

UTILITY ADVISORY TASK FORCE
Meeting Minutes
April 21, 2021 - 7:00 PM
Warren Craft Meeting Room

The mission of the Utility Advisory Task Force is to assess the level of communication and service from the utility companies providing services to Bernards Township, identify areas of concern and in need of improvement, suggest ways to collect and report chronic outages and disruptions, facilitate and/or coordinate resident feedback to the Board of Public Utilities, and represent Bernards Township customers before the BPU when appropriate.

Present: Edelstein, Estrin, Fields, Fischer, Guibord, Romano, Shah

Absent: Monaco, Neiman, Robina

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Flag Salute**
- 3. Open Public Meeting Statement**
- 4. Approval of Minutes**

The March 17, 2021 meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

5. NJAWC Presentation – Maintenance, Field, and Inspection Plan

Mike Malloy from the New Jersey American Water Company (“NJAWC”) made a presentation to the Utility Advisory Task Force (“Task Force”). Mr. Malloy reported on NJAWC’s proactive infrastructure management program which includes:

- Hydrant flushing every 3rd year.
- Blowoff flushing of dead ends.
- Valve inspections done on a rotating basis over a 4-year period.
- GIS (Geographic Information Systems) tracking of all “assets” owned by NJAWC to identify problems.
- Leak detection performed by 2 dedicated staff members.

He reported that, statewide, NJAWC invested nearly \$3.23 billion in system improvements since 2010 and replaced more than 740 miles of water mains since 2008, installing larger mains where necessary. NJAWC serves over 2.8 million people in 18 counties. He stated that NJAWC has replaced over 6.4 miles of water lines in Bernards Township (Township”) since 2018 at a cost of \$12.73 million. In answer to Ms. Shah’s question, he said NJAWC does not provide sewerage service in the Township other than one section of the Hills development.

He discussed various aspects of NJAWC’s customer service program and activities, including the wealth of information and customer support provided

through their toll free number, website, emails, texts and bill inserts. Ms. Shah asked about water quality testing and whether there are alerts for poor water quality. Mr. Malloy replied that they constantly monitor water quality and would issue an alert if there were a water quality health issue, and also notify the NJ Department of Environmental Protection. Contacts with township officials would also occur, as well as alerts through their automated phone, email and texting system. Mr. Edelstein noted that water consumption is billed in 1,000 gallon increments and questioned how to determine the true number of gallons actually consumed. Mr. Malloy offered guidance but agreed that since usage is metered and billed in 1,000 gallon increments, actual gallon consumption is difficult to determine. Mr. Estrin questioned whether NJAWC checks to see if snow has been removed around hydrants. Mr. Malloy replied that NJAWC does not perform that service.

Mr. Malloy reported that the Raritan-Millstone water treatment plant services the Township and there is redundancy at other plants to service water to the Township if necessary. He said that the water report for the Township is based on the Short Hills reservoir and that report is available on the NJAWC website. Ms. Shah asked again about the sewerage service in the Hills and if there are similar notifications for sewerage issues as water issues. Mr. Malloy explained that the state wide monitoring for sewerage is headquartered in the Hills. Mayor Fields asked why the Hills is separate for sewerage service, and Mr. Malloy explained it was because NJAWC took over the Hills sewerage system that had been owned and operated by the Hills developer.

Mayor Fields asked how residents can get their water tested. Mr. Malloy stated that any resident can request a water test by NJAWC through their 800 number or website.

6. Altice USA/Optimum Update – The Hills

Mr. Guibord said he was informed by Ms. Davis of Optimum that Optimum would be completing two node splits in the Hills this week, leaving one node left to be split.

7. Resident Survey Update

Mayor Fields reported that the Township Committee had reviewed the survey. Ms. Shah asked how long the survey would be available to residents and the time frame to tabulate the results. The Task Force decided to send out the survey 1 week after the node work in the Hills is done and leave it open for 3 weeks for residents to complete. Mr. Guibord will draft a flyer/press release for review by Mayor Fields. The Task Force discussed using multiple venues to circulate the survey (Hills Highlands Master Association, Township website, Rave, Patch, Bernardsville News, Friday school folders, Facebook, Nextdoor) and Ms. Shah and Mr. Fisher discussed methods for processing the survey results. Mr.

Guibord suggested the Task Force have a group phone call at the time of survey distribution.

8. Public Comment

None

9. May Meeting Agenda

Mayor Fields stated that she will arrange to have a Township Sewerage Authority representative give a presentation at the May meeting.

10. Comments by Members

None

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

**Submitted by Scott Guibord
On Behalf of the Utility Advisory Task Force**