

Washington County Service Authority Board of Commissioners
November 18, 2016 Dispute Committee Meeting Minutes

The Dispute Committee Meeting of the Washington County Service Authority Board of Commissioners was called to order at 3:33 pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present:

Mr. Jim McCall

Mr. Mike White

WCSA Staff Present:

Robbie Cornett, General Manager

Holly Edwards, Customer Service Manager

Ken Perrigan, Meter Manager

Hossam Saadeldin Dispute Hearing

Mr. Saadeldin requested a dispute hearing regarding Giardino Pizzeria & Restaurant located at 12412 Maple Street in Glade Spring, Virginia.

Mr. Cornett explained to Mr. Saadeldin that Mr. McCall and Mr. White were the two Commissioners appointed by the Board to serve on the Dispute Committee. Their role is to hear customer concerns. If they find it appropriate to do so, they may make interim policy adjustments and refer the suggested policy change to the full Board of Commissioners for consideration.

Mr. Saadeldin said it is an honor to be here and he thanked the committee for hearing his concerns.

Mr. Saadeldin began saying, on the July 5, 2016, apparently the person who read the meter saw there was an abnormal amount of water "I guess coming out of the pipes." This is according to the document Mr. Saadeldin received from Mrs. Edwards telling him how much WCSA adjusted the bill.

Around August 12, 2016, Mr. Saadeldin received the bill and it was abnormally high; around \$1,000 or \$1,200 and that

brought to his attention something was wrong. Mr. Saadeldin said he called and talked to a gentleman and found out later it was the same person that read the meter. Mr. Saadeldin said when he called WCSA; he used the prompt that would transfer his call to a technical person for a leak. The gentleman was nice and told him where the meter was located. Mr. Saadeldin went to the meter and the WCSA employee told him how to turn the meter off. Mr. Saadeldin took his advice and immediately came to the WCSA office and picked up a stethoscope. He took it to the restaurant and it took him about 30 minutes to locate the leak. Once he located the leak, Mr. Saadeldin called Mr. Blevins and Mr. Blevins fixed the leak the next day. From July 5th until the last week of August, the water was running, said Mr. Saadeldin. The whole town of Glade Spring lost that water. Mr. Saadeldin said he had no notice that would tell him, sir, there is a leak.

Mr. Saadeldin said Mrs. Edwards said she spoke to the gentleman who read the meter. According to Mr. Saadeldin, Mrs. Edwards said that gentleman told her he notified one of the waitresses of the leak. Mr. Saadeldin said he would like to bring this point to the committee's attention. It is going in every business. Not everyone that works for you wants good things for you. So telling a waitress you have a leak, that waitress might forget to tell you or didn't care; she probably was texting her boyfriend. Mr. Saadeldin said the bottom line is he hasn't received anything from any of the workers that there is a leak.

Mr. Saadeldin said his second point was that he suggested to Mr. Cornett they have to put in in perspective which is sending a letter. We are such a small town and are family here; we see each

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other in stores and in traffic. Mr. Saadeldin said a letter would not take more than two or three days to notify that person.

If they say, yes we sent a letter and I say I did not receive the letter, it is very difficult for a person like me as a citizen to say, no I have not received it, said Mr. Saadeldin. Mr. Saadeldin received all the bills from WCSA, why wouldn't I receive that letter? Mr. Saadeldin said his suggestion was there was no letter sent to notify him of the leak. A letter will take two or three days and would have worn those two or three weeks of leaks. Mr. Saadeldin said he wouldn't have lost, the company wouldn't have lost and the town and tax payers wouldn't have lost and everyone is happy. There is no letter, he stated.

Mr. Saadeldin said he spoke to Mrs. Edwards about all this. Mr. Saadeldin said he considered himself part of a family in this small town. What is Glade Spring, what is Abingdon, what is Damascus, what is Lebanon; they are all such small towns. Anyone could have noticed or saw that leak.

Mr. Saadeldin said if it were up to him, and he worked at a company like WCSA and he knew there was a leak, if I couldn't go today, I would stop by the next day and be sure the person was notified of the leak. Mr. Saadeldin said we all have to put our hands together and all our effort together and try to better the system, try to better the situation for citizens. Mr. Saadeldin said he did not think it was difficult for someone to stop by. This isn't a week, it isn't two weeks. It is from July 5th all the way to the end of August. That is a long time. Anyone can say so; anybody, stated Mr. Saadeldin.

Mr. Saadeldin said that was his dispute. He spoke to Mrs. Edwards and Mr.

