

RCWSS Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
November 3, 2025
CE Steele Community Center

Meeting Attendees: Chair Nicole Lichner; Vice Chair Morgan Telfany; Tom Harrison, George Kelecheck, John Nix, Mark Walton, Richard Davis, Kimbry Peek, Andrea Lee, Fayola Harris – representing Stormwater Management

Guest Attendees: Larry Kaiser; Honorable Chair JaNice VanNess

Community Attendees: Connie Lazenby, Furman Rogers, Charlotte Gellert, Mary Boysworth, Michelle Irizarry

CALL TO ORDER: The Meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m. by Chair Nicole Lichner.

Approval of the October 6, 2025 Meeting Minutes: Tom Harrison made a motion to accept the October 6th, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. George Kelecheck 2nd the motion. The motion was approved and carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – RWR

1. Director Kimbry Peek provided the following Rockdale County Water Resources updates:
 - a. RWR's annual budget for 2025 RWR - \$51MM; current balance is \$33MM; (44% utilization); Capital Budget - \$24MM – Current balance = \$18MM (22% utilization)
 - b. Copies of printed maps were presented depicting the locations of Rockdale County's five (5) Wastewater: Honey Creek; Scott Creek; Snapping Shoals; Almand Branch; and Quigg Branch
 - c. Status updates on the Water Loss/Smart Cap Leak Detection program provided insight into the current process:
 - i. Smart cap units are rotated throughout communities and are placed on fire hydrants – the smart cap reads/detects leaks (e.g., listens for voids in the water system); information is shown on a monitored screen, and RWR conducts exploratory leak examinations.
 - ii. Rockdale has a rating of 34% leaks/water loss. Our goal is to achieve less than 20% water loss.
 - iii. The program has been in effect for the past 6 months. 1 leak detected to date.
 - d. Meter Replacement Updates --- 982 units have been replaced to date (SPLOST funded). Updates are needed to ensure radio.

- i. John Nix requested an update on metrics associated with water loss – specifying asking what is the lift identifying bigger meters? (e.g., why the delay in changing out the larger meters? Director Peek advised that large meter changeouts are expensive and more laborious; however, Director Peek advised that RWR has recently received approval to conduct an audit on ALL of our meters to ensure all of our accounts match billing and water usage. We recognize that additional \$\$\$'s are needed to repair large meters. All agreed that good record keeping based upon the upcoming meter audits may impact the 34% water loss data read capability.
 - e. Meter Repairs – 49 meters have been repaired to date
- 2. George Kelecheck asked if the large pumps were also going to be calibrated. Director Peek advised that the flow rates of large pumps are calibrated. The units are stationary units, and the large pumps do not affect water loss.
- 3. PFOS Update – Director Peek emphasized that this is a New GA State Program – RWR has no historical data to review for comparison purposes. RWR is ahead of the guidelines associated with the GA State program as the entire process will not be active/State mandated across all Counties until 2029. Rockdale County is well below the identified PFOS threshold and continually tests/monitors our chemical usage to ensure water purity and quality.
 - a. George Kelecheck advised that he reported Rockdale County's outstanding PFOS #'s during a recent GA state meeting.
- 4. Director Peek and Deputy Director Michelle Irizarry presented information regarding the new Water and Sewer Wage Rate increase that will be effective January 1, 2026. Copies of the across the board 7% base fees and volumetric rates and tiers were distributed to RCWSS members and guests. Deputy Director Irizarry advised that the new rates were approved by the BOC on 8/21/2025 and detailed communication was being prepared for all Rockdale County citizens. Community communication would include the use of printed inserts in upcoming water bills, as well as communication via PR and other outlets in advance of the January 2026 rate increase. Deputy Director Irizarry advised that the rate change will become effective the 1st billing cycle of the year – and will be reflected in the February billing cycle. Deputy Director Michelle Irizarry asked the community to contact her directly via her cell # at 470-914-5868 if specific questions arose regarding RWR Customer Service.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Guest Speaker Mr. Larry Kaiser

At 5:23 p.m. Chair Lichner invited our guest speaker, Mr. Larry Kaiser, to present additional historical overview of the development of the Watershed. Mr. Kaiser advised that in 1984 he served as Rockdale County's Public Works Director, managing a small group of 15 in a trailer in what is now the Publix Parking lot. Mr. Kaiser stated that he met Mrs. Elaine Nash as a Rockdale County employee, and valued her and others expertise, wisdom, and insight for over 16 years.

