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Hanover County Board of Supervisors Meeting, Wednesday, February 12, 2025

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- Official agenda (CivicClerk): [https://hanovercova.api.civicclerk.com/v1/Meetings/GetMeetingFileStream\(fileId=3463,plainText=false\)](https://hanovercova.api.civicclerk.com/v1/Meetings/GetMeetingFileStream(fileId=3463,plainText=false))
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[00:00:00] has passed mr chairman sir mr chairman i move to appoint mr ronald edward kuiper jr to the economic development authority representing the mechanics phil magisterial district filling an unexpired term ending december 31st 2026 that's on the consent agenda sir correct to add it to the consent agenda that is correct all in favor of that amendment please indicate by saying

[00:00:34] aye aye any opposed none consent agenda has been amended i'd like to recognize sheriff hines thank you for being with us sir our treasurer mr. devotion thank you for being with us sir also our fire chief mr. Anderson thank you for being with us we will now go into chair and board member comments any board members have comments thank you mr. chairman I just just wanted to recognize the fact that mr. ed keeper is actually here today and we'll be voting on that shortly on the consent agenda so thanks for serving Ed and thanks for coming out on this lovely weather day

[00:01:13] simplify those that's all any other board members who wish to make comments recognize County Attorney mr. Walter new mr. chairman members of the board I'm here today it's not often I come before you to announce a new member of the County Attorney's Office but we do have a new member that I want to make sure that you all are aware and get a chance to meet sitting next to me is Linda

[00:01:52] Scott Linda joined the office just about a month ago in mid-January as you know with the appointment of Lisa Seward to the bench. We have been in a situation where we've been trying to make sure that we are back to full staff. We are, and we are very pleased that Linda has joined us.

[00:02:10] She comes to us not as a new attorney. She is well-known to those in our office. She previously worked here in Hanover at the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office. She's also worked in Henrico with their Commonwealth's Attorney's Office. Most recently, she's been with the Office of the Attorney General downtown. So she comes with a wealth of experience not only in the legal profession, but also here in Hanover County She will be primarily working with the Department of Social Services But like every attorney in the office, she's got a number of assignments. And so that includes fire EMS Communications parks and rec and she'll be working on some of our zoning enforcement uses So I did just want to make sure that you all had a chance to see her and that the public had a chance to see her

[00:02:49] And I hope that you will welcome her as you have everyone else in our office Thank you, ma'am, and welcome to our team. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Welter. Next, I'll recognize Mr. Badesky. Thank you, Mr. Chair, members of the board. Just a few updates today. First, I wanted to just welcome everybody back to the board room. We had a hiatus in January to upgrade some of our technology. So this is our very first meeting with the new board system. So if we have, this is our trial period here today. So if we have any technical glitches, we'll work through those.

[00:03:27] And then all of the meetings, including our school board meetings, will start to return back to this room. This room is one of the most heavily rooms that we utilized for public meetings, but also for trainings. This system was originally installed almost 25 years ago.

[00:03:44] So if you think about the technology changes in the past 25 years, we're bringing them up to date. So glad to be able to improve the user experience here in the room and for those that watch remotely. So we'll continue to to make improvements in the room as we move forward I did want to remind everybody that Hanover County will be closed on Monday the 19th in recognition of President's Day that includes our Transfer stations as well on those days next Wednesday February 19th at 2:00 p.m. In this room The county administrators recommended budget to the board will be introduced

[00:04:22] That's done after a number of months of taking feedback from not only our residents but all of our department heads our constitutional officers working together with our school partners we will introduce the recommended budget next week over the next few months and into april this board will deliberate and take additional public feedback and hopefully adopt the fiscal year 26 budget in the middle of april so we encourage our residents to participate and engage in that feedback that budget includes both our operating budgets and capital budgets which we have and are continuing some major capital investments in our community look forward to

[00:05:00] sharing that next wednesday we completed our second meeting with the ashland community regarding the henry clay elementary school we had really great turnout at both of those meetings staff will be working to consolidate all of the feedback that we received not only from the in-person meetings but the online feedback in the months to come we will bring recommendations for this board consider we certainly will be working with our town partners but later this spring we anticipate a process to once we have the board adopt some considerations for for potential proposals and so more to come