Cornett and told them he was disputing this as a person and a citizen of this area. Mr. Saadeldin said he was set up on the 12 months payment plan and handled things the way they to be handled. Mr. Saadeldin said he paid the first payment and things were going well on the left side. On the other hand, Mr. Saadeldin said his dispute continued and he brought the matter to Mr. Cornett's attention. That is when Mrs. Edwards called Mr. Saadeldin about the dispute hearing.

Mr. Cornett thanked Mr. Saadeldin. We try to notify customers. For better or worse, from a policy standpoint we are not obligated but as a curtesy we try to notify customers of high usage with a call. After reading the meter around July 5, 2016, the system generates a report. On that report, the consumption of 87,000 was circled and a note written saying "talked to 276-274-8229." If we are not mistaken, on the same day or the following day, Mrs. Edwards called and spoke to a lady the first time then a man called back and we thought it was Mr. Saadeldin and had a conversation that perhaps it was a toilet leaking that had caused the high water usage and had been repaired. Mr. Cornett asked Mr. Saadeldin if he recalled that conversation.

No I do not, said Mr. Saadeldin. He continued saying he would not have come this far with the dispute if he know that he had talked to someone around July 5th. Let's pretend that happened then it wouldn't have come all this far. I would have said, I remember this, I called that day and we spoke about the toilet; just forget about it and I will pay everything. But I have not, stated Mr. Saadeldin. He said the only phone call he remembered was to a gentleman around August. I still remember because

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I had someone else with me, a partner and he was out of town. Mr. Saadeldin said you say I get confused between dates and I don't know if I really called that time or not. No. I connected and linked my phone call to his (Mr. Saadeldin's partner) arrival 10 days before coming back from his trip, stated Mr. Saadeldin. That is why Mr. Saadeldin said he remembered that in the mid or end of August, that is when he called his partner and said we have a leak; what is going on? We talked about the subject as partners. Mr. Saadeldin said that is why he remembers he called that gentleman at that time, at the end of August.

Mr. Saadeldin said he wanted to show his good faith with the situation. He said I do not think so for one second that I know there was a leak or even thought there was a leak and not do anything about it. I am an adult and have a degree and I do know the difference between paying for a leak for a whole month and having it fixed. Getting it fixed wouldn't have been more than two or three hundred dollars. I don't think it would be the idea that I called someone to fix the leak and then hide the fact. Mr. Saadeldin said he came to the WCSA office and made this clear to everybody and now to you all here.

I am not a greedy person. I am not saying I'm not paying a dime and 100% it's not my fault. All I am saying when the adjustment was made, I asked if we could meet in the middle more. We have to take the basket together. I'm not on the greedy side, said Mr. Saadeldin.

Mr. Saadeldin said that phone call did not happen (call in July), only the second call around August.

Mr. White confirmed Mr. Saadeldin's phone number.

Mr. White asked Mr. Perrigan what day he spoke to Mr. Saadeldin.

Mr. Perrigan said he spoke to a lady.

And Mr. Saadeldin called you back from that number?

Mr. Perrigan said someone did, I don't know it was Mr. Saadeldin.

Mr. Perrigan said he talked to Mr. Saadeldin the next month (August) and told him where the water meter was located.

Mr. Saadeldin said he only recalled speaking to someone in August.

Mr. Perrigan said the lady said she would tell Mr. Saadeldin as soon as she saw him.

Mr. Perrigan explained that when the read about 3,000 to 4,000 meters at a time, they may have 60 people on the high usage list. We do the best we can to notify those customers. Many times we do not have any way to get in touch with a customer other than to wait until the customer receives the bill and they hopefully notice there is a problem. It takes an hour or more to go through the list for the customers with high usage. Mr. Perrigan continued saying we want people to know they have leak. We have four meter readers that read 22,000 water meters and we are strapped to run here or there several times to tell you about a leak; we don't have the manpower, explained Mr. Perrigan.

Mr. Saadeldin said to Mr. Perrigan; I really do from the bottom of my heart appreciate your job and what you do for the company and for us. And I do know it is not slacking on your part. Except sometimes, some things slip out of a person's mind. It happens to the best of us. Mr. Saadeldin said when he approached this subject, Mr. Perrigan, The meter is here. I am not trying to put down your effort whatsoever. The meter is here and the store is over here, not

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more than 25 or 30 feet, 40 feet at the most.

How much is my regular usage, 5,000 or 6,000 asked Mr. Saadeldin?

Yes said Mrs. Edwards.