- Mr. Kaiser stated that during this tenure with Rockdale, his focus was upon Stormwater and Watershed work as both departments were combined in preparation for the required EPA/EPD MS4 (Municipal Stormwater System).
- Mr. Kaiser stated that before starting the Enterprise program, discussions were held to initiate watershed oversight via the development of partnerships with other counties to form a multi-county stormwater enterprise program. The initial idea was to include leadership across four (4) counties (Henry, Walton, Rockdale, and Newton) to share staff and resources to develop one (1) enterprise for all 4 counties.
- A white paper concept was developed and presented to all four county leaders at that time. The Scope of work was developed as a beginning point.
- Numerous meetings were held with the City Managers, the County staff, and County Commissioners. Following presentations, Rockdale County received initial interest of the concept by Henry County; then Walton County's leadership also expressed interest in the concept; followed by Newton County's acknowledgement of interest– all expressed interest of the concept. We were excited about the momentum demonstrated. Subsequently, Mr. Kaiser stated that the concept was discussed with representatives and EPA administrator during a bi-annual meeting held in DC. The EPA Administrator and others were allegedly impressed that the State of GA would have such a focused effort toward water quality and Total Maximum Water Delivery (TMDL).
- Mr. Kaiser stated that once the actual process of developing the specifics associated with the joint multi-county Stormwater Enterprise Program began, unfortunately, the hill became “tough” to climb as county leaders tried to develop the administration process of making this concept work (e.g., territorial/cross-jurisdictional concerns; funding concerns and commitments; etc.)
- Working diligently over an 18-month period the team experienced various county leadership changes, the lack of confirmation of various funding commitments, etc. A final presentation was developed, and Mr. Kaiser and team sought to present the defined program to each of the respective county leaders.
- Unfortunately, Walton advised that they were no longer interested in participating in the multi-county program. Upon communication of

Walton's rejection of the idea, the other counties also elected to no longer support this initiative.

- Mr. Kaiser acknowledged his disappointment in the outcome and stated that he believed the benefits of a cross-functional process were large, and that the prior committee was approximately 10 years ahead of its time as the focus toward environmental awareness occurred later. The issues were not viewed as "political" but unfortunately they were not pushed forward.
- When asked what could have been done differently to facilitate a greater chance for success, Mr. Kaiser indicated the need for upfront, advance and vocal support and commitment from each respective Chairman of the County's involved, as well as their respective Board Members was needed versus relying on the commitment of local Department Heads and Leaders. Mr. Kaiser stated that..."The public heard it, the department heads pushed it – it did not have the leadership focus we needed. Now each County has their own system. "

General discussions arose regarding potential next steps to ensure preservation of the Watershed and reservoir.

1. George Kelecheck asked if the cans been kicked down the road to the point that action is needed (referenced Gwinnett) – as we move forward and look at the Haynes Watershed Assessment.
 - a. What can we do with the County agreement that ended in June 2021 – several committees were set up to protect the drinking water – any suggestions that we could use to protect our water going forward? Should we pursue another good agreement with the County's? Is there any technical information to view as we work to protect the reservoir?
 - b. Discussions occurred regarding the actions taken with Grayson/Logansville. Many variances and ordinances were introduced designed to improve the development's impact on the reservoir downstream – we are now seeing the degradation of the tributaries and creeks – we need to take action.
 - c. George Kelecheck asked if any of the conceptual sketches were available. Mark indicated that he would check. George indicated that the Core of Engineers may request that information. Mr. Kaiser said that George's current role with the Corps is beneficial as we work to address stopping the erosion now. George Kelecheck indicated that in 10 years we have seen 1% of siltation – 40-acre feet deep; the Corp of Engineers (team of 7) will be onsite to look at solutions to minimize silt -- \$250,000 to perform the work

across 56 acres. They will bring the counties together and identify the concerns and resolution 65/35 split from the Corp and County. We have water flowing for over 600 years- but if we don't correct it, it may turn into a trickle.

- d. Tom Harrison asked Mr. Kaiser if he had any knowledge of what the other Counties did on their own to address these concerns? Was there individual recognition of the problem? Mr. Kaiser advised that ..."NO – they did not recognize the degradation of the river downstream..." As an example, Mr. Kaiser stated that McIlroy Dam should be repaired – which may require other Counties to participate. Mr. Kaiser recommended the pursuit of discussions with other counties (e.g., have cross-county staff discussions).
 - i. George Kelcheck stated that we have the signed letters from Gwinnett and Rockdale and the City of Conyers. He also advised that he would seek to meet with Walton and Gwinnett. The Amy Corp of Engineers has committed to providing funding. Barring any unplanned and unforeseen delays that may occur at the Federal level, by June 30, 2026 the assessment will be completed. Yes, it will take an effort.
 - ii. Mr. Kaiser expressed appreciation and acknowledgement that this has gained some traction. Mr. Kaiser said that the Snellville Council has requested a 15-minute clear, concise presentation and agreed to partner with George Kelecheck on this matter if needed. Mr. Kaiser stated that the financial commitment is not there at this time. George Kelecheck also expressed a "new life" in Rockdale County associated with wanting to take care of our water.

