

Augusta Water
Regular Board Meeting, Thursday, September 17, 2026, at 3:00 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, *via remote participation from disclosed location*
Matthew Egeli, Wayne District
Timothy Simmons, Pastures District
Phil Martin, Executive Director
Brent Canterbury, Treasurer
Jean Marshall, Board Secretary

ABSENT: Michael L. Shull, Riverheads District

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CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

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ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

Vote was as follows:

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

Motion approved.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Gordon moved, seconded by Mr. Simmons to approve the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of August 20, 2026, as presented.

Vote was as follows:

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

Motion approved.

MATTERS PRESENTED BY THE PUBLIC

No members of the public were in attendance to make comments and no public comments were brought forth by Staff.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S HIGHLIGHTS

The Highlights were included in the Board packets and reviewed with the Board members.

Mr. Martin mentioned he participated in a tour of the Middle River Wastewater Treatment Plant along with members of the Augusta County Community Academy. During the tour, a chemist informed the group about a new process being developed to treat PFAS using ultraviolet (UV) light. After conducting additional research, Mr. Martin found this process involves UV treatment combined with sulfite. The process is designed to be a low-energy treatment method and helps break the carbon-fluorine bonds that make PFAS particularly difficult to remove. Mr. Martin will provide the Board members with a link to the information he found regarding this process.

There were no questions by the Board members.

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PROGRESS REPORT

The August Progress Report was included in the Board packets and was reviewed with the Board.

Mr. Martin presented the Board members with a Memo from William Monroe, Director of Engineering, to Doug Wolfe, Director of the Augusta County Community Development Department, regarding the Fannan Poultry property and the Source Water Protection Ordinance. Fannan Poultry has applied to develop a groundwater supply exceeding 10,000 gallons per day. Augusta Water staff has reviewed the project information provided by the applicant and a report from Emery & Garrett Groundwater Investigations (EGGI), which Mr. Martin provided to the Board members. Staff concurs with the recommendations included in the report. Staff recommends that at a minimum, the production and monitoring wells meet Class IIIB installation requirements. Staff also recommends the Special Administrative Permit should note the requirements set by Virginia Department of Health for proper closure of all wells, should the proposed operation cease in the future.

In conclusion, Augusta Water believes the Source Water Protection Ordinance requirements will be met if the Special Administrative Permit includes and enforces three conditions: the EGGI report recommendations, the additional recommendations above, and legal property access for testing and monitoring.

There were no questions by the Board members.

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were not Committee reports given.

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

Mr. Martin reminded the Board members Mr. Joe Moore, representing the Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, addressed the Board at the August 20, 2026 Board Meeting. During his comments, Mr. Moore indicated the United States Forest Service (USFS) is proposing a repeal of the “Roadless Rule”. This Rule was established in 2001 and currently protects roughly 44.7 million acres of undeveloped national forest lands from new road construction and commercial timber harvesting. Approximately 24% of national forest land in Virginia is under the Roadless Rule.

Mr. Martin explained 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.

Mr. Martin reminded the Board members Mr. Moore requested Augusta Water submit a comment letter to the USFS opposing the repeal of the Roadless Rule. The City of Staunton has issued a similar letter, a copy of which was included in the Board packets, urging the USFS to retain the Roadless Rule. At the August 20th Augusta Water Board Meeting, the issue was deferred until Augusta County considered taking similar action.

Mr. Moore addressed the Augusta County Board of Supervisors (ACBS) at their August 26, 2026 meeting. Following that meeting, Staff met with the Augusta County Administrator to discuss whether the County would be offering comments. The ACBS addressed the issue at their September 9th meeting and gave direction to the County Administrator to submit comments in opposition to the proposed repeal of the Roadless Rule.

Staff recommends the Board authorize Staff to send a letter to Mr. Tom Schultz, Chief for the United States Forest Service stating opposition to the repeal of the existing Roadless Rule. The letter will be sent before the Comment Period closes on October 6, 2026. A draft copy of the letter was included in the Board packets.

Mr. Egeli moved, seconded by Mr. Gordon to authorize Staff to send a letter to Mr. Tom Schultz, Chief for the United States Forest Service stating opposition to the repeal of the existing Roadless Rule. The letter is to be sent before the Comment Period closes on October 6, 2026.

Mr. Dahl stated he spoke to a representative with the U.S. Forestry Department about increased fire risks if new roads are opened up. The representative agreed the risk of fire does increase if more roads are opened; however, if there are no roads, fires cannot be fought, regardless of how they are started.

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Mr. Egeli stated fighting fires is an important matter, but the Board's focus is on water quality and the protection of water resources, and Staff should move forward with sending the letter.

Mr. Gordon stated he agrees with Mr. Egeli. Opening up roads will impact the water sources in Augusta County. There are many ways fires can be fought, such as with the use of helicopters.

Mr. Dahl stated the proposal to repeal the Roadless Rule doesn't just affect Augusta County; it affects other states that need to be able to thin out overgrowth to help prevent fires close to homes. Mr. Dahl recommended the Board consider staying neutral on the matter, due to the lack of information, and recommended the comment letter not be sent. Based on the research he has done, he does not believe there will be a tremendous risk to the County's water sources, if the rule should be repealed.

Dr. Middleton stated, opposing the repeal completely seems to be outside the scope of Augusta Water's purpose. Dr. Middleton suggested a paragraph be added to the proposed comment letter stating water authorities across the country should be able to object to roads in the drainage areas around lakes, wells and other water sources, and allow for final decisions on the Roadless Rule to be made at the state level. Mr. Dahl agreed with Dr. Middleton's suggestion.

