

Questions from the 2/6/23 Public Meeting Concerning Water & Sewer

- When and where did you realize there were problems with the W & S Department?
The Administrator has been aware of continued Water & Sewer Department problems for the past few years and met periodically with the Utility Manager to discuss concerns. The discussion included but is not limited to constant water leaks, high TTHM, employee turnover, employee absenteeism, training, meter locations and installations. In an effort to fulfill work orders the Administrator approximately one year previously authorized subcontracting meter locations to meet the demands of building contractors. It was very difficult for the Water Department to keep pace.
- Why was the contract not shopped around?
The Administrator utilized various outside resources to meet the demands of the Water & Sewer Department. There were various contacts inside and outside South Carolina. The Administrator utilized various contacts from the SC Association of Counties plus multiple outside resources to meet the demands of the Water & Sewer Department. There were various contacts inside and outside South Carolina. Furthermore, consulted with attorneys to determine which approach was in the best interest of the county.
- Who is keeping record of the question/meeting?
The Clerk to Council recorded the meeting.
- Why didn't the County Attorney review the contract?
The County Attorney reviewed the contract prior to County Council for approval.
- Why would the county allow an open ended contract?
The County did not enter an open-ended contract.
- What has County done to privatize service?
Nothing has been done to privatize. This is a public/private partnership. This arrangement is a public private partnership and McCormick County still owns all water and sewer assets.
- What other companies did the County evaluate?
Inquiries were made regarding other companies providing similar services.
- Who is responsible for vetting CWS? Stephens or Council?
The Administrator
- Is Council aware that Port Wentworth Georgia terminated their contract with CWS because CWS repeatedly violated the contract?
According to the Port Wentworth minutes during a special called meeting November 1, 2022, the contract was to be extended for a period of one year after the suspension with CWS.
- Who was in charge of prepping Administration Center for the impending weather?
The Building Department is responsible for all county buildings complying and prepared for any inclement weather.

- Was there a protocol for storm prep?
Storm preparation is covered under after-hours operations. As for the Water/Sewer Department, they are on call 24/7/365. If a problem is brought to our attention, we address it as efficiently and timely as possible.
- How many thousands of dollars did this cost?
Storm preparation cost nothing additional. All the extra time spent during the weather event did not cost the county any additional money, above the normal, approved, contract amount.
- Who was overseeing their (CWS) work?
CWS is in regular communication with the County Administrator.
- Was a state of emergency called and if so was it in a timely manner?
No state of emergency was called. It was discussed and recommended by the Legislative Delegation was not deemed necessary declaring a state of emergency.
- How long will this inconvenience the citizens of McCormick?
As with any weather event, length of inconveniences are determined largely by how long the event lasts. The entire system was never out of service. Loss of water was isolated to specific sites.
- Why are we privatizing, why are we doing it and what are the benefits?
The county did not privatize the utility. The county still owns all assets and is sovereign over county policy. A major benefit is access to resources in times of need.
- What happened during the cold snap?
The entire system experienced a prolonged period of sub-freezing temperatures that local homes are not equipped to withstand. Many unprotected residential service lines froze and broke causing water to be lost to the ground. Many homes let their water drip from multiple faucets and that water went down the drain. The situation caused a demand on the system that our main water provider was not prepared to supply.
- Who will pay for the 8 million gallons of water?
The month covering Christmas 2022 usage totaled 19.5 million gallons. As a comparison, the same period, last year (2021), totals reached 14.3 million. This calculation produces an ESTIMATED increase in usage, for the same month, of 5.27 million gallons. The county pays a minimum charge, to CPW, for 24,918,803 gallons of water each month. Because the usage was under the minimum, the “additional” usage did not cost anything more. The county pays a minimum charge, to Calhoun Falls, of \$24,930 for 9,000,000 gals of water each month. For the month covering Christmas 2022, usage totaled 10.6 million gallons at a cost of 28,74.50. This equates to an increased cost, over the minimum, of \$3,844.50. For the same period, last year (2021), totals reached 15.6 million gallons at a cost of \$40,808.40. This equates to an increased cost, over the minimum, of \$15,878.40.
- Wants CWS to detail what they did and a cost analysis

	<u>Hours Worked</u>	<u>Dispatch calls</u>	<u>Gallons Used</u>
Fri. Dec. 23 rd	15	No data	1.027 mgd
Sat. Dec. 24 th	26	14	1.303 mgd

Sun. Dec. 25 th	31	11	1. 631 mgd
Mon. Dec. 26 th	31	177	1.898 mgd
Tues. Dec. 27 th	33	82	1.853 mgd
	136		7.712 mgd

A total of 136 hours spent assisting customers with water issues and searching for potential leaks over the course of 5 days. December 28th and 29th were normal workdays with full staff on duty. CWS discovered leak at the Co. Admin Bldg. on Tuesday morning. (hours do no include the project managers time)

- What other options were considered before outsourcing?
We considered partnering with local water/sewer provider and other county providers of same services.
- How did you decide on this company?
Referrals
- What will CWS and other companies provide?
Management and oversight of day-to-day operations of the water and sewer department, all labor cost including benefits of all department employees, certification for the operation of the water distribution system, safety training, water distribution and sewer collection training for all appropriate employees, pooled resources when appropriate, repair and maintenance of the water distribution and sewer collection system.
- How is it an improvement?
More oversight, follow-up and resources.
- Did Council ask other cities/counties that were successful?
Other cities and counties experienced similar problems during the cold front.
- What went wrong?
Unexpected duration of cold front.
- What happens long term, etc. considering the problems we have?
The county Water & Sewer Department has ordered and will install devices that will alert assigned employees of any unusual activities. Also, additional insulation has been added to the Administration Building to minimize pipe freezing or bursting during extreme cold weather.
- Does CWS use our trucks?
Yes
- Who pays for wear/maintenance?
CWS pays for fuel and general maintenance.
- Who is liable if there is an accident?
Insurance follows the vehicles. CWS would cover all workman comp expenses.
- Why change, why so quick, what comparisons were there, why no review?
The McCormick County Water & Sewer System is part of a Regional Study with Abbeville County Water Districts along with Calhoun Fall, Due West, Iva and Ware Shoals.

- Why would council vote yes?
CWS provides a Professional Services needed for the McCormick Water and Sewer Department.
- Why can't we keep the money here in our community?
The money is being kept in the county, fourteen (14) employees were maintained by CWS.
- Did the employees lose benefits?
There was no loss of benefits. One stipulation was that CWS must provide comparable or better benefits to employees.
- Who decided to go out and hire someone else?
The Administrator invited CWS to provide a presentation to the County Council. Council members appeared to be impressed with the presentation and discussion of services evolved.
- Who has the insurance on the trucks?
The County of McCormick has insurance on the vehicles because they own the trucks.
- Who gets sued?
Anyone can sue
- Is there a waiver of segregation?
Not needed.
- What is the succession plan?
The county is awaiting on the results of the Regional Water and Sewer study.
- What is the backup plan if you retain CWS and don't like the service?
There is an option to terminate with proper notification.
- What are the next steps following this meeting?
All information will be reviewed, evaluated, and follow up to questions will be provided accordingly.
- When will the public hear from you, what will you do, will they have a say?
Upon review and approval by council of answers provided.
- How much does it cost to run the county water department for a year?
The County Council approved \$4 million during FY 2022/2023 to operate the Water & Sewer Department
- Has anyone seen the original spec books on this system?

- How many employees do they plan to keep
All of them
- What are the procurement procedures?
SC Procurement Codes state specifically that Personal Services are not required to be bid. McCormick Procurement Code Section 2-272-CD 2:24 defines Personal services means the service of accountants, physicians, architects, engineers, consultants, or other individuals or organizations possessing a high degree of technical skill.