

Rockdale Water, Sewerage and Stormwater Advisory Council Meeting

July 7th, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Meeting Held at CE Steele Community Center

1040 Oakland Avenue, Conyers, GA

ATTENDEES: Vice Chair Telfany Morgan, George Kelecheck, John Nix, Mark Walton. Richard Davis, Andrea Lee, Kimbry Peek, Terrence Simpkins (Mark Hardgrove, Tom Harrison, Chair Nicole Lichner were unable to attend)

SPECIAL GUEST: Rockdale County Chair JaNice VanNess

Vice Chair Telfany Morgan called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m.

Approval of the June 2nd Meeting Minutes: The minutes were approved as presented. John Nix made a motion to accept the minutes as presented and the motion was 2nd by George Kelecheck. The June 2nd, 2025 Meeting Minutes were unanimously accepted.

Unfinished Business

Reference #3 on Agenda – Stormwater and Tree Ordinance

Director Simpkins indicated that Chair Van Ness is seeking additional focus to minimize tree clear-cutting on all future Rockdale County developments and projects. Director Simpkins advised that Pittman Construction plans to build a large facility off of a major road that will require a considerable amount of tree removal. Pittman representatives have met with Rockdale County and have been advised of Rockdale County's new ordinance. Director Simpkins advised that Pittman Construction is working diligently with Rockdale County to identify suitable arrangements.

Director Simpkins further stated that Rockdale County is looking to work with our neighbors as we support the standards of the new ordinance. Specifically, Director Simpkins advised that the new ordinance requires builders to proactively submit their plans to support the minimal removal of trees, leaving as many trees currently in place as possible, or establish build funds. Going forward, Director Simpkins advised that the developers/builders will be required to provide a clear reason identifying their rationale for established tree removal.

Requisite buffers are identified and marked on plans, and onsite inspectors' presence would be required. Director Simpkins acknowledged that the law will be upheld; and that when encroachment occurs, it will be addressed.

Vice Chair Morgan requested additional information associated with potential fines for builders/developers who fail to abide by Rockdale County's ordinances. Director Simpkins indicated that through effective communication, the need for fines may not necessarily be pursued as builders often work to correct the situation – thereby minimizing Rockdale County's need to pursue this route.

Vice Chair Morgan respectfully invited our **SPECIAL GUEST**, Rockdale County Board of Commissioners Chair Ja Nice Van Ness, to speak to the Council and guest attendees. Chair Van Ness was warmly greeted by all attendees. Chair Van Ness expressed her thankfulness and appreciation to the RCWSS Advisory Council, while also providing additional guidance and key points of focus for the RCWSS Advisory Council to consider as continued goals. Chair Van Ness expressed her desire for the RCWSS Advisory Council to continue focusing upon recommendations and strategies that might be useful for community education and communication associated with potential Water and Stormwater fee schedules – stressing the importance of providing community communication updates as part of the revenue and building development processes as Rockdale County reviews long term plans to better support infrastructure needs of both Stormwater and Water.

The RCWSS Advisory Council has a unique opportunity to review and recommend communication and community educational opportunities that may prove beneficial as an educational continuum associated with the potential need for cost increases. Chair Van Ness stated that a 6-7% increase range has been presented with Water and the BOC would value the Advisory Council's input on how to present this information and other Stormwater updates to the community.

While reviewing citizen's concerns associated with water leaks, Chair Van Ness asked that the Advisory Council consider working toward finding solutions to various community issues and concerns – such as how we could develop a County-wide program that coordinates the identification of a set # of plumbers who would be screened and vetted, and who could provide assistance – on a fee scale basis - to not only our senior citizens but to many others within our community in a manner that minimizes the financial impact often associated with the unexpected need to call a plumber (e.g., emergency plumbing calls often involve higher costs and scheduling constraints). Such a program may reduce Rockdale County's overall water loss and help reduce the financial burden placed on the homeowner -- having access to plumbers who have credentials and who are on the up and up will help our citizens. Chair Van Ness stated that such a process would require stringent, thoroughly vetted operational standards.

