

Aqua Illinois Advisory Council

Thursday, September 28, 2023

7:00 PM

Attendees:

1. Paul Zucker, Advisory Council Member
2. Appaji Valavala, Advisory Council Member
3. Nancy Gold, Advisory Council Member
4. Chrissy Williams, Advisory Council Member
5. Lyle Staab, Advisory Council Member
6. Michael Talbett, Advisory Council Member
7. Neil S. Koplitz, Advisory Council Member
8. Susan Bauer, Advisory Council Member
9. Paul Pike, Advisory Council Member
10. David Carter, President, Aqua Illinois
11. Andrew Price, Director of Operations Aqua Illinois
12. Tracy Fullen, Engineering Manager, Aqua Illinois
13. James Bilotta, Director of Corporate Development Aqua Illinois
14. Michelle Buffenbarger, Area Manager, Aqua Illinois
15. Lucas Brush, Field Service Supervisor Aqua Illinois

Introductions:

- Overview of mission/goals slide:
 - David Carter: Shared that Aqua wants to get a better understanding of customer experiences from Advisory Council members, and that this is a two-way dialogue and open forum

Aqua Illinois Presentation:

- David Carter shared a few slides to introduce the Aqua Illinois team as well as a high-level look at the company, its footprint and operations across the U.S. and the State of Illinois.
 - Advisory Council Member: Asked clarification on amount of Aqua Illinois employees
 - David: Aqua Illinois Northern Region uses outside contractors to do repair work
 - Advisory Council Member: Asked clarification on Aqua's ability to deploy contractors and contractor response time
 - David Carter: Aqua has contractors who respond on-call as emergencies arise, and response times are not a concern
 - Advisory Council Member: Will ratio of staff to customers increase as more customers are added to systems?
 - David Carter: Employee growth is slow, but whenever there is an acquisition we look to bring on previous staff and hire to fill all open roles
 - Advisory Council Member: Is this the first Advisory Council formed?
 - David Carter: Yes, for Illinois – an advisory council in another state or two
 - Advisory Council Member: Did you come to the initial town hall with the intention to create the Advisory Council?
 - David Carter: No, but through the feedback of that town hall, we realized it would be beneficial for this community

- Advisory Council Member: Who else from Aqua Illinois will join in the future?
 - Jim Bilotta: Based on what topics the Advisory Council is interested in, we can determine who to bring to meetings

System and Process Updates Since the July Event:

- David Carter provided a preview of the presentation with a comprehensive view of the activity Aqua has conducted since July to improve operations.
 - Advisory Council Member: Shared a desire for these updates to be a recurring part of Advisory Council meeting, noting we need to spend time to discuss improvements since last meeting, with a timeline and explanation. Consider opportunities for AC Members to visit Aqua facilities for demos/tour.

[Note: Due to the number of questions and discussion from the activity summary, many of the questions and discussion points anticipated in the following slides were discussed from the summary slide. Below are comments and questions on the main slide topics but do not follow the order of the slide deck.]

Emergency Response:

- Advisory Council Member: What's the protocol now to avoid emergency response requests going unanswered
 - David Carter: Outlined updated emergency response procedures and existing text/phone call alarms
- Advisory Council Member: Why wasn't the fire department ever notified about the water outage?
 - Jim Bilotta: Clarified that the fire department notification was not directly from Aqua and came from Hawthorn Woods.
 - David Carter: We have updated protocol to cover direct outreach
- Advisory Council Member: Text alerts should be standard for customers
- Advisory Council Member: Shared that July incident webpage has not been updated since conclusion of outage
 - David Carter: Aqua Illinois will be sending an update to residents on progress made; Aqua will also be setting up a webpage to host future customer updates, information about the Advisory Council and materials from meetings, and general information about the Hawthorn Woods water system

Infrastructure improvements:

- David Carter: Added new alarm features to the SCADA system that enhance sensitivity to potential system failures. The system now alarms to rapid declines in tank level and to instances where tank level is not increasing despite significant periods of well and booster pump activation.
- David Carter: The Hawthorn Woods SCADA system is now visible and monitored 24/7 by staff at our Kankakee water treatment plant, in addition to the alarm-based automated system that alerts Hawthorn Woods staff via phone call.
- David Carter: New water treatment plant in works prior to July main break.
- Tracy Fullen: Provided information regarding the addition of water treatment facilities to the existing irrigation well that will double the water supply capacity. Originally scheduled for completion in September 2024. Working to pull in completion date to July 2024.
- Advisory Council Member: Wants to know more what happens when failures happen with wastewater management

- David Carter: We can go in-depth on this topic during a future meeting

Next Steps:

- David Carter: We will work to follow a monthly cadence, and can switch to bi-monthly or quarterly as Advisory Councils desire.
- David: Advisory Council Members will receive survey with list of next meeting topics to help develop next presentation
 - Advisory Council Member: Expressed interest in learning about rates
- Advisory Council Member: Expressed interest in monthly or quarterly newsletter for customers
- Advisory Council Member: For those who didn't get gift cards/never picked them up, they have had issues getting a response
 - David Carter: We'll review that and make sure people have the proper information on how to receive them