[00:05:39] on that particular project but want to thank all of our residents for participating in that process today as we end today's meeting you will hear the after action report on the richmond water crisis that

hanover county had to respond to i i will say it's very comprehensive but i want to say in advance while the report itself is well over 100 pages we are putting every document that we have available related to the water crisis including text emails reports online fully today for the public we are being as transparent in this process as possible we want to make sure that our

[00:06:18] residents know that we have taken uh the impact of that water crisis to to our residents extremely serious take the reports and recommendations that will come out here today and look forward to their implementation but quite honestly an even greater regional response and look forward to providing more feedback once that report is provided here today mr chair that's all i have at this time thank you for your comments mr pedesky any board members wish to make additional comments seeing none we will now move to citizens time by a show of hands how many citizens wish to address

[00:06:55] your board today seeing none we will open and close citizens time next on the agenda is item five consent agenda mr davis pardon me mr chairman i move that the board adopt the amended consent agenda second all in favor of of adopting the amended consent agenda please indicate by saying aye aye any opposed none consent agenda is approved agenda item six presentation richmond region

[00:07:26] tourism annual report is katherine o'donnell thank you miss o'donnell thank you wasn't on okay start again thank you mr chair members of the board great to be back with you all today for our annual update on tourism for the richmond region and once again we're here with good news so as you all know tourism supports our community and the people who live here and those are our our primary customers we do this because tourism is good for our citizens and our quality of life you are aware that tourism is over four decades of regional collaboration in our area these are

[00:08:05] the seven localities that make up the richmond region tourism footprint and we know that when visitors come here to vacation they fly into that may fly into the richmond airport they may go to king's dominion they may eat downtown they may play on the fields in river city sportsplex and go home and tell their friends they went to richmond so that's why we do this all together they went to five seven localities but as one region we offer a lot for visitors and that's they never know which boundaries they're in but they'll spend their money all over the place the good news is we're continuing to break records more trips year over year we're seeing an increase in

[00:08:42] overnight trips post-covid which is great when people stay overnight they're spending more money in our community when we look at the last calendar year we're well above in visitor spending for the region not quite in the number of visitors but the good news is the people are spending more money when they come so in Hanover specifically you're almost at two hundred and thirty million dollars in visitor spending in calendar year 23 with is that almost again just under 11 million in taxes to 2,300 jobs and 75 million in wages for our citizens in

[00:09:18] Hanover County one of the ways we always measure how tourism is performing is by seeing how many people stay in hotels and last fiscal year we had record hotel sales reaching almost 40 million not pictured here we got data today from our research firm for the last calendar year and in Hanover specifically you're You're up 10% in occupancy, which is the highest growth in the region, and you're up 2% in revenue.

[00:09:45] So more people spending more in Hanover County hotels in the last calendar year, which is a different time period than this. The reason that we're so successful in the region is because we have a

variety of tourism markets that perform well. You might be able to think of other communities that sort of have one asset, and maybe it's just leisure or just meetings.

[00:10:06] We have all of that here. family and friends are the number one reason people come to visit our region. That's the number one reason people go most places, except for maybe Vegas and Orlando. But here in the Richmond region, we actually outperform the national average, which means we really want our citizens to be engaged in what there is to see and do here.

[00:10:25] And it also tells us our citizens have good pride in our community because they're inviting their friends and family to come here. We do really well with meetings and conventions in sports, and we'll talk more about that later, but in Hanover, you guys have really carved out a niche running events which is super cool no one else is doing that in our region we do well with business travel you all are aware there are a lot of corporations and businesses located in our region and then leisure travel located perfectly situated on 95 and 64. when we look at our demographics in the history of doing tourism northern Virginia and DC is always our our top market but for the

[00:11:03] most part it's went within a three to four hour drive but we've seen increase in New York which is really interesting so we continue to do some more advertising there. We are very evenly spread out across the seasons. Again, unlike other destinations where you maybe just have summer high season, we are basically the same throughout, which gives us good, steady tourism income throughout the year for our businesses. And again, we're pleased to see that the length of stay increasing post-COVID to more people staying overnight. One of the things that we do at Richmond Region Tourism is to help keep the region on the radar for travelers.