General discussions arose regarding the viability of a community's use of master meters (e.g., Viewpoint East and Callaway Gardens). Chair Van Ness and Director Peek stipulated that such applications are under constant review and are typically only permitted on private streets.

Chair Van Ness stated ... "Our goal as a board is to work collaboratively through the process of unifying our plan for the future in a sustainable way with clarity and appropriateness. This includes step down zoning to protect our neighborhoods, and ties into the tree clear cutting and other areas. We are looking at a multitude of things that we can do to make Rockdale County beautiful. We are working with Code Enforcement to ensure Quality of Life concerns with property, and our goal is to improve quality of life through these upgrades."

George Kelecheck asked about the specifics associated with the tree ordinance and ODO and requested the opportunity to receive monthly updates and briefings that he and others would provide to the community. The RCWSS Advisory Council expressed a desire to be kept abreast of the updates and potential opportunities to review the plans. Chair Van Ness will continue to keep everyone informed as the ordinances are developed, approved, and implemented.

John Nix requested additional information on the committees the BOC is developing (e.g., the number of committees, committee composition requirements, etc.). Chair Van Ness advised of the formation of the Patriotic Committee – which is preparing for the upcoming November 8th Veterans Day; the Citizen's Financial Oversight Committee – which maintains on-call meetings as needed to serve as a sounding board for fee increases and revenue. The Chair also advised that our new Parks & Recreation Director is working with the BOC and the BOC plans to announce her committee shortly. The Chair also referenced the ongoing initiatives of the Keep Rockdale Beautiful Committee. Chair Van Ness also encouraged all present to review the committee's websites for member requirements and applications.

As a recommendation to support Rockdale County staff's active participation in many of the other Community Committees, John Nix recommended the consideration of scheduling 1 staff member at each, or scheduling staff on a rotational basis. An outside perspective on community issues is definitely needed – and Rockdale County staff have expert knowledge that proves invaluable to discussions. John expressed gratitude to the staff and concern that we not over burden and burn our staff out. Chair Van Ness acknowledged the concern and the concept of rotational staff participation. Both Director Simpkins and Peek stated that the meetings were not presently a burden and staff would prefer to maintain availability to continue the development of effective, responsive lines of communication for knowledge transfer. Meetings are currently held on a monthly basis, with the goal of establishing quarterly meetings as issues are reviewed and addressed.

George Kelecheck asked if the RCWSS Advisory Council and various Rockdale County citizens could participate in an educational tour of the Wastewater facility, with the potential ability to tour additional Rockdale County facilities. To support the RCWSS Advisory Council's education and understanding of water distribution and associated costs, discussions arose regarding the potential availability to use a Rockdale County van as transportation to conduct a back-to-back tour and meeting for the RCWSS Advisory Council and interested citizens to view the Treatment plant, and possibly the Quigg Facility and/or our Snapping Shoals facility. Vice Chair Morgan reminded all present that we should secure additional information and insight regarding safety, security, liability, and logistical responsibilities if such trips are planned. Additional discussions will be held during a future meeting.

George Kelecheck also respectfully requested the City of Conyer's representation at future RCWSS Advisory Council's regular meetings as the RCWSS Advisory Council

discusses both City of Conyers and Rockdale County issues, the City's input may be needed (e.g., participation by the City Manager). Chair Van Ness will present the RCWSS Advisory Council's request forward to personnel within the City of Conyers for their review and consideration.

Unfinished Business #1 – Social Media and Recording Permission

Chair Van Ness advised that Rockdale County currently does not maintain the mechanism to allow outside media to host on our regular media channels; and has no immediate interest in establishing separate social media platforms external to Rockdale County at this time. Chair Van Ness encourages citizen's use of Rockdale County's current platforms.