Mr. Martin noted the aforementioned draft comment letter does include language stating the retention of the Roadless Rule is the most efficient way to safeguard the drinking water supplies in Augusta County and urges the USFS to keep the current protections in place.

After further discussion, the motion made by Mr. Egeli and seconded by Mr. Gordon remained unchanged.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas:	Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Egeli, and Simmons
Nays:	Dahl

Motion approved.

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REVISION TO AUGUSTA WATER POLICY 5.4 WATER BILLING ADJUSTMENTS

Mr. Martin explained, current Augusta Water Policy 5.4 Water Billing Adjustments specifies customers who qualify for a Water Billing Adjustment "will receive an adjustment for 100% of the water usage in excess of double their average consumption". The policy goes on to specify "Adjustments for any water leak exceeding \$5,000 will require approval of the Augusta Water Board".

A review of bill adjustment (due to leak) policies at nearby localities indicates that, while there is some variation amongst them, none of those localities use "double their average consumption" as a baseline. The City of Waynesboro credits 75% of the amount above a "three normal usage months" average. The City of Staunton website allows for application for an

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adjustment, but does not specify the amount to be credited. Rockingham County specifies “Credit shall apply only to the sewer portion of the utility bill; no credit will be given for water usage”. Finally, Western Virginia Water Authority specifies “The water portion of the bill will be adjusted for 50% of the water loss over the average consumption for the customer” for underground leaks and “40% of the water loss over the average consumption” for leaks inside the residence or building.

Given the increases to water billing rates, the number of gallons equating to a \$5,000 adjustment has steadily fallen. Staff believes basing the threshold for Board approval on a specified gallon amount, rather than a dollar amount, would be a more reasonable approach and would eliminate the issue to smaller leaks requiring Board approval.

Staff recommends the Board approve the proposed revisions to Policy 5.4 Water Billing Adjustments, specifying adjustments for any water leak exceeding one million gallons will require Board approval. Staff also recommends qualifying customers will receive an adjustment for 50% of the water usage in excess of their average consumption.

After a brief discussion between Staff and the Board members, Mr. Dahl moved, seconded by Mr. Simmons to approve the proposed revisions to Policy 5.4 Water Billing Adjustments, specifying adjustments for any water leak exceeding one million gallons will require Board approval. Qualifying customers will receive an adjustment for 50% of the water usage in excess of their average consumption.

Vote was as follows:

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

Motion approved.

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REVISION TO AUGUSTA WATER POLICY 5.5 SEWER BILLING ADJUSTMENTS

Mr. Martin explained, current Augusta Water Policy 5.45 Sewer Billing Adjustments specifies “An adjustment in the amount of 50% of the difference between the customer’s actual sewer usage and their average bi-monthly sewer usage” for flush tank leaks and “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” for underground and miscellaneous leaks. The policy goes on to specify “Sewer adjustments exceeding \$5,000 will require approval of the Augusta Water Board”.

The calculations for sewer billing adjustments do make sense because flush tank leaks increase only the “clean water” component of wastewater, thereby diluting the strength of the wastewater and resulting in a reduced per-gallon cost for treating the additional water. Relatedly, underground leaks would be going into the ground, not into the sewer system, and would not result in any additional cost to Augusta Water. Furthermore, these adjustments are based on the difference in the actual usage and the average bi-monthly usage.

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Given the increases to sewer billing rates, the number of gallons equating to a \$5,000 adjustment has steadily fallen. Staff believes that basing the threshold for Board approval on a specified gallon amount, rather than a dollar amount, would be a more reasonable approach and would eliminate the issue to smaller leaks requiring Board approval.

Staff does not recommend any changes to the calculation methods for Sewer Billing Adjustments. Staff does, however, recommend the Board approve the proposed revisions to Policy 5.5 Sewer Billing Adjustments, specifying any sewer adjustments exceeding one million gallons will require Board approval.

Mr. Gordon moved, seconded by Mr. Simmons to approve the proposed revisions to Policy 5.5 Sewer Billing Adjustments, specifying any sewer adjustments exceeding one million gallons will require Board approval.

Vote was as follows:

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

Motion approved.

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DISCUSSION ON FLUORIDATION OF DRINKING WATER

Staff and Board members engaged in extensive discussion regarding the pros and cons of fluoridating drinking water, the history of fluoridation, the absence of a prior board vote to allow the fluoridation of drinking water, the potential neurological effects at high fluoride concentrations, the role of the Virginia Department of Health versus the EPA, and the practical ability of customers to add or remove fluoride independently. Staff also informed the Board members the cost to fluoridate Augusta Water's drinking water last year was approximately \$23,000.00. Staff reported the City of Staunton does not currently fluoridate its water due to an equipment failure, but will resume fluoridation once the equipment has been repaired.

At the October Board meeting, the Board will vote on whether to direct Staff to continue fluoridation of Augusta Water's drinking water or discontinue it altogether.

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BOARD COMMENTS

Dr. Middleton reported attending the WaterJAM conference this week and noted the increasing use of the term *intensification* to describe efforts to increase capacity from existing wastewater treatment facilities, including the use of fixed-film processes such as moving bed biofilm-reactors and hydrocyclones on recycled sludge lines. Intensifying older plants may be an option for Augusta Water to consider.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Gordon moved, seconded by Mr. Egeli to adjourn the meeting at 4:27 p.m.

Vote was as follows:

Yeas: Middleton, Gordon, Almarode, Dahl, Egeli, and
Simmons

Nays: None

Motion approved.

Board Secretary

Chairman