[00:11:41] There's so many ways to do this, through advertising and social media. We also work with influencers and writers to tell the stories of the Richmond region. These are just a couple examples of times that Hanover has been mentioned in the media. First, for the Mimosa Trail, with a mention of Hanover Tavern.

[00:11:59] This is from writers that we worked with in the Mimosa Trail as one of our programs. And then, of course, Winterfest, named by USA Today as the number nine holiday attraction last year. We also use social media as a tool to reach potential travelers.

[00:12:17] Again, two examples of social media content that our team produced. And you can see the effectiveness of it with getting over 8,000 views and 15,000 views, a good interaction, and getting the word out about what there is to do and see in Hanover.

[00:12:33] As I mentioned, sports tourism, still the largest market when we think about booked business. Leisure is always going to be the biggest, but when we're looking at events, sports tourism the largest for a reason region and that is driven by facilities and as I mentioned you all have had a run of running events here in the county with you can see some of the great bookings USA track and field cross-country nationals as well as the cross-country showcase the Atlantic 10 cross-country championships and the NJCAA National Junior Collegiate Athletic Association

[00:13:10] championships here. So really when it comes to running events in our region Hanover is the place to be and we continue to work with your our great partners here in Parks and Rec to pull these events off and recruit them to Hanover. We're very excited to partner with the University of Richmond to host the NCAA Division 1 cross-country in 2027 and it will be in Hanover at pole green park and this is

really cool we won three ncaa bids this year and to have one of them the portal only opens once every three years so we bid this year and won three for future years

[00:13:48] and to have one in hanover is a very big deal so congratulations as always we want to update you on the tourism master plan this we're almost we are halfway through since it's 2025 of the 10-year plan and these are the priorities that we have been working on as a region the first is the headquarter hotel. This is still a need for the convention center, which you all are a part of. In order to maximize that building, we need to have more rooms adjacent to the building, so that we are continuing to advocate for that. The inspiration campaign, if you'll recall, through ARPA money, we were able to launch a \$2.4 million inspiration campaign.

[00:14:28] We've showed it to you guys last time we were here. It's the one using the ASMR video technology this is telling the story through sound. It has performed very well and so much so that we continued to run it once our money ran out. And you can see here the results. There's lots of numbers, lots of impressions. Really the one to focus on is the brand lift. This is much higher than industry standards and it's telling us that people who saw the ad, their perception of our region increased by 50% and their likeliness to travel here increased by 34 percent so we know that the ad is working and we can as i said continue to do to be able

[00:15:05] to afford to do that through using tourism improvement district funds to continue that ad and speaking of the tourism improvement district um you all will recall that we passed the two percent fee we're a year and a half in in your packets is the latest mid-year report for this fiscal year but the the gist of it is that we're always on we're able to advertise year-round now which we could not afford before and this is really putting us more in line with our competitors previously Richmond region tourism's resources were much smaller so the TID enables us to be able to compete a little bit more with those other destinations that are clamoring for visitors and meetings

[00:15:43] conventions and sports you can see here we're also able to go to a lot more trade shows and interact with event planners to convince them to choose the Richmond region for their event marketing is what we do and we are always trying to drive visitors to the hotels a couple examples of campaigns that we've run recently are pet friendly we know that a lot of people adopted pets during COVID and we want them to bring their pets to our region and stay in our hotels and then of course the outdoors and with that I'm going to turn it over to Danielle Fitzhugh who will talk more about workforce development

[00:16:20] it's nice to see you all again good afternoon really want to talk a little bit about some of our work with workforce development we're working with our CTE programs and our schools we are making sure that we are building career pathways and they're thinking about tourism as a career pathway and I'm going to give you a little bit of that information here in just a second this is just a little bit of information on the division of our funds for our foundation and how we spread those out including sports grants to help elevate

