinois, the Village's past efforts in trying to secure Lake Michigan water for the Village, communications during the water issue and the format of tonight's meeting.

IV. PRESENTATION BY AQUA ILLINOIS TO ADDRESS CUSTOMER QUESTIONS ALREADY RECEIVED

Dave Carter, President of Aqua Illinois introduced members of the Aqua Illinois staff present at the meeting. He also introduced Colleen Arnold, President of Aqua America.

Ms. Arnold apologized to the residents and customers of Aqua Illinois for their response to the watermain breaks earlier in the month. She explained the situation as they initially understood it, and acknowledged their untimely response was related initially to their belief the events were being caused by the drought the area was experiencing as well as high water consumption. She thanked the Village of Hawthorn Woods officials for stepping up when Aqua Illinois was absent.

Mr. Carter went into detail as to the events that commenced on July 2, 2023. He acknowledged that the problem was in fact not caused by high demand or the draught as Aqua Illinois initially believed, which caused a delay in their mobilization. He also

recognized the lack of communications from his company. He noted that once they learned of the watermain break, they engaged leak detection experts. The leak was finally identified near Spencer Loomis School on July 8, 2023. The system was losing 500 gallons of water per minute. Because the area where the leak occurred was marshy, it was not easily detected. Mr. Carter noted the issue was not related to capacity but rather due to a watermain break.

Mr. Carter spoke about Aqua Illinois' future plans. They will be adding additional well capacity in 2024 to meet the growth the Village is experiencing. They will also be adding treatment to the existing well for consumption.

At this point in the meeting, the Aqua team addressed questions that the Village received from residents ahead of the meeting. Mr. Carter noted breaks with some of the hydrants were found and fixed.

The procedure for identifying breaks was discussed. Acoustic listening devices are used to find leaks, with larger leaks producing less acoustical sound.

Internal communications at Aqua Illinois were outlined. Mr. Carter provided information on the alarm system they utilize to detect low levels in the water tower.

Mr. Carter commented that Aqua's incident response plan should have been triggered by the watermain leak, but this did not happen.

Mr. Carter spoke about Aqua's water supply. He said they have looked at interconnects with local communities as well as bringing Lake Michigan water to the Village. He noted that additional well supply with added treatment is the path forward.

Regarding communications with residents, Mr. Carter committed to doing a better, more comprehensive job with customer communications. Ms. Arnold indicated Aqua Illinois is looking to form an advisory council to regain customer confidence. She directed people to their website and asked for volunteers.

Ms. Arnold spoke of the boil order and quality of water. She indicated any low pressure triggers a boil order, which is regulated through the IEPA. The language used in the messaging about boil orders is mandatory. The system was tested and no evidence of contamination was found from both Lake County and the IEPA testing.

Mr. Carter indicated Aqua Illinois follows manufactures recommendation regarding maintenance. Additionally, Aqua Illinois cannot release their GIS maps due to Homeland Security as a result of 9/11.

Regarding future improvements, Mr. Carter stated they have worked with operators on their responses when water levels are low. Now, operators are on-site 24/7 to monitor, whereas before, they were monitored remotely via a SCADA system. Aqua Illinois also plans to increase the capacity in the system. They will also work more closely with the Village of

Hawthorn Woods and surrounding communities regarding growth. Additionally, they will improve communications.

The Village Board asked questions of Aqua Illinois.

Trustee Kaiser asked Aqua Illinois what their response protocol was prior to this incident and what changed since that time. Ms. Arnold indicated Aqua has an emergency response plan, but it was delayed by two days. Their emergency response plan is being updated and additional training is occurring right now. Trustee Kaiser asked if the timing of the incident over a holiday weekend played into the delayed response. Ms. Arnold responded that the holidays should not be a factor in their response. Lastly, Trustee Kaiser asked about improved communications. Ms. Arnold replied there needed to be an earlier elevation to emergency command.

Trustee McCarthy asked about the SCADA system and how often the wells are manned. Ms. Arnold responded the system is alarmed 24 hours per day; however, the wells are not manned 24 hours per day. She said the system will be manned 24 hours per day now. Trustee McCarthy asked about the ductile iron break by the school and what plans are in place to replace this pipe. Ms. Arnold indicated the pipe will be replaced.

Trustee Bayer asked about leak detection. Mr. Brian Gresehover, Head of Engineering for Aqua America, answered pressure monitoring should help find leaks. Trustee Bayer asked about the outcome of their meeting with the ICC. The ICC is a financial regulatory body, and they are still reviewing the situation.

Trustee Hurst asked if there is an alternative source for an emergency interconnect, or another source for water. Ms. Arnold noted Aqua Illinois is not the original owner of the system, but is prepared to provide water. She noted that the situation probably would not have been so bad if they are started sooner in searching for the source of the low water levels. As far as additional training of Aqua Illinois staff, Mr. Carter responded training has already occurred. Mr. Gresehover noted there is money in the budget for a well in 2024.

Trustee Laman expressed concern about the responses that came from Aqua's customer service phone center in light of the fact that leadership was not informed of the severity of the situation. Ms. Arnold indicated there are protocols in place now at the local level to communicate early. She said Aqua is looking for another after hours provider. Regarding an independent inspection and audit, Aqua is regulated by the ICC and has mandatory reporting requirements they adhere to. Ms. Arnold provided a recap of the water/sewer bills.

V. **COMMUNITY CONVERSATION WITH AQUA ILLINOIS AND PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Neil Kaplitz, 14 Tournament Drive North – Mr. Kaplitz commented on Aqua Illinois' customer service response and their \$100 gift card. He noted there are flags in their neighborhood.