Unfinished Business #2 - AI recording and transcription of RCWSS Advisory Council Meetings

Andrea Lee advised all present that Rockdale County has established, on a trial basis only, our ability to use Microsoft TEAMS as a platform to allow the automated capture of conversations held during our future meetings. To properly capture our group conversations, additional microphones are needed and have been ordered. We anticipate receipt of the microphones prior to our next scheduled meeting. Additional recording requirements were discussed (e.g., the feature will only capture words – it will not differentiate or identify the speakers. Therefore, each speaker will be asked to state their name before speaking to ensure proper recording. Additionally, speakers will be asked to respectfully speak up so that their words will be heard and transcribed by the system.) Andrea also advised that we will continue to take handwritten notes as needed throughout this trial period, with a structured focus upon ensuring the validity and accuracy of the meeting flow, presented concerns, Council Member questions, etc., while proactively facilitating the recording and manual transcription – our goal is to minimize editing of the minutes.

Unfinished Business – Continued Discussions on Stormwater/Tree Ordinance

(#3a, 3b, 3c, 3d – Clear Cutting, Buffer Zones, Mature Tree Preservation, Ordinance Language Updates

Director Simpkins re-emphasized Chair Van Ness' passion toward minimal tree cutting. Rockdale County recognizes that some developers received older permits that were not covered by the new ordinance. As such, we want to meet with them to help them make the necessary adjustments to their building plans. Director Simpkins also indicated that the ordinance has changed the use of all language referencing "should" to "shall." This removes some of the options developers may have felt they had. We believe that our tree ordinance will not slow down or halt development but will further stress the importance of the specimen trees and canopy within Rockdale County.

Unfinished Business #3e – Lee Clark- Arborist

Director Simpkins advised that the arborist will be onboard and will be very useful. Responsibilities are clear – with the updated permitting process Rockdale County gains the owner's information, but we also need the engineering information. The owner may

not properly convey the message to the engineer – we are now making sure that we are following the proper process. Director Simpkins confirmed that the process flows smoother when Rockdale County representatives speak with the engineer.

Unfinished Business #3f – Clarification on responsibilities/process flows

Vice Chair Morgan requested additional information regarding the process for developers to use. Director Peek confirmed that we use a clearly defined process. The engineer is brought on board and meets with Stormwater PRIOR to the initiation of tree clearing or land disturbance. The developers are required to meet with all parties before the process begins. Chair Van Ness indicated that Jessica Pollett, Rockdale County's Project Manager, is working aggressively to expedite the implementation of a software program that will enhance and expedite the planning process – our goal is for Rockdale County to be the best place to do business.

Unfinished Business #3g – Liability/Indemnification Concerns

Considerable discussions were held as the Advisory Council sought to gain additional clarification of the question/issue being presented. Vice Chair Morgan provided the following clarification... As the moratorium is lifted, the conditions would be clearly understood – the developers need a 10-year bond to put roads in and are held accountable for the quality of the road. However, who is held responsible if the builder is the individual property owner?

Vice Chair Morgan acknowledged that..." Once you are trained better, you do better." As an example, references were made to the activity that surrounded the intersection of 138 and Weatherstone – a stop order was issued by Rockdale County's Department of Transportation to ensure the developer was doing the right thing. Rockdale County is learning and responding to each situation.

Discussions were held regarding the definitions of indemnification versus liability – and their potential language interchangeability. General discussions were held regarding land disturbance and how to apply language that will help us while also recognizing that citizens' private rights will also be impacted by our ordinances. All agreed there is no perfect world, but good ordinances, protective bonds, and stop work orders will be useful. Accountability from the developers is needed.

General discussions arose regarding the ordinance's application or enforcement against private homeowners. As an example, George Kelecheck asked if Rockdale County's ordinance addresses or stipulates any requirements or actions when a personal homeowner looks at his personal property and ultimately wishes to build or erect something on his property and cuts trees without permits – does Rockdale County's new ordinance address that? Although Director Simpkins indicated that the ordinance addresses this matter, considerable discussions were generated regarding the private owner's ability to remove trees (not pushing over the trees) on his/her personal property. Ordinance education and communication will be crucial to ensure citizen's awareness.