[00:16:56] our sports programs that are happening across the region I talked about creating career pathways where our young people think about tourism as a career option you heard the numbers over 2300 student jobs here in tourism those wages the average medium wage in our community is \$82,000 for tourism and hospitality that's a real job and we want to make sure that our young people are thinking about that as a career option and this is just a little bit more in our career pathways we're also working with the with chamber RVA and

[00:17:31] their mission tomorrow program as well on to I am tourism I am tourism is our in-market program where we help educate residents on tourism throughout the region this past year we took our program on the road and we have been in every community including right here in Hanover this is our I am tourism program that we hosted in Covenant Woods and we'll be back again this coming year most recently we're coming off of our RVA sports awards RMC was rich Randolph

[00:18:07] Macon almost was a clean sweep three awards out of 11 categories including female athlete of the year I'm not mistaken I think this is the second year that Randolph-Macon has taken home that same spot RMC baseball also for team of the year and we had coach as well so thank you so much for the support of I know I know chick mr. chairman you were there at the event thank you so much for attending and supporting that event as well tourism is a force for good and so with that I'll bring up Catherine for a few closing comments so we know that

[00:18:45] beyond the economic impact of tourism it's a force for good in our community and improving quality of life for our citizens because when our visitors come here they support all the things that make living in our community wonderful and so from our team who every day gets out of bed passionately promoting the Richmond region because we believe it's one of the best places in the world to live and visit we are honored to represent Hanover to the world and appreciate your investment and your trust in us and with that we would be glad to take any questions any questions or comments from board members I see

[00:19:24] none so thank you very much to both of you for being here today it was good to see you at the RVA sports award event on Saturday and we thank you for the regional partnership that we have and it's really good when I go to pole green park for an event on some of these what are they marathons that they run and we see runners from all over the country and it's it's great to see how the regional partnership really benefits what you do of those athletes that come here and also our community so thank you very much

[00:19:58] thank you okay next on the agenda is item seven presentation fiscal year 2025 second quarter financial report ms lauren doll good afternoon mr chairman and members of the board my name is lauren doll i'm the finance division director and i'm here today to present the fiscal 25 second quarter financial report we'll look at the county's general fund department of utilities and the school board operating fund for the six months ended december 31st 2024 and a projection for

[00:20:35] the year ended june 30th 2025. we did review this financial report at the finance committee meeting last week and we will begin with the general fund operating revenues through december 31st totaled 169.9 million or approximately 45 and a half percent of appropriated revenues total your revenues are projected to be approximately 384.8 million or 11.2 million higher than the appropriated budget we are projecting positive budget variances in several

[00:21:13] revenue categories. General property taxes are estimated to be 3 million higher than the current year's budget. The variance is a mix of real property and personal property taxes in addition to other tax types such as merchant's capital and machinery and tools taxes. Other local taxes are projected to be 500,000 higher than budget due to recordation taxes. Sales tax revenue is projected to be consistent with budget. Revenues from use of money and property is projected to be \$6.1 million above the appropriated budget due to investment income, and charges for services is

[00:21:52] projected to be \$1.8 million higher than budget due to receipts from fire EMS buildings. Revenue from the Commonwealth and federal revenue is expected to be lower than budget by \$35,000 and

415,000 respectively due to timing of state and federal grants year-to-date expenditures and transfers totaled 215.2 million or 54.2 percent of the appropriated budget total your expenditures and transfers are projected

[00:22:24] to be approximately 385.8 million this is 11.4 million or 2.9 percent less than the appropriated budget the estimated budget variance reflects personnel savings of 2.6 million operating savings of approximately 4.1 million and an anticipated return from the school board of 4.7 million revenues collected above budget along with personnel and operating savings and the return from the school board bring the projected general fund operating balance to

[00:23:00] approximately 22.6 million dollars this projected operating balance is primarily planned for use in the fiscal year county and school budgets and five your capital plans next we'll look at the Department of Public Utilities total projected revenues are thirty six point nine million which is approximately eight hundred and seventy five thousand above budget charges for services and investment income are projected to be slightly higher than budget while capacity fees are expected to be consistent with budget projected operating expenses for the year or twenty seven point nine million or