Mr. Saadeldin said, that means something horrible under the soil is happening. Again, I am not putting your job down and I know you are doing effort, but to me, said Mr. Saadeldin, it would take 60 seconds for a person to walk to the store, write a note, give this to your boss. That way, you can put this in the basket of the future of changing some policies. It is only 60 seconds to put the note and turn around. If that would have happened that day, we would have saved a lot of time and a lot of money, stated Mr. Saadeldin.

Let's jump for one second, Mr. Perrigan. Mr. Saadeldin said there was also another alternative. I know you said Mr. Cornett you are not required by law to do this and I respect that, but this situation is not about us and you, you and us. No, it is about everybody. Mr. Saadeldin suggested in the future that WCSA send letters and charge the customer for the stamp and envelope. Send the customer a letter that day and we save everything, suggested Mr. Saadeldin.

Mr. Saadeldin said he did not recall speaking to anyone that day but did speak to someone the end of August. Mr. Saadeldin said as soon as he talked to Mr. Perrigan, he turned off the meter and immediately fixed the leak the next morning.

Mr. Saadeldin said if I know back in August, why would I have done all this, why would I wait; that's my point.

Mr. White asked Mr. Saadeldin who looks at the bills when come in.

I do. Sometimes my partner but in July my partner was not there, stated Mr. Saadeldin.

You have a bill in July with a large water usage and another one in August with large water usage. So that wasn't a red flag that you had a problem, asked Mr. White.

Mr. Saadeldin said the red flag was one of the bills. I saw one of the bills, the second bill. The second bill was when I saw the big figure. Sometimes we don't look at the bills one by one because sometimes we have 10 or 11 bills, explained Mr. Saadeldin. So you just look at the bill. If my bill is usually \$200 and my bill comes in at \$350, I'm going to say oh my, I told them not to use a lot of water and I go fuss at the employees to be careful. What really gets your attention is the number \$1,000. When I saw the second bill, I really jumped out of my seat and contacted WCSA.

The committee discussed Mr. Saadeldin's regular bill and concluded his regular bill for water and sewer was about \$130 per month. His monthly bill went from \$144 to over \$1,200.

Mr. Cornett said that bill was mailed on July 13th.

Mr. White said that was your first signal in July and you said it went through August too.

Mr. Saadeldin asked what the bill in July was.

\$1,286.82, said Mr. White.

Mr. Saadeldin asked when he received the July bill.

It was mailed July 13th, answered Mrs. Edwards.

So I would have received it July 16th or 17th, said Mr. Saadeldin.

Yes, said Mrs. Edwards.

Well then I did not see that bill. So it was leaking from July 5th to the 18th asked Mr. Saadeldin.

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Yes, said Mrs. Edwards.

None of us are perfect. Sometimes you miss one of the bills, said Mr. Saadeldin. That is why we give you the benefit of doubt and give you the adjustment like Mrs. Edwards did, because nobody is perfect. That is why we gave you the benefit of doubt and adjust the bill, said Mr. White.

Mr. White asked Mrs. Edwards if she adjusted the bill in August.

The adjustment went on the account in October after the readings went down, said Mrs. Edwards.

After the leak was fixed, stated. Mr. White.

After the leak was repaired, yes, said Mrs. Edwards.

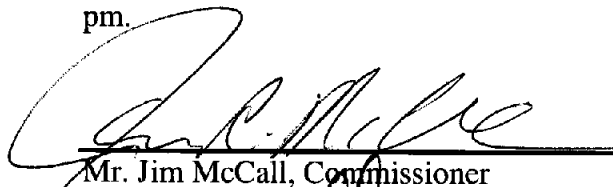
It is amount of the adjustment was \$2,122.22, said Mrs. Edwards.

Mr. McCall said, at this point, unless Mr. Saadeldin has something else, we need to talk about it and Mrs. Edwards can let Mr. Saadeldin know. It won't be months or weeks, said Mr. McCall to Mr. Saadeldin.

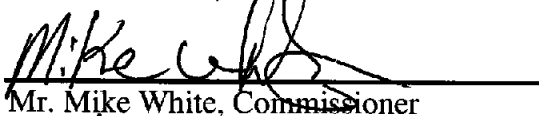
Mr. McCall thanked Mr. Saadeldin for his time and told him either Mr. Cornett or Mrs. Edwards would get back to him.

Adjourn – 4:04 pm

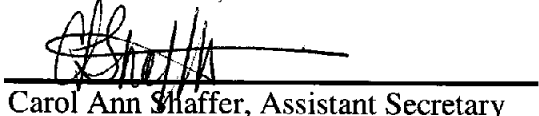
The dispute hearing concluded at 4:04 pm.



Mr. Jim McCall, Commissioner



Mr. Mike White, Commissioner



Carol Ann Shaffer, Assistant Secretary