Unfinished Business #3h - Blowing debris into the roadway

Director Simpkins acknowledged that this is an ongoing concern as the debris runs into the catch basin and builds up – impeding water flow and requiring cleanup. Often after mowing lawns or completing landscaping, citizens unfortunately elect to simply blow their debris into the catch basins rather than properly disposing of the debris. Director Peek advised that we now have approval and a process to issue citations for blatant blowing of debris into the catch basins. This process will be implemented. Education for all business owners and landscapers will be ongoing as software becomes updated.

George Kelecheck distributed a pamphlet that provides information regarding State legislation that addresses tree protection and yard management maintenance. The information is available to help educate our citizens regarding the impact of tree removals, etc. George indicated that this information can be used as needed. George also distributed an additional handout that provided effects of stormwater and land uses.

Unfinished Business #4 - Septic Tank Inspections

Director Peek advised that the Rockdale County Health Department is responsible for reviewing and inspecting private septic tanks, emphasizing that unless the septic tank presents a valid health concern, the owner bears the responsibility of addressing any septic tank issues. Additionally, the Health Department maintains reports on each home and maintains the responsibility for communication education accordingly. Deputy Director Davis indicated that the Health Department, located at 1329 Portman Drive - Suite F, Conyers, GA 30012, will also provide citizens with a map detailing the locations of septic tanks.

George Kelecheck asked if Rockdale Water could be more involved in the community's education of septic tank inspection requirements. This educational activity would make the citizens more aware of their individual needs to support the County's \$71.3 MM expense to develop the reservoir in 2012. Following general discussions regarding the Health Department's roles and responsibilities, Director Peek reminded all present that the Health Department is directly aligned and governed by the State of GA; therefore, Rockdale County seeks to respect this governance. Rockdale County wishes to minimize the presentation of any conflicting or inaccurate procedures and guidelines and must defer to the State regulations – subsequently, the Health Department maintains sole authorization and control of the production and communication of regulations, etc.

Vice Chair Morgan asked about sanitary sewer spills, and the associated liability. Director Peek advised that the Health Department oversees that process and that the homeowner may be held directly responsible.

Unfinished Business #5 – RWR Capital Improvement Plan (CIP 2025 \$4MM increase)

Director Peek advised that the \$4MM increase was a direct result of Rockdale County's identification and assessment of the need for Infrastructure updates and additions. Director Peek discussed the operational requirements of the various wastewater

treatment facilities, pump stations, etc., reaffirming Rockdale County's old infrastructure and our need to proactively address the deteriorating infrastructure rather than waiting for an emergency break or leak to occur that could potentially inhibit Rockdale County citizen's ability to receive clean water. Director Peek also advised that although funds may be identified for proposed projects in the Capital Budget, it does not mean that we are going to get every project completed during that calendar year – unexpected emergencies arise which require us to maintain flexibility in our plans; but it allows us to develop a wish list –the increases are based on infrastructure needs based on the age of that infrastructure and our continued proactive planning to keep Rockdale Water pure, clean, and available for our citizens.

George Kelecheck asked if Rockdale County maintains reports that depict the linear feet, age of the pipe per section, etc. via the use of a GIS system. George commented that he was aware that such a system was used in 1996 and questioned whether Rockdale Water maintains similar systems currently. Both Director Peek and Director Simpkins provided confirmation that such a system is being used on a regular basis and confirmed the development of the Water Asset Management Plan and the Sanitary Sewer Plan. Director Peek advised that the Water Asset Management Plan will be placed on the County's SharePoint for accessibility and review. Director Simpkins advised that Rockdale will also provide a link for the committee to review information associated with Rockdale County's plans to minimize cutting trees. The RCWSS Advisory Council requested training on the web-based site to ensure everyone's ability to gain access to the site and review the information.

Unfinished Business #6 – Establishment of Point Person for Watershed (Request Watershed reassignment to Stormwater.)