[00:23:35] approximately one point nine million lower than the appropriate budget public utilities and anticipate savings and personnel costs of approximately six hundred and fifteen thousand and operating expenses are projected to be 1.3 million below budget finally we'll take a look at the school division operating fund revenues for the school division are projected to be 244.8 million or three and a half percent below appropriated budget and this does include the general fund return of 4.7 million non-categorical state aid is

[00:24:13] projected to be 422,000 below budget categorical state aid is projected to be 1.6 million below budget and federal revenue is expected to be 1.3 million below budget these variances are primarily driven by multi-year state and federal grants and unused amounts may be reappropriated for use in fiscal year 26 expenditures are projected to total 247 million which is 3.5 percent below low budget. School personnel savings are estimated to be approximately 4.9 million and operating

[00:24:50] savings are estimated to be 4.1 million. At this point in the year, the school division anticipates a projected return of the local appropriation of approximately 4.7 million that will be returned to the county's general fund for use in the fiscal year 26 school budget. This concludes my presentation and I'm happy to answer any questions you might have any questions or comments from board members seeing none thank you very

[00:25:21] much for your presentation next on the agenda item 8 committee appointment for monkey regional library board this is to fill a vacancy that we have had since June of 2024 so it's not a full four-year term it will be the remainder of a four-year term which is about 16 and a half months I will nominate Jody

[00:25:52] McMaster to be appointed to the Promokey Regional Library Board. Second. Any comments or from board members? Supervisor Pritchard. Thank you Mr. Chair and I want to say I'm very appreciative of the thoughtful way in which you approach this nomination and I appreciate your phone calls and and your clear explanation. Unfortunately I'm not going to be able to support this candidate but I certainly do appreciate your process. Thank you Supervisor Pritchard and the reason this is not

[00:26:26] on consent it's on regular agenda because Supervisor Pritchard in a very polite professional way let me know that she would not be able to support the nomination as always Supervisor Pritchard I

respect your position with those comments being said the vote will go forward all in favor of appointing Jody McMaster to the Promokey Regional Library Board effective today for a term running through June 30 June 30th 2026 please indicate by saying aye aye any

[00:27:04] opposed nay madam clerk please pull the board miss Pritchard nay miss Floyd hi mr. Davis miss Dibble mr. Stoneman mr. Hudson aye chairman Herzberg aye motion passes congratulations Joe not required would you like to say anything not required thank you very much for being with us and

[00:27:35] Thank you for your willingness to serve next on the agenda item nine presentation Richmond regional water crisis after action report before I introduce our speaker.

[00:27:52] I would this is going to be quite detailed and lengthy may not answer all of our questions. I will politely request it for members. Please hold your questions to the end of the presentations so these gentlemen can present the information and the outline that they have decided.

[00:28:10] be best for the board if a board member does have a question that you feel needs to be asked immediately please feel free to do so but others otherwise please hold questions until after the presentations mr matt longshore director department of public utilities the floor is yours sir thank you sir good afternoon mr chair members of the board again i'm matt longshore director of public utilities so today members of our after action report team will present their findings on the county's response throughout the richmond regional water crisis that began january 6th

[00:28:49] earlier this year with this report it's important to note that the scope of this report primarily focuses on the events of that week but also provides some recommendations from the technical analysis and communications analysis of the report so to complete this report an independent review the county tapped a team of consultants in dewberry engineers and water pio dewberry was tasked with review and analysis of public utilities operational and technical data and to provide any recommendations they saw from that week water pio was tasked with the review and analysis of

[00:29:28] internal and external communications from the department and from the county and also to provide any recommendations so with dewberry engineers we have dan bill howard presenting the operational and technical analysis and findings mr bill howard is a vice president at dewberry engineers and a professional engineer licensed in the commonwealth of virginia with 20 years of experience in water and engineering practices he received a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering from the the University of Virginia and a master's of science in civil engineering from Virginia Tech. Dan has worked with Hanover County on numerous water and

