

**MINUTES OF COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE WATER WORKS BOARD OF THE CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
February 6, 2023**

A Communications Committee meeting of the directors of The Water Works Board of the City of Birmingham was held on Monday, February 6, 2023 at 11:30 a.m.

The following Committee members were present: Committee Chairwoman Tereshia Huffman, Ronald Mims and Tom Henderson. Directors George Munchus and Mashonda Taylor were also present.

Others present were: Michael Johnson, General Manager; Derrick Murphy, and Iris Fisher, Assistant General Managers; Cynthia Williams, Board Administrator; Anitra Clark, Corporate Governance Specialist; Rick Jackson, Joi Dulaney, Colandus Mason, Jeremy Ervin, Jeff Wade, Charles McGee, and David Walker, BWWB Employees; K. Mark Parnell, Parnell Thompson, LLC; Kelvin Howard, Kelvin W. Howard, LLC; Byron Perkins, Perkins Law, LLC; Tiffanie Agee, Agee Law, LLC; Bill Todd, and Sherri Stewart, O2 Ideas; Lindsey McAdory, and Brian Gunn, CBG Strategies.

Committee Chairwoman Huffman declared a quorum in attendance.

Committee Chairwoman called the meeting to order at 11:31 a.m. and Rick Jackson, BWWB Employee, opened the meeting with prayer.

Following, Chairwoman Huffman asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Director Henderson made a motion to approve the agenda and Chairwoman Huffman seconded the motion. The motion was approved by Directors Henderson and Huffman; and Director Mims voted No.

Following, the Committee moved to the first item on the agenda, Request Committee to approve the minutes from Communications Committee Meetings held July 5, 2022, August 18, 2022, September 12, 2022, and October 10, 2022. Director Mims made a motion to approve the minutes and Director Henderson seconded the motion. Director Mims questioned why the minutes are late. The General Manager responded the employee that was responsible for the minutes is no longer employed with BWWB. He indicated the minutes were assigned to others to complete. On a motion duly made and seconded, the item was approved.

Following, the Committee moved to Reports of Officers. The General Manager stated the HomeServe Service Line Protection Program that includes the Leak Adjustment Program, which gives customers an opportunity to receive assistance, will need to present an additional proposal at a Communications Committee Meeting in March 2023. He stated this agreement would provide 100 percent reimbursement to BWWB of the leak adjustment provided to a customer, indicating the customer would not have to pay if they have a leak. He stated the details are being finalized. Director Mims stated according to the Board's rules and regulations the customer is responsible for a certain amount of water that passes through the meter. He stated this proposal sounds like the liability would be taken off of the customer and now be given to BWWB, which is not fair to the other customers. The General Manager stated the customer is responsible for a portion of the adjustment, about 50 percent. He stated BWWB has customers that are either at or below the poverty level. He indicated this new program would forgo administration expense and bad debt

expense which would result in BWWB coming out ahead. He indicated with the program there would not be any increase in premiums even if the adjustments increased over a certain period of time. Director Mims questioned whether this would have any reflection on unaccounted water and the General Manager responded No. Director Henderson stated BWWB will return to disconnecting for nonpayment next weekend questioned whether there will be an additional push to send out communications to customers. The General Manager responded yes and stated the Board will be given a full update. Rick Jackson, Public Communications Manager, stated communications have been sent via bill inserts, radio, non-profit organizations, TV, door hangers, newspapers, and IVR. He indicated the goal is to engage with customers to assist them. He indicated Customer Service is offering extended hours. Director Taylor questioned how communication is tracked with non-profits. Mr. Jackson stated there is no way to track the Urban League; however, the H2O Foundation keeps track by means of appointments scheduled and assistance provided. Director Munchus questioned whether HomeServe will make a presentation to the Board and the General Manager responded yes.