Director Simpkins confirmed that Stormwater and RWR work collaboratively together to monitor, review, and address all Watershed issues and concerns – therefore, no single point of contact or Stormwater designation was needed at this time for the Watershed. George Kelecheck stated that he was seeking a designated point person to maintain communication and responsibility with the Army Corp of Engineers as they begin their 100% assessment process of the Watershed later this year. George advised that the Army Corps of Engineers will canvass approximately 56,000 acres and he is striving to have the best Rockdale County Stormwater or RWR representation possible available to meet with the seven (7) engineers and stormwater leaders and listen to their concerns and recommendations. Both Director Peek and Director Simpkins acknowledged that although the Watershed can be viewed as a stormwater function, the reservoir is on site, and both departments work collaboratively on all aspects of the Watershed. Director Peek and Simpkins agreed that to ensure that the engineers have access to the best representation available, Rockdale County Leaders will review and identify a potential point person(s) of contact with the understanding that both departments (Stormwater Management and Water Resources) will continue to work together to collaboratively review, monitor, and address all Watershed issues and concerns.

Unfinished Business #7 - Formation of the Rockdale County Environmental and Natural Resources Committee

Following general discussions regarding the scope and focus of the above recommended committee, George Kelecheck presented information for the RCWSS Advisory Council's review and asked for the current RCWSS Advisory Council's consideration of incorporating this matter for review by a RCWSS Advisory Council Subcommittee. Vice Chair Morgan recommended that the RCWSS Advisory Council present this request to the BOC for their review and approval. Vice Chair Morgan advised she will communicate this request forward and ask that Chair Lichner discuss this proposed incorporation with Chair VanNess for additional insight.

Unfinished Business #8 Larry Kaiser Visit – Update

John Nix advised that Larry Kaiser will be available to attend the RCWSS Advisory Council's August 4th, 2025 meeting and asked the Council to set aside 30 minutes on the agenda for these conversations. John advised that Larry could provide historical, institutional knowledge, insight, and a greater understanding of the thought processes associated with the development of the Watershed as Larry was actively involved in the Watershed's formation process. To facilitate Larry's presentation to the RCWSS Advisory Council, John Nix and George Kelecheck will meet prior to the August 4th, 2025 Advisory Council meeting to coordinate the 30-minute discussion topics, etc.

Unfinished Business #9 Field Trip Visit to Haynes Watershed

General discussions were held regarding the benefits and potential format recommended to support the planning of a future visit. It was suggested that the Advisory Council plan to view a few key sites (e.g., the bridge off of 20 in Walton County; then travel to the wooden bridge to view silt collection sites; and view other environmental concerns, etc.) The trip could be scheduled to accommodate a 1 ½ hour tour in duration. Questions regarding liability, safety, and security were discussed and additional research will be required. Members also stressed the need to strongly review the summer's weather and temperature concerns into consideration as we plan such a trip as we would be out in nature's elements. The RCWSS Advisory Council agreed to defer the trip until cooler weather conditions exist.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Urban 3 Analysis – George Kelecheck recommended that the RCWSS Advisory Council visit the You Tube website and view the relevant information – the Advisory Council was advised to specifically search "Suburbia is Subsidized...You do the Math." George indicated that this video shows the impact of community planning on taxation and infrastructure and looks at assessments worldwide. It also talks about the financial impact of why we are in the condition we are in.
2. General discussions arose regarding the process and timing associated with emergency water leaks and the protocol to initiate timely repairs. Mark

Walton referenced events that surrounded a leak that was observed and reported and provided the following insights:

- a. The leak was observed across the street from this home and Deputy Director Davis came out and physically observed the site to initiate responsiveness. Unfortunately, from May 31st – June 9th water was trickling into a stormwater drain.
- b. The leak was repaired by ESG, but only after looking at approximately 72,000 gallons of treated water go to waste as well as the additional costs associated with the chemicals used.

Conversations were held regarding how RWR addresses small water leaks... specifically focusing on minimizing the loss of water. Is there a process where we might be able to address these smaller water leaks more quickly (e.g., is there a process where we might be able to address these smaller water leaks more quickly?)