[00:30:08] sewer master planning and infrastructure projects in the last 15 years and has extensive knowledge of the county's water distribution system. With Water PIO, we have Mike McGill presenting his communications analysis and findings. In 2017, Mike founded Water PIO, a public communications firm dedicated to helping water and wastewater utilities of all sizes improve their customer media and crisis communications water PIO currently works with service providers in more than 20 states before starting water PIO Mike directed public communications and customer service operations for multiple water utilities

[00:30:47] for over a decade he began his career as a news producer with CNN and W USA TV in Washington DC Mike has completed after action reports focused on public communications for austin water in austin texas and the city of ashville north carolina among others so with that i will hand the

presentation over to danville howard you met good afternoon mr chairman members of the board uh thank you for having me here so again i'm danville howard

[00:31:21] with duber engineers i'm joined by mike mcgill with water pio so we are going to present the after-action report that we did for the recent Richmond regional water crisis so I'll start with a brief overview of the agenda so I'll start with the introduction and purpose of the report and then I'll follow it with a summary of the timeline of events that occurred over that week for the water crisis and then I'll follow up with my technical evaluation and recommendations and then Mike will do the communication evaluation recommendations from there

[00:31:59] And then at the end of the presentation, we will open it up for questions. So to start with, as you are aware, on January 6th of this year, the Richmond water plant had an outage, experienced an outage, and the result of that caused Hanover County to lose public water service in the Mechanical area for 24 to 36 hours, and then there was also a four-day boil water advisory.

[00:32:29] After that happened, Hanover County hired Dewberry and Water PIO to conduct an after-action report. As stated earlier, Dewberry was tasked to evaluate the technical components of Hanover County's response, and then Water PIO was tasked to evaluate the communications aspects.

[00:32:47] So starting with the timeline, what we wanted to do was first start focusing on the City of Richmond communications related to the outage. So due to the city's miscommunication and delay in communication, that significantly hampered Hanover County's immediate response at the beginning and throughout the water crisis.

[00:33:11] So starting with the timeline, so starting at 6.30 in the morning on Monday, January 6th, the Richmond Water Treatment Plant had a power outage and noted issues at the water treatment plant. But Hanover County was not notified until about seven and a half hours later, so about 2 p.m. on that same day that there was an outage.

[00:33:33] About 45 minutes later, there was a regional call with the city of Richmond, Hanover County, Enrico County, Chesterfield County, where the city informed everyone on the call that the water treatment plant would be back online and operational within the next four to six hours.

[00:33:50] Another regional call an hour and a half later at 4:30, the city stated the water treatment plant would be back in operational later that night. However, later on into the evening at 8:30, the city identified that the water treatment plant SCADA system or the control system was down and they sent out a request for all the regional partners with requests for contractors that could come in there and fix that issue.

[00:34:17] So Hanover County, for their part, called their SCADA contractors and provide recommendations for a firm to or contract to come help with that uh following on to the next morning there was another uh request from the city at 4 59 a.m to send electricians so hanover county responded with uh sending and providing contact information for hanover county's on call electrical contractor at 6 a.m the city of richmond requested operational help at the water treatment plant so numerous county staff both county administration staff as well as Department of Public

[00:34:55] Utilities staff came on to the site at 8 a.m. to assess the situation and provide assistance and for the next 24 hours DPU staff were there to assist the city in helping to bring the water treatment plant back online so this provides a brief overview in the first two days of the communication and actions with respect to the city Richmond so the following timeline this starts the timeline related to when Hanover

County received word from the city Richmond that there was an outage you can see on the top right there's a legend color

[00:35:32] coded really indicating the different types of activities so red indicates county operations blue indicates public utility actions green indicates regional events or actions and then the orange dot indicates the communications from the county so starting again at 2:00 p.m. that's when when DPU staff or county staffs received word that there was an issue at the water treatment plant so immediately after that there was an internal conference call with the county they immediately put into effect the standard operating procedure for the

