Rockdale County Water, Sewerage, and Stormwater Advisory Council Meeting
August 18th, 2025 Meeting Minutes
Meeting Held at the CE Steele Community Center
1040 Oakland Avenue, Conyers, GA 30012

ATTENDEES: Chair Nicole Lichner; Vice Chair Telfany Morgan; Tom Harrison; John Nix; Richard Davis, Terrence Simpkins, Mark Walton, Mark Hardgrove, Andrea Lee

SPECIAL GUESTS: ESG – Neil Counts, Richard Porter

Chair Nicole Lichner called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

Approval of the July 7th, 2025 Meeting Minutes were approved as presented. Tom Harrison made a motion to accept the minutes as presented and the motion was 2nd by John Nix. The July 7th, 2025 Meeting Minutes were unanimously accepted.

Unfinished Business:

1. Communication for Citizens
    a. Chair Lichner expressed the need for our council to identify how, we, as an Advisory council can provide direct assistance communicating and educating the general public on the "why's" associated with potential Water and Stormwater rate increases in a respectful manner that helps the community better understand who we are (e.g., clarifies the function and mission of the Advisory Council), while also informing the citizens of county's needs to acknowledge the need for infrastructure funding; providing environmental education; etc.
    b. Chair Lichner stated it is important that citizens understand that the role of the current RCWSS Advisory Council – specifically, we are NOT the Water Authority and that no current public termination or resolution to dissolve the Water Authority is needed at this time. Our Advisory Council is NOT to serve as a replacement or renewal of the prior Water Authority for Rockdale County. Chair Lichner stated that our Advisory Council has no oversight responsibilities and reminded all present that we have volunteered to serve in an advisory capacity only, as a liaison of communication. Our Advisory Council is advisory only. Tom Harrison asked if Chair Van Ness planned to reinstate the Water Authority. Chair Lichner further indicated that all concerns or comments associated with the reengagement of a Water Authority should be directed to Chair Van Ness.
    c. Director Simpkins provided additional insight into Stormwater Management's communication regarding the need for planned rate increases – stating that citizens may experience small rate increases over time. Director Simpkins stated that the BOC continues to review the data and has not yet voted on any specific %'s; however, as the data is being reviewed, and in the spirit of open communication, Director Simpkins indicated that recommendations

being discussed included a 10% annual increase for a 3–5-year period. Director Simpkins stated that the Rockdale County's topography and aging, often failing infrastructure must be seriously taken into consideration as the County seeks to provide our citizens with safe piping systems throughout the entire County. Director Simpkins again stated that no official rate increase has yet been determined by the BOC. Community education will remain a critical aspect of our council's focus.

d. Vice Chair Telfany Morgan indicated that any action taken regarding rate increases needed to ensure that upfront, advance communication as a key part of the process. Tom acknowledged that Rockdale County is expanding and stated that we must remain sensitive to our community's needs and communicate our plans.
e. Tom Harrison asked how the County planned to communicate the increases.
f. General discussions arose regarding the potential placement of flyers in the water bills. Concern arose regarding how citizens with septic systems would receive notification since they don't receive water bills. Mass communication updates are needed. Chair Lichner suggested the use of podcasts via Channel 23, etc. Tom Harrison recommended that the Council develop additional communication strategies once we receive the rate increase presentations
g. Discussions regarding community education on Stormwater Management was expressed – with key focus upon how we can help citizens understand "what is Stormwater", what are the public versus the private responsibilities; what are the purposes/usages of the charged utility fees; how the fees are determined, etc. Greater transparency is needed.
h. Conversations were held regarding the possibility of placing "'stickers" on storm drains to minimize the inappropriate discarding of unwanted yard debris, garbage, etc. into drain basins within the community. Discussions arose regarding the potential request for enhance community awareness via the use of students attaching stormwater stickers as part of the educational process.
i. Director Simpkins referenced the development of a County-wide Stormwater Symposium and Water Symposium – similar to the format aligned with Rockdale County's annual Transportation Summit as an educational arm. Tom Harrison recommended an alliance/partnership with RCA and the Rockdale County School System. Tom Harrison also advised that George Kelecheck would serve as a great reference as he has participated in the Soil & Water Symposiums. Director Simpkins will review and develop details for future discussions. Potential 1st quarter 2026 dates may be most advantageous as the messages would tie into Flood Management discussions.
j. Chair Lichner asked the advisory council to gather their thoughts, and forward recommendations/suggestions to her direct attention on "how we can better communicate who "We Are" (e.g., Who is the RCWSS Advisory

Council) so we can minimize misconceptions, and increase public awareness.