George Kelecheck asked if ESG representatives are aligned with RWR's gold standard as he referenced a recent repair site where ESG allegedly repaired the leak and put grass seed and straw down instead of replacing the lawn properly with sod. George also stated that use of manpower should be critically reviewed to ensure the availability of staff when needed. As an example, George stated that ESG came out with 3 trucks and 6 people to put down a pallet of sod... reflecting an excessive use of a firm that we pay millions for. George asked that Rockdale County look at better ways to address situations like this.

In response to the specific examples and concerns presented above, Director Peek provided additional insight into Water's processes and procedures associated with leaks and advised that a service call was properly placed; however, due to other emergency scheduling conflicts, it unfortunately took several days for ESG to come out and address it. Director Peek acknowledged that Water Resources responds immediately (within 24 hours of the notification), completes an initial assessment and initiates a work order. Director Peek advised that ALL work sites must be properly reviewed and marked by the utility marking team PRIOR to the initiation of any excavations or digging. All utilities must be located and marked. Director Peek advised that Water Resources does not control the scheduling of the utility marking team as they are not Rockdale County employees – subsequently, the marking team prioritizes their work schedule and provides assistance as their schedules allow. This leak was prioritized, and the team responded the same day – completed pre-marks and coordinated scheduling. It is a coordinated process between multiple entities – and we work aggressively to minimize water loss.

Deputy Director Davis also clarified that the leak in question flowed toward the gutter and did not impact residential home, businesses, or streets. We are extremely glad that our citizens see and report these leaks when they see water flowing.

Director Peek advised that we have a process, and that every drip of water is important to Rockdale County Water Resources. George Kelecheck recommended the

development of a broader communication plan with the citizens to ensure they understand the process, and to also ensure that ESG is aligned to RWR's goals. All agreed that... "People are down on what people are not up on..." – just educate and communicate the process – it helps the consumers understanding of the "why".

3. The dissolution of the Water Authority for Rockdale County.
 - a. Clarity was sought regarding the specific concern or question associated with the agenda item. Due to the RCWSS Advisory Council's limited knowledge of the specific questions or concerns associated with this agenda item as presented, it was agreed that this particular agenda item would be carried forward to the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

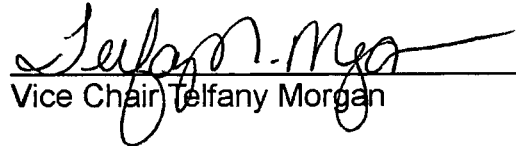
Charlotte Gellert was recognized by Vice Chair Morgan and provided the following comments:

- a. Regarding potential planned conversations associated with the dissolution of the Water Authority – are we seeking to designate the Advisory Council in lieu of the Authority? Do we need a resolution to dissolve it? We can keep it as just in case it is needed.
- b. Stormwater's bonds reflect a potential need for a financial review to capture greater cost savings as interest rates change – refinancing may be beneficial. Rockdale County's Finance Department should carefully review the bond market and take action that may help reduce our expenses. Is anyone looking at the bonds that Rockdale County has from 2021-2031. A review by Finance may result in additional money being saved. Perhaps we should refinance these bonds to lower interest rates. Mrs. Gellert agreed to provide information as needed to our Finance Leadership.
- c. Suggested that Chair Van Ness consider the potential roll-out of a "round up" program associated with Water, Stormwater Fees, and other County bills as a financial alternative designed to help offset the bills for citizen's who need assistance. This may be a program the Board may want to review
- d. If Rockdale County implements a program that coordinates the use of fully vetted plumbers, the screened plumbers should also include plumbers who are certified to conduct septic tank assistance. Environmental Health should be able to provide Rockdale County with some additional information that identifies plumbers registered and certified to work on septic tanks.
- e. Recommended The RCWSS Advisory Council invite Mr. Buddy Compton, Environmental Health, to the August 4th, 2025 meeting.

The next meeting of the RCWSS Advisory Council will be held on Monday, August 4th, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. at the CE Steele Community Center, located at 1040 Oakland Avenue, Conyers, GA 30012.

There being no further business to discuss, John Nix made a motion for adjournment of the July 7th, 2025 meeting. The motion was 2nd by Mark Walton. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Vice Chair Telfany Morgan

Date 7-26-25