Susan Bauer, 10 Tournament Drive South – Ms. Bauer commented on the high cost of water and her charcoal system. She expressed concern about trusting Aqua in the future. She indicated she does not want residents to bear the cost of a new well.

Howard Futterman, 11 W. Peter Lane – Mr. Futterman thanked the Village and asked that the Village continue to be their advocate as it relates to high costs for water/sewer.

Resident, 16 Twin Eagles Court – Resident noted there has been no price difference in their bills when they are gone for three weeks in the winter. The \$100 gift card was questioned.

Bruce Berson, 8 Melrose Place – Mr. Berson inquired about the bills as well. He also inquired about the recent changeout of the meters. He wants management to set the right tone for all employees to raise concerns when warranted. He asked when Aqua interfaced with the fire departments about there being no water.

Howard Kaufman, 4 Melrose Place – Mr. Kaufman asked Aqua about strategy planning and whether there is any documentation about the system. He asked about Aqua's 2023-2024 budget and training for new employees.

Paul Segalla, Long Grove Fire Protection Chief – Chief Segalla noted that none of the three fire districts serving the affected area have yet to be notified by Aqua Illinois of the incident. He expressed frustration with Aqua's phone system and being disconnected. Chief Segalla indicated he will focus efforts to mandate legislation change that would require fire departments to be notified when there is a drop in water pressure or no water.

Mayor DiMaggio informed the public that the Village contacted all impacted fire protection districts on July 3, 2023.

Ken Ohr, 23800 N. Muirfield, Kildeer – Mr. Ohr expressed concern about the number of outages and boil orders they have experienced in the last 2 ½ years. He encouraged all to contact the ICC for regulatory oversight.

Resident – Resident noted he did not like the format of the meeting. He asked about whether the system was aging. He suggested Lake Michigan water be pursued. He would like another resident survey about interest in Lake Michigan water. He also asked about Aqua's reserve funds.

Barry Cohodes, 2 Ruffled Feathers Court – Mr. Cohodes asked what Aqua's plan was to reimburse the local businesses, the Village of Hawthorn Woods and the Hawthorn Woods Country Club for lost services.

Marlene Langer, 114 Tournament Drive East – Ms. Langer asked about the safety of the water and provided a sample of her brown water after 10 minutes of boiling.

Claudia Crouch, 23684 Muirfield, Kildeer – Ms. Crouch indicated Kildeer’s leaders were nowhere to be found while this situation was progressing. She asked where claims can be sent. She indicated she was originally turned away at the Aquatic Center because she was not a resident, so she purchased water and will be filing a claim for reimbursement.

Kamel Aranki, 32 Palisades Boulevard – Mr. Aranki said he has lost trust in Aqua, and asked Hawthorn Woods to conduct a third-party assessment that Aqua Illinois would pay for. He asked that the Village hold Aqua Illinois accountable.

Eric Hutchins, 35 Andrew Lane – Mr. Hutchins commented that the Village Board could have done better. He said residents were told by Aqua’s customer service that they could not communicate directly with Aqua Illinois when they called the emergency number. He said their service advisory map was not updated. He asked if anyone is communicating with the IEPA regarding the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Greg Park, 9 Andrew Lane – Mr. Park suggested the Village needs to inform those on private wells about this issue. He asked questions about Aqua Illinois’ basis for ownership of the lines, and he asked about the \$1.5 million grant the Village is receiving for Gilmer Road sewer and who will own those lines.

Najeeb Ahmed, 2 Potter Court – Mr. Ahmed asked that Aqua Illinois train their customer service team in handling emergency situations. He said he called Aqua repeatedly and could not get through many times.

Susan Bauer, 10 Tournament Drive South – Ms. Bauer noted that there is an area in the Hawthorn Woods Country Club that is seeping water. She asked about the calibration of the meters and how they are checked for accuracy.

Tom Etling, 15 Tournament Drive South – Mr. Etling also commented about Aqua’s emergency number not being in service. He noted there is a leak in his neighbor’s front yard, and that flags have been in the yards for weeks now suggesting Aqua knew there was an issue a long time ago.

Andrew Piscitello, 53 Pacific Avenue – Mr. Piscitello spoke of the sizing of the waterlines as a means of saving on the monthly fees. He said the Village’s response was not enough as residents could not shower or flush for days. He asked the Village to establish places in town where residents can shower. He encouraged the Village to pursue relationships with surrounding communities and explore Lake Michigan water.

Paul Pike, 1 Melrose Place – Mr. Pike asked the Village how much the watermain break cost, and commented he did not want to pay for it with increased rates.

Greg Park, 9 Melrose Place – Mr. Park said the residents of Hawthorn Hills are concerned again with the midge flies, and wanted to know Aqua’s plan to mitigate them.

Ed Geraghty, 31 Pacific Avenue – Mr. Geraghty said he received a letter regarding Aqua’s bad debt and that he did not want to pay for it.

Caroline – Caroline commented early on, Aqua’s website indicated the issue was resolved when it was not.

At this time, Ms. Arnold provided a response to the residents. She noted the advisory council will work with all residents. She acknowledged Aqua Illinois let the residents down by their communications and actions, and that they will work to earn their trust. She noted they are regulated by the EPA and commented on the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Ms. Arnold also indicated Aqua Illinois is regulated by the ICC and spoke of their relationship with the ICC. Ms. Arnold said they will need a week to respond to the questions posed by residents tonight. She also said there is an address for claims on their website and that each case will be independently reviewed.

VI. OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Margo Pelak, 20 Championship Parkway – Ms. Pelak noted Aqua Illinois is not using any emergency response procedures.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Hurst, second by Bayer to adjourn the special meeting.

Roll call vote.

Ayes: Kaiser, Bayer, McCarthy, Hurst, Laman

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Rychlik

Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Donna Lobaito
Village Clerk