Augusta Water
Regular Board Meeting, Thursday, August 20, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.
Field Operations Training Room

PRESENT:	Andrew C. Middleton, Chairman, North River District
	Garry R. Gordon, Vice Chairman, Middle River District
	Harvey Almarode, South River District
	Allen Dahl, Beverley Manor District
	Matthew Egeli, Wayne District
	Michael L. Shull, Riverheads District
	Phil Martin, Executive Director
	Brent Canterbury, Treasurer
	Jean Marshall, Board Secretary
ABSENT:	Timothy Simmons, Pastures District

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CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m.

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ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Mr. Shull moved, seconded by Mr. Almarode to approve the Agenda as presented.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas:	Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Egeli, and Shull
Nays:	None
Absent:	Dahl

Motion approved.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Shull moved, seconded by Mr. Egeli to approve the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of July 16, 2026, as presented.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas:	Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Egeli, and Shull
Nays:	None
Absent:	Dahl

Motion approved.

MATTERS PRESENTED BY THE PUBLIC

Mr. Joe Moore, with the Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley addressed the Board regarding the recent announcement of the United States Forest Service (USFS) intention to repeal the Roadless Rule adopted in 2001. For the last 25 years, the Roadless Rule protected the least developed areas of the George Washington National Forest by prohibiting road building, development, and timber harvesting in designated areas. The Rules is not a hands-off preservation policy, it explicitly allows for continued strategies for firefighting, timber cutting to improve forest health, recreational access, and to exercise all valid existing mineral and private property rights. The comment period regarding the recension is open until midnight on September 21, 2026. The Roadless Rule is important to key areas in Augusta County for the protection of drinking water sources, such as Coles Run Reservoir, North River Reservoir, Staunton Dam and Ramseys Draft, to name a few. One of the reasons for the proposed recension is to allow for better fire prevention, even though USFS studies show the risk for fire increases when new roads are built. Concerns if the Roadless Rule is repealed include the increase in water runoff on new roads not properly maintained, and an increase in road construction and logging leading to more sediment in waterways, which can affect water quality. Representatives from the Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley have spoken with other localities and found City of Staunton and Shenandoah County have written letters encouraging the USFS to keep the current standards; other localities have indicated they are planning to do the same. Mr. Moore encouraged the Board to consider the long-term impact repealing the Roadless Rule would have not only on existing water resources, but also on potential future water sources if Augusta Water were to expand. He asked the Board to consider writing a letter to the USFS in opposition to the recension of the Roadless Rule.

Mr. Dahl asked if fire prevention was the Forest Service’s only reason for repealing the rule. Mr. Moore stated the main forces behind the repeal are fire prevention, locality to locality management, and allowing for various forestry practices that could be more catered to an individual area.

Mr. Dahl asked if logging would be allowed if the repeal is approved. Mr. Moore stated logging is allowed now for timber management for the health of the forest; however, if the repeal is approved, it will open up opportunities for commercial logging.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S HIGHLIGHTS

Mr. Martin noted the Highlights include more information on the current water source levels than in previous months. He also presented a letter to the Board members addressed to Ron Elkins from Montana Welcher, Water Treatment Plant Supervisor at the City of Staunton. The letter explains the current water levels at the Staunton Dam and at Gardner Spring and indicate there are no concerns with the levels at either source.

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PROGRESS REPORT

The July Progress Report was included in the Board packets and was reviewed with the Board. There were no questions by the Board members.

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Egeli stated the Personnel Committee met with Staff on Monday, August 17, 2026 to consider suggestions by Staff to change the structure of Augusta Water's IT Department. The Personnel Committee has considered and is recommending Staff's proposal to adopt the changes, which will be explained in the following Agenda item.

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CONSIDERATION OF A NEW FULL-TIME SYSTEMS ANALYST I POSITION AND REVISIONS TO EXISTING IT POSITIONS

Mr. Martin explained the Augusta Water Information Technology Department (IT) currently consists of three positions: a full-time Director, a part-time Systems Analyst Developer I, and a Systems Administrator. The current part-time Systems Analyst works three days a week and is not interested in increasing those hours, and the Systems Administrator position has been vacant for several months. The Systems Analyst Developer I position is a paygrade 4, the Systems Administrator position is a paygrade 5, and the unused Systems Analyst Developer II title is a paygrade 6. During the aforementioned Personnel Committee meeting, it was determined the Systems Analyst Developer position does not develop programs as indicated in the job description. After reviewing the current positions and discussing the needs of the IT Department, the following changes were suggested: the job titles for the current Systems Analyst Developer I and II positions be changed to Systems Analyst I and II, the paygrade for the Systems Analyst I position be changed from 4 to 5, a full-time Systems Analyst position be added to the organizational structure of the Department, and the paygrade of Systems Administrator be changed from 5 to 7.

Staff recommends the Board approve the revisions as described above.

Mr. Egeli asked Mr. Martin to explain to the Board the risks of being understaffed in the Information Technology Department.

Mr. Martin stated, a notice was received a notice from CISA (Federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency) and other agencies regarding recent cyber attacks on utilities, specifically SCADA systems. The Augusta Water IT and Instrumentation and Controls Departments have taken the appropriate measures to ensure the Augusta Water systems are secure. With security being a top priority, the IT Director needs to be able to continue working diligently on security measures for Augusta Water and not be spending time on lower-level tasks.