There being no additional questions or comments associated with Mr. Kaiser's presentation, Chair Lichner and the Advisory Council thanked Mr. Kaiser for his presence and presentation

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Public Accessibility to RCWSS Meeting Minutes and Agenda

1. Andrea Lee provided an update on the uploading and public accessibility of RCWSS Advisory Council Meeting Minutes and agenda for public viewing. All internal systems have been properly aligned, and meeting minutes and agendas are available for public viewing on the Rockdale County website.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussions arose regarding the RCWSS Advisory Council's meeting schedule – are month to month meetings still a necessity? Are we ready for quarterly meetings? Are we all willing to add in a meeting if necessary between quarterly meetings?
 - a. Following discussions, John Nix made a motion which was 2nd by Tom Harrison that the RCWSS Advisory Council Meetings will be scheduled and held bi-monthly (every other month) on the 1st Monday of such month beginning February 2026 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. No meeting will be held in January 2026. The meeting location preferred is CE Steele Community Center, 1040 Oakland Avenue, Conyers, GA 30012. The vote via a show of hands was unanimous. The motion was carried.
 - b. Additional discussions focused on the RCWSS Advisory Council's future inclusion of specific agenda topics that better identified which Rockdale County Department Staff might be needed at future meetings (e.g., to respectfully recognize that Rockdale County RWR and Stormwater Management Staff have worked during the day of the designated evening meetings). Prior topic designation will increase Rockdale County Staff's input and communication on designated topics of interest in a manner that minimizes mandating Rockdale County Department RWR and Stormwater Staff attendance at all meetings (Water & Stormwater, etc.)
 - c. Requests arose regarding the Council's ability to use Zoom meetings (or other media-based technology) for future meetings if needed. Chair Lichner asked for the opportunity to review this matter with Chair VanNess and provide an update at a future meeting.
2. Questions arose regarding the scheduled December 1st meeting. All were advised that the public notifications of our monthly meetings have already been distributed. Therefore, to minimize any public confusion and maintain adherence to our own guidelines, Chair Lichner asked to maintain what is already scheduled.

RCWSS Advisory Council Comments:

1. George Kelecheck asked if the County would consider the use of a Stormwater Liaison – to minimize educational and communication gaps, etc. This liaison would help Council members learn more about water and stormwater allowing them to

serve as ambassadors within the community when needed. George Kelecheck indicated that he visited the RWR website and acknowledged the benefit of seeing RWR videos and articles identifying events and activities that were occurring in the field. George asked if Stormwater would also create a 10-minute video that provides an overview of what Stormwater is doing in the field for public viewing. George indicated that these videos are an educational tool for the public and would also help support the RCWSS Advisory Council's August 18th comments captured in the minutes regarding education and mass communication efforts that we could undertake.

2. Additionally, George Kelecheck requested an update on Stormwater's plans to conduct a Stormwater/Water Symposium that Director Simpkins mentioned previously. Is it being planned? An update is requested from Stormwater.
3. George also provided a visual that can be used as we discuss the funds/ \$\$'s that are being expensed for infrastructure...a display on a map of the United States that reflects the number of pipes currently maintained underground to support our water and stormwater capability – the map would reflect that the number of pipes, if placed next to each other on a continuous basis, would reach from here to Washington, DC.!!! Visual presentations are needed to express and explain all that we do!

PUBLIC COMMENTS – The Honorable Chair JaNice VanNess stopped by briefly and provided the following updates:

1. Chair VanNess advised that she and the BOC are working aggressively with RW leadership to shore up and reduce the water loss rates which are currently reflected at 33%. The County's goal continues toward 20%.
2. Chair VanNess stated that the County is aggressively identifying and analyzing ways to minimize the loss of funds that are being written off due to customer leaks. Because water bills are often one of the less expensive bills that citizens receive, consumers don't always pay attention to small incremental water usage increases that may be associated with a leaking faucet. Also, we have identified that prior tenants or residents moved into locations where the landlord or property owner was previously listed as the recipient of the water bill and neglected to repair the leak and when the new tenant moves into the location and places the water service under their name, because the leaks were not repaired, the new tenant now bears the responsibility for subsequent the large

water bills – but the landlord was not held responsible. This process has now been fixed!

3. Chair VanNess also stated that efforts are being undertaken to stimulate the utilization of local plumbers in our community while also providing services to our low-income residents. Rockdale County will not be endorsing the workmanship or reliability of the plumbers, but we could provide names of local plumbers for citizens to contact and conduct their own research. The County's ability to simply write off past due accounts is extremely limited; so, we're trying to identify an insurance program that may help our residents.
4. George Kelecheck questioned the billing used to identify impervious surfaces – specifically asking if the bill would be based upon the actual impervious surfaces associated with the residence versus a uniform charge. Chair VanNess acknowledged that businesses are already being charged in a manner to reflect acknowledgement of impervious surfaces and their impact on Stormwater.
5. Chair VanNess also stated that Churches and large councils are not tax exempt from fees. George Kelecheck reminded all of the recent articles in the Atlanta Journal Constitution that referenced various Counties instituting new Stormwater charges.

No additional public comments were offered.

The RCWSS Advisory Council's final meeting for 2025 will be held on Monday, December 1st, 2025

Meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Barnes-Lichner", written over a horizontal line.

Nicole Barnes- Lichner, Chairperson

Respectfully,

Chair Nicole Barnes-Lichner