



# CENTRAL PINES

REGIONAL COUNCIL

Johnston County  
Water and Sewer Authority Study Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
May 16, 2024

Meeting opened at 6:04 pm.

Lee Worsley welcomed the committee and gave an update on the communication of information process. He stated that a hold has been put on the information sending process until next steps can be determined through discussion of the potential timeline.

Lee invited the committee members to give initial thoughts on the Black and Veatch study presented at last month's meeting. The first thought raised was that the picture of the systems given in the study were unsurprising, and this thought was seconded. A concern was also raised about how the formation of an authority may force a rate increase, but based on the study, it seems a rate increase is a necessity regardless of the formation of a regional body to secure long-term financial health of enterprise systems. The County representative offered that even after the study presentation, they are still looking with their board about whether to commit to the authority but are still very interested in having a seat at the table and being a part of the process.

Lee focused the conversation on the potential timeline. He emphasizes this timeline is pulled straight from the Black and Veatch study, but with added dates to begin in July 2024. He restated that at no point in the first couple years is this binding, members can always pump the brakes if they felt it necessary.

The first thought raised about the timeline is that it is a long process, and the committee needs to jump on it now or risk falling behind by the time the formation can be implemented. Lee stated that by going through the process outline in the timeline, such as the technical assessments, many of the committee's concerns about individual needs will be addressed as more information is gathered.

A concern was raised about with the authority being three years out, how can some communities with more immediate needs address their systems in the meantime. The idea of smaller, interlocal agreements (ILAs) between communities in the next year or two can start the process of working together and collaborating before the official formation of an authority, with the added benefit of being a trial run of collaboration before communities give up ownership of their systems. Emphasis was placed on how camaraderie between towns is at an all-time high, and the boards should take advantage of the common goals amongst the study members right now. ILAs may build the basis for the future authority.

An idea was raised about forming small groups through the county between towns geographically closer, such as Eastern, Western, and Southern Johnston groups, to start

working together right now, and begin addressing immediate needs through the lens of preparing for a larger collaboration in the future. Despite this approach to immediate needs, communities must approach this process from two ways at the same time. Communities must work to figure out how they can solve their most pressing problems, while figuring out how they can build this larger entity to one day take over the systems in the long-term.

The first step should be to form the regionalization committee, ideally with two groups. This study committee can be the policy group which makes the larger political and financial decisions, while a second, technical group should be formed that brings together those with advanced knowledge of the individual systems, such as managers, public works directors, and engineers to inform the policy group of needs and priorities.

For the June meeting, the group would like to see a draft one-pager and draft slide deck from Central Pines that outlines the process so far, beefs up the timeline, and focuses the conversation on a concrete recommendation to each communities' respective boards and public. The focus of this communication of information should be getting board members not present on the study committee up to speed with the process and getting initial feedback. The information should also highlight the overall vision and the long-term nature of the problems the authority would attempt to solve. CPRC offered to potentially tailor the handouts to each community if there are any concerns with the material from specific communities. Part of this handout can be recommending to each community to begin working with other communities in small groups in their immediate area for short term issues. It could also be beneficial to include how the stated goal of the county is to push growth and development to the boundaries of municipalities, in order to ease concerns of towns who are worried about how they will continue to grow and annex land if they give up control of their water and sewer infrastructure.

Meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm.