



# Utilities Advisory Committee

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR FY2010

### Introduction & Purpose

The seven-member Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities Advisory Committee operates under a City/County agreement that requires three members appointed by the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners, three appointed by Charlotte City Council and one by the Mayor of Charlotte. With the exception of a towns representative, the members of the committee must be actively involved in one of the following categories: real estate developer, neighborhood leader, water and/or sewer contractor, civil engineer specializing in water/sewer construction, and a financial expert. This composition of member representation and skill sets was suggested by a 13-member citizen committee that reviewed Utilities policies from April to November 1990. At that time, the citizen committee recommended the five-member *Community Facilities Committee* be transitioned to a seven-member *Utilities Advisory Committee* with these characteristics and qualifications. The change took effect in June 1991.

### Current Members

Members are appointed to 3-year terms, and may be appointed for up to two full terms (plus filling an unexpired term).

| Member Name                 | Appointed By    | Representative Role    | Term Expires |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------|
| David A. Jarrett, Chair     | City            | Towns                  | 6/30/12      |
| George Beckwith, Vice Chair | City            | Financial              | 6/30/12      |
| Keva Walton                 | County          | Neighborhood Leader    | 6/30/10      |
| James Merrifield            | County          | Developer              | 10/31/12     |
| Erica Carter                | County          | Engineer               | 6/30/11      |
| Robert E. Linkner           | Charlotte Mayor | Engineer               | 6/30/10      |
| Marco Varela                | City            | Water-Sewer Contractor | 6/30/11      |

### Duties & Responsibilities

- ❖ Review and make recommendations to Charlotte City Council regarding:
  - Annual water & sewer capital improvement programs
  - Proposed changes in water and sewer rate and fee methodologies; and
  - Proposed changes in the policy for water and sewer extensions.
- ❖ Review and make recommendations to Charlotte City Council through the City Manager regarding:
  - Requests for one or more specific extensions of the water and sewer system that have not been approved within a reasonable time by the Director; and
  - Proposed changes to the specifications for installing water and sewer facilities that have not been approved by the Director.
- ❖ Sit with City Council in public hearings on any matter required.
- ❖ Present an annual report on the operations of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities and on the activities of the Advisory Committee to City Council and the County Commission.
- ❖ Review and report on any matter related to water and sewer service as requested by the Director, City Council or County Commission.

The Utilities Advisory Committee typically meets the third Thursday afternoon each month at 5100 Brookshire Boulevard. The group's annual meeting schedule is posted at [www.cmutilities.com](http://www.cmutilities.com).

## **Utilities System Activities for FY10**

Our community's water and sewer system includes two drinking water intakes from impounded lakes on the Catawba River (Lake Norman and Mountain Island Lake), three water treatment plants, five wastewater treatment plants, 74 sewage lift stations and a combined total of 8,053 miles of water distribution and wastewater collection pipe. A staff of 720 clean water professionals operates the system and provides customer service to 250,000 water account holders (equal to roughly 774,000 customers). During the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, Utilities safely treated and delivered more than 39 billion gallons of drinking water to customers throughout the county. Staff also collected, treated and discharged nearly 28 billion gallons of wastewater effluent back into our local waterways.

## **Utilities Advisory Committee Activities during FY10**

The Utilities Advisory Committee met 11 times during FY10. Its activities are listed below.

### **Late Summer/Fall 2009**

- Received updates for and supported bond rating review and \$385 million revenue bond sale that occurred in December 2009. Utilities retained its 2 AAA ratings and AA1 rating. Credit status upgraded to 3 AAAs in May 2010.
- Reviewed educational video produced by Utilities staff and City-community partners (including Utilities Advisory Chair) to promote the value of clean water systems. Video won national industry award.
- Reviewed and discussed amendments to Utilities Water and Sewer Extension Policy. Supported recommended changes to City Council, which were approved.
- Considered changes to Customer Assistance Program that helps customers pay back new connection and capacity fees over a 10-year period. Changes made to Extension Policy (previous bullet) allow more flexibility for how the Customer Assistance Program may be applied.
- Received updates on the SC vs. NC water rights lawsuit and the City's involvement.

### **Winter 2009-2010**

- Received a staff overview of proposed FY11-FY15 Capital Improvements Program.
- Received updates on a proposed regional wastewater treatment plant at Long Creek, including a proposed Memorandum of Understanding with Town of Mount Holly.
- Received staff report regarding the Utilities response to public concerns regarding unexplained high water bills, customer service complaints and policies, and the tiered water rate structure.
- Discussed staff process for working with a citizen water bill task force assembled by the Mayor of Cornelius. Advisory encouraged more effort to educate citizens about the tiered rate structure.
- Reviewed and supported utility financial needs/policies presentation to City Council Restructuring Government Committee (prologue to FY11 budget/rate recommendation).

### **Spring 2010**

- Received final report and presentation from Cornelius water bill task force in March 2010.
- Received information regarding proposed ReVenture development project that could include a partnership with the Long Creek wastewater plant.
- Received information on the May launch of the meter equipment audit, a component of the 9-part City-Manager Sponsored Utilities Customer Service Evaluation (UCSE) project under way since early 2010.
- Received updates about the UCSE project effort/progress while producing a Utilities Advisory Committee response to the citizen water bill task force report. Advisory response released to public in June 2010.
- Reviewed and supported FY2011 budget/rate recommendation to City Manager, City Council Restructuring Government Committee and Charlotte City Council.
- Discussed plans for a Utilities water and sewer rate study to occur in FY11.
- Received information about the Utilities 2009 Water Quality Report, mailed countywide in Spring 2010.
- Received information about the upcoming Utilities Meter Route Resequencing project, which will reduce lag time between meter reading and issuing of bills and equalize workload associated with processing bills.
- Utilities Advisory Chair participated in City Manager's selection process for new Utilities Director.