

Jul 7, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

Green Hills Country Estates Water & Sewer District [PBA the District]

7:00 p.m. via Zoom or in Person @ Huntsville Library

Board members present: Gary Hebert, Greg Liddell, Natalie Davenport

District members present: Patty Danks, Lou Cooper, Brenda Cooper, Jacque Behar, Tina Yagle

Others in attendance: Diane O'Connell, Thom Summers

Call to Order

- **President Gary Hebert called the meeting to order.**

Agenda Item 1: Broken Meter Policy Discussion and Vote

I. Introduction and Purpose of the Policy:

- Natalie Davenport explained the reason for the policy: a few malfunctioning meters have occurred in the past year, leading to inaccurate water consumption measurements.
- The goal is to ensure fair and transparent billing for all customers.
- The district is dealing with an older system, and more meters may need replacement.
- A new potential malfunctioning meter was reported just this morning.
- Thom Summers added that the district is seeing both large overages and underages in water usage, suggesting meters are not always accurate. He wants to compile a list of affected customers and conduct tests.

II. Policy Draft Review and Discussion:

- **Purpose:** To establish guidelines for issuing possible credits to district users for verified broken/malfunctioning meters.
- **Policy Statement:** Green Hills Water and Sewer District will provide a one-quarter billing credit to a customer's account when their water meter is officially determined by the General Manager to be broken and subsequently replaced.
- **Scope:** Applies to all active water and sewer service accounts where a district-owned water meter is found defective.
- **Natalie read the entire draft policy.**
- The board agreed to change the look-back period to **8 quarters** (2 years) for calculating the average consumption for credit, where historical data is available.

III. General Discussion and Public Comment:

- **Meter Testing and Replacement:**
 - Thom Summers stated the average water meter lifespan is about 20 years.

- The district plans to start testing older meters this year, working their way through the neighborhood, using a "bucket test" for calibration.
 - The district hopes to implement cellular meter reads this year, which will provide real-time data and help identify continuous leaks. However, this system will not verify meter accuracy, so physical testing will still be necessary.
 - The cost to bench test a meter by a third party is approximately \$500, making replacement a more viable option.
 - **Homeowner Concerns (Tina Yagla):**
 - Tina reported her June water bill was double last year's, despite no meter movement when all water was turned off, indicating a potential malfunctioning meter rather than a leak on her side.
 - Thom Summers offered to perform the 5-gallon bucket test for any customer who suspects a malfunctioning meter.
 - **Cooper's Case Discussion (Pre-Policy Issue):**
 - Lou and Brenda Cooper's meter was discovered to be malfunctioning in 2024 (replaced July 13, 2024).
 - Tests showed their meter was over-reading by 30.6% and 32% respectively.
 - Mr. Cooper initially requested 10 years of excess water charge compensation, then suggested 15 years of free Tier 1 water.
 - Natalie Davenport stated the board prefers monetary compensation over providing free water for extended periods due to potential future complications and fairness to other customers.
 - Disagreement arose regarding the over-read percentage: Gary Hebert cited 31.3% based on lab tests, while Mr. Cooper asserted 43% based on his own field bucket test.
 - The challenge of determining when a meter began malfunctioning was discussed, as historical data (especially pre-2013 handwritten records) is sporadic.
 - The board acknowledges the Coopers' frustration and the fact that their meter was indeed malfunctioning, leading to overcharges. However, they are grappling with several complexities:
1. **Fairness and Consistency:** The board wants to ensure that any compensation provided to the Coopers sets a fair precedent for all other customers who might have experienced or will experience similar issues. They recognize that if a long look-back period is applied to the Coopers, it might need to be applied to others, potentially creating a significant financial burden.
 2. **Financial Responsibility:** As a small company with upcoming major expenses (like building a filter plant), the district's financial stability is a concern. Thom Summers, the General Manager, emphasized that the district doesn't have unlimited funds to reimburse everyone and that "everybody's gonna have to give a little bit."
 3. **Lack of Historical Data and Malfunction Onset:** A key challenge is precisely determining when the Coopers' meter began malfunctioning, as historical data (especially pre-2013) is sporadic. Without clear data, it's difficult to quantify the exact period of overbilling.
 4. In essence, the board wants to compensate the Coopers for the water they paid for but didn't receive, while balancing this with the district's financial health and the need for a consistent, legally defensible policy that applies fairly to all customers.

- The District and the Cooper's were at an impasse as to what, if any, compensation was applicable.
- **Decision regarding Cooper's case:** The board decided to seek legal guidance on Utah's statutes of limitations for such compensation claims. This is to establish a clear, legally sound basis for determining how far back the district could be responsible for compensation, rather than setting an arbitrary precedent. The Coopers were asked to send any relevant documentation to the Green Hills email address.
- Thom Summers reiterated that while he can't comment on compensation, customers deserve to get what they pay for. He also emphasized that as a small company with significant upcoming costs (e.g., filter plant), everyone may need to "give a little."
- Natalie Davenport hopes that the issue of widespread malfunctioning meters is limited to a few, but the policy is necessary regardless.

IV. Motion to Vote on Policy:

- A motion was made to vote on the "Broken Meter Policy."
- **Vote:** "Aye" votes from Gary, Greg, and Natalie).
- The policy will be tweaked with the agreed-upon changes (8 quarters for historical data, current quarter for insufficient data) and then sent for e-signatures.
- The policy will be posted to the district website and included in the next newsletter.

V. Adjournment:

- Greg Liddell was excused due to a previous commitment.
- Natalie Davenport made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
- The motion was seconded.
- **Vote:** All in favor ("Aye").
- The meeting was adjourned.

Next Regular Scheduled Meeting: July 21st at 7:00 PM.

Reviewer	Status	Notes
Treasurer Green Hills	Not started ▾	
Greenhills Water	Not started ▾	
Gary Hebert	Not started ▾	
Secretary GreenHills	Not started ▾	