Following, the Committee moved to the second item on the agenda, Request Committee to recommend to the Board to enter into a one-year agreement with CBG Strategies for public relations and strategic consulting services at a monthly out-of-pocket cost to the Board of \$15,000.00, upon review and approval from the Board's Attorney. Director Mims made a motion to combine items 2 and 3 and Director Henderson seconded the motion. The motion was approved. The General Manager stated agenda item 3, Request Committee to recommend to the Board to amend its one-year agreement with O2 Ideas for public relations consulting services at a monthly out-of-pocket cost to the Board of \$10,000.00, upon review and approval from the Board's Attorney. Mr. Jackson stated the Board has a Strategic Plan with a large component being communications with its stakeholders. He indicated BWWB is looking at ways to define its communications to be specific and intentional with it, focusing on internal and external communications. He stated an additional firm is being requested to assist with communications while the existing firm will define internal communications. He indicated the \$300,000.00 annual allocation for communications will not be altered. He stated three firms made presentations regarding handling public relations for BWWB. He indicated two of the three firms were close in the running and because of that they would be a great mix to maximize staff's strategy of reaching BWWB customers with defined roles of handling internal and external communications. He indicated this strategy will enhance current communications. Director Mims stated he received his meeting book this past weekend and he will not review information at the last minute for board and committee meetings. He stated he is not sure who made the decision to engage CBG Strategies and O2 Ideas. He indicated he does not have a problem with either firm. He indicated he has heard nothing but good things about O2 Ideas' performance; however, now he is hearing there are problems. He indicated if there are issues with O2 Ideas they need to be discussed with the Board. He recommended tabling both items. He indicated the Committee cannot make a decision at this time on sending these items to the Board.

He stated the items were not added to the agenda correctly and things need to be handled in the proper order. He also stated if work is being taking away from O2 Ideas he needs to know why. Committee Chairwoman Huffman requested the General Manager and Mr. Jackson explain how the two items came to be on the agenda. The General Manager stated the meeting was scheduled and given the time to get items on the agenda, the items were sent to the Board in the timeframe for getting items on the agenda. He stated meetings were held with both firms separately and jointly. He indicated he feels having both firms would put BWWB in a better position with

communications. Mr. Jackson stated he wouldn't say there was a problem with O2 Ideas; however, his long-term goal is to create an atmosphere to show the Board the progress in public relations over the next several months. He indicated during the budget process he will ask the Board for more funds in the consulting budget for public relations. Director Mims stated staff is requesting to take 60 percent of O2 Ideas' funds and give it to CBG Strategies. He indicated there is a contract with O2 Ideas and to take away 60 percent of their funds there must be something wrong. He indicated he will find out what happened. Committee Chairwoman Huffman stated Director Mims should do his due diligence to have conversations with both firms. Director Henderson questioned whether both firms were in agreement with the arrangement. The General Manager responded yes. Director Henderson stated in the future the Communications Committee should be aware of negotiations like this prior to the meeting. Committee Chairwoman Huffman agreed with Director Henderson, and she indicated the General Manager reached out to her and she instructed him to reach out to the Committee members. Board Attorney Mark Parnell stated the purpose of the meeting is not to just move these items to the Board for approval but to vet these items. He indicated the consultants should be prepared to make a presentation to the Committee. He stated staff should review information and then present to the Committee the reason why they would like to make a change. He indicated the item should not just be read and voted on. Committee Chairwoman Huffman requested the Committee move to hearing presentations from CBG Strategies and O2 Ideas. The General Manager stated the firms could make presentations if they were prepared to. Director Henderson requested Mr. Jackson explain the difference between internal and external communications. Mr. Jackson stated internal communications relates to BWWB employees and external communications relates to BWWB customers and stakeholders.

Subsequently, Director Mims made a motion to table the items; however, the motion did not receive a second. Committee Chairwoman Huffman questioned whether the firms were ready to present. Mr. Jackson stated he did not tell the firms to make a presentation; however, they were present to answer questions. Committee Chairwoman Huffman then recommended the Committee vote on agenda items 2 and 3. She indicated if the items were approved, she would encourage each Committee and Board member to request a meeting with both firms to hear their presentations. She then stated there was a motion and a second on the floor to combine items 2 and 3 and then called for a vote. Directors Huffman and Henderson voted yes. Director Mims stated he made a motion to combine the items to get them on the floor and that was voted on. Committee Chairwoman Huffman then questioned Director Mims was he voting in favor of passing the items. Director Mims responded No. Committee Chairwoman Huffman then stated the meeting was adjourned. A discussion then ensued.

Next, Director Mims made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Director Henderson seconded the motion. On a motion duly made and seconded, the motion was approved by unanimous vote, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

/s/
Michael Johnson
General Manager

/s/
Tereshia Huffman
Communications Committee Chairwoman

/s/

Ronald Mims
Director

/s/

Tom Henderson
Director