This Personnel Committee report constitutes a motion and a second to the full extent of the Board.

There being no further discussion, the vote was as follows:

Yeas:	Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Dahl, Egeli, and Shull
Nays:	None

Motion approved.

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BILL ADJUSTMENT – ROSEMARY RIDGE OWNERS ASSOCIATION

On July 28, 2026 the Rosemary Ridge Owners Association (located on Long Meadow Road in the Wayne Magisterial District – Account #48747-45682) requested a water and sewer adjustment for an underground leak. The affected bill was mailed on July 7, 2026 and was for a total of $11,083.07 (577,000 gallons).

Per Augusta Water Policy 5.4, *for underground leaks that have been repaired*, Augusta Water may grant an adjustment in cases where water usage is at least double the customer's average water consumption. Per Augusta Water Policy 5.5, *if a customer has an underground leak, a leak in a crawl space, or a similar area* where it can be reasonably assured that the water from the leak did not enter the sewer system, the customer may be eligible to receive a sewer adjustment of 100% of the difference between the actual sewer usage and their average bi-monthly usage. Their average consumption is 221,000 gallons. These adjustments will result in a 135,000-gallon credit to their water account and a 356,000-gallon credit to their sewer account. As a result of these adjustments, the revised bill would be $5,911.00.

The overall adjustment is $5,172.07 ($946.35 to their water billing and $4,225.72 on their sewer billing) and policy requires approval from the Board prior to adjusting a customer's account for more than $5,000.

Staff recommends the Board approve the adjustment to the customer's account as outlined above.

There being no discussion by the Board members, Mr. Egeli moved, seconded by Mr. Gordon to approve the bill adjustment to the Rosemary Ridge Owners Association account in the total amount of $5,172.07, with $946.35 being applied to their water bill and $4,225.72 being applied to their sewer bill.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas:	Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Dahl, Egeli, and Shull
Nays:	None

Motion approved.

CONSIDERATION OF COMMENT LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE ON PROPOSAL TO RESCIND THE ROADLESS RULE

Mr. Martin stated, as Mr. Moore indicated while addressing the Board, the USFS is proposing a repeal of the "Roadless Rule". The Rule currently protects roughly 58 million acres of undeveloped national forest lands from new road construction and commercial timber harvesting.

The Coles Run Reservoir lies within the George Washington National Forest (GWNF) and the Dry Branch Well is very near the border. The City of Staunton, from whom Augusta Water purchases one million gallons of drinking water daily, has two reservoirs, North River and Elkhorn, which also lie within the GWNF.

The City of Staunton has issued a letter urging the USFS to retain the Roadless Rule. A copy of this letter was included in the Board packets.

Staff recommends the Board authorize Staff to send a letter to Mr. Tom Schultz, Chief of the USFS, urging retention of the existing Roadless Rule. The letter should be sent soon now that the comment period is open.

Mr. Shull moved to authorize Staff to send a letter to Mr. Tom Schultz as stated above.

Mr. Dahl requested the Board members be given additional time to consider the pros and cons for all parties concerned.

Dr. Middleton suggested the matter be tabled until the September 17, 2026 Board meeting, at which time Mr. Martin will have a letter prepared to send to the USFS, if the Board directs him to do so.

Mr. Shull withdrew his previous motion.

Mr. Dahl moved, seconded by Mr. Egeli to table this matter until the September 17, 2026 Board meeting.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas:	Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Dahl, Egeli, Shull
Nays:	None

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REVISION TO AUGUSTA WATER POLICY 13.1 - EASEMENT ACQUISITION

Mr. Martin explained, over the last five years, there has been a notable increase in land values in the county. When acquiring easements, current policy requires that Augusta Water staff value the easement based on the assessed value. If the easement value exceeds $10,000, an appraisal of the property is required. The cost to have an appraisal performed can cost up to $4,000.

Prior to 2024, it was less common for an easement value to exceed $10,000 and if it did, the cost for an appraisal was typically less than $1,000. In the current land market, it has become more common for an easement value to exceed $10,000, and the cost of the appraisal is much higher. The Code of Virginia §25.1-417(2) establishes a threshold of $25,000 before an appraisal is required. Augusta Water has been operating under a more stringent requirement.

Given the changes to land values and appraisal costs, Staff are recommending that Policy 13.1 – Easement Acquisition, be amended to match the Code of Virginia as it pertains to the point at which an appraisal is required. This recommended change would increase the limit from $10,000 to $25,000.

Staff recommends the Board approve the proposed revision to Policy 13.1 Easement Acquisition, increasing the threshold for requiring an appraisal for easements from $10,000 to $25,000, matching the current Code of Virginia.

There being no discussion by the Board members, Mr. Egeli moved, seconded by Mr. Gordon to approve the proposed revision to Policy 13.1 Easement Acquisition, increasing the threshold for requiring an appraisal for easements from $10,000 to $25,000, matching the current Code of Virginia.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas:	Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Dahl, Egeli, Shull
Nays:	None

Motion approved.

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BOARD COMMENTS

Dr. Middleton made a comment regarding health and safety and reminded staff to be cautious of tick bites and any unusual symptoms presenting after a bite.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Shull moved, seconded by Mr. Almarode to adjourn the meeting at 2:08 p.m.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas:	Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Dahl, Egeli, Shull
Nays:	None

Motion approved.

Board Secretary Chairman