New Business:

1. Larry Kaiser was unable to participate in today's meeting – we look forward to an MNGWPD presentation at a future meeting.
2. ESG Project Manager, Richard Porter and ESG Regional Manager Neil Counts attended our meeting and provided a general update and overview of the services ESG provides to Rockdale County. Their presentation included the following information:
   a. ESG Operations provides full-service operation, maintenance, management, and consulting services to the government and private sector across the Southeast. We also provide a partnership based on shared values and goals and a deep understanding of the challenges that communities face. ESG is recognized as the fastest growing utility operations and public works management company and has received more numerous awards for operations excellence over the past 16 years than all of its competitors combined;
   b. Since May of 1998, Rockdale County has contracted the operation and maintenance of the wastewater treatment plants and pump stations to a professional service contract operation firm, ESG. ESG is responsible for managing Rockdale Water Resources' contract operations providing the following services:
      - Wastewater treatment
      - Maintenance and repairs of sanitary sewer lift stations
      - Maintenance and repairs for the water distribution system
      - Maintenance and repairs for sanitary sewer collection
      - Maintenance and repairs of the wastewater treatment plants
      - Sludge disposal

ESG provides consulting services and oversight over Rockdale County's 5 Wastewater Facilities:

- ❖ Quigg Branch
- ❖ Snapping Shoals
- ❖ Almand Branch
- ❖ Honey Creek
- ❖ Scott Creek

ESG's commitment is to make sure Rockdale County's water as safe as possible with minimal chemical disturbance. Partnering directly with RWR, ESG strives to provide support for over 680 miles of pipes, 5550 valves, 5550 fire hydrants, 6080 manholes, and in excess of 280 miles of collection systems.

Throughout their presentation, both Richard Porter and Neil Count shared their expertise and knowledge by responding to questions regarding the age of pipes throughout Rockdale County and the City of Conyers, the significance of minimizing FOG (fats, oils and grease) and soap and other products that create grease as a by-product within our water system - they also extended an offer to work with RWR to coordinate potential educational tours for our Advisory Council when possible.

1. Discussions were held regarding the progress to date with Rockdale County's Radio Read program and the implementation of the R900 meter upgrades. Deputy Director Davis advised that SPLOST funding has facilitated RWR's ability to upgrade the vast majority of Rockdale citizen's meters – with upgrades continuing on a daily basis as new construction occurs across our County.
2. Tom Harrison requested an update on the Leak Detection programs. Deputy Director Davis reviewed RWR's implementation of a rotating Smart Caps program that facilitates the immediate identification of leaks as a direct resource to identify and reduce potential billable water loss. Deputy Director Davis advised that the pilot program was completed in Milstead, and no leaks were identified during the 3-month period. The Smart Caps will be shifted throughout the County as a tool to help proactively identify and mitigate water loss.
    a. Contractors and developers used PVC piping in the past, and PVC pipes often inhibit or negatively impact the electronic leak detection signals. Our goal is to minimize/eliminate the use of underground PVC pipes. It was observed that the majority of the water main breaks are due to failing PVC pipes. Deputy Director Davis advised that when replacements are required, RWR seeks to use ductile iron pipes with copper connections to the meter itself.

Public Comments:

1. Charlotte Gellert provided insight into best practices associated with public education and communication strategies that the Advisory Council should consider as we develop our communication processes – reminding us that the public also seeks information relative to "what our tax dollars are being used for" therefore, it is important that our communication include specific examples throughout the educational process. Education is important and communication is key.
2. Questions arose regarding the Stormwater billing process for apartment dwellers. Specifically, are apartment dwellers paying or charged a stormwater fee? How are apartments billed? How are shopping centers and other large businesses billed? Are the schools exempt from Stormwater fees? Director Simpkins stated that he would work with his team to obtain detailed billing reporting information that explains how Stormwater bills each area.

The next meeting of the RCWSS Advisory Council will be on 5:00 p.m. Monday, October 6, 2025 and will be held at the CE Steele Community Center located at 1040 Oakland Avenue, Conyers, GA 30012. There is no meeting in September due to the observance of the Labor Day Holiday.

There being no further business to discuss, John Nix made a motion for adjournment of the August 18th, 2025 meeting. The motion was 2nd by Tom Harrison. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Nicole B Lichner
Chair Nicole Lichner

10/2/2025
Date