[00:36:08] Richmond water outage and then DPU staff immediately initiated several of those items to react to that so one thing they did was they ramped up the operation in full capacity of the Dosswell water treatment plant which is the water treatment plant north side by the county they reduced the pumping rate from the city to help reduce demand in the city and then made some other operational modifications to get as much dazzle water throughout the county at 2:45 as I stated in the earlier slide there was a regional conference call in which

[00:36:43] Richmond stated that they were hopeful that the water plant will be back online within the next four or six hours. But subsequently, as time went on, the city, they circulated a draft boil water advisory to the regional partners. DPU immediately acted and decided to turn off the Richmond feed from the entire water system and then made modifications so that the DASA water treatment plant would serve all of the county water system. The boil water notice then went into effect for the city of Richmond at about 4 30 p.m. There's another regional conference call where the city

[00:37:22] stated that the water plant will be back online operational by the end of that night. So one thing I want to note is the DPU staff, because of their quick actions, they were able to maintain the integrity of the entire Hanover County water system, even though Richmond was under boil water notice and then later that day there were various social media posts and press releases one to encourage conservation of water and then two just making it clear that the hanover county water was still safe to drink so moving on to the next day so tuesday january 7th so as stated in the first

[00:37:59] slide hanover county administration and public utilities staff went on site to further assess the situation at the richmond water treatment plant and then provided 24 hours of operational assistance at 9am the joint information center was established and then throughout the morning and really throughout the rest of the crisis there were various social media posts live updates press releases to keep the citizens of hanover county updated on progress but as the day went on

[00:38:32] the uh the storage available in the mechanics area water storage tanks slowly started depleting because the demand in the system was was lower than the supply from the does of water treatment plant and then by early to mid-afternoon it was evident that the water storage tanks were not going to be able to maintain their level before they dropped all the way low dpu staff made made a decision to isolate the mechanical area completely from the rest of the water system and then that mechanical area or east of i-95 was put on a boil water advisory but the remainder of the water

[00:39:11] system so what was termed as west of 95 was still in service still operational so that includes areas of ashland elmont doswell later that afternoon or pretty subsequently after that hanover county set up two bottled water distribution sites to allow for citizens to get water if needed and then again continued

the communication social media updates and and whatnot to keep citizens informed moving on to Wednesday the water system continued to operate as

[00:39:49] before Hanover County has set up another set of bottled water distribution sites and then also set up to put a water truck stations for most of the day there were additional regional updates and at that point the city Richmond informed Hanover County that that the water plant was slowly ramping on line and that in afternoon water would start flowing from the city so about 4:00 p.m. that day DPU staff started seeing gravity flow at the Lockwood water pump station which

[00:40:25] is the pump station that pumps from the city Richmond a DPU staff went out there to manually slowly turn up the feed there just to make sure that the system was being pressure repressurized properly without any issues once DPU staff was was comfortable with the fact that you put it in operation the rest that night through the next morning the mechanical zone was repressurized so by 8:00 a.m. the next day so on that Thursday mechanics still had pressure it's still under a boil water advisory so DPU staff focused on getting the

[00:41:01] system back into compliance and removing the boil water advisory so they implemented a about a six-hour water main flushing program where they went through all the main transmission mains mechanics still flushed until they were able to measure a high enough chlorine residual and then proceeded to take the first round of bacteriological samples to ensure the water was safe to drink again that same day there was also another set of bottled water and puttable water truck stations open to allow for citizens to have water and there was a news release that the boil advised boil water advisory would be expected to

[00:41:39] be lifted by Saturday so moving on into Friday another thing that the the department of public utilities staff did is they constantly communicated with the Virginia department of health and that allowed them to reduce the sample duration between the first set of samples and the second set of samples from 24 hours to 16 hours so at 9 a.m they were able to take it the second set of bacteriological samples later that afternoon they got the good news of the first set of samples

[00:42:13] passing and then there was another update to inform the citizens that we were still planning on putting the water system back fully online without the boil water advisory on Saturday on Saturday we got the good news that the second set it passed at 10 30 a.m notified vdh were notified that the boiled water advisories were lifted for Richmond and RICO as well and then at 11:30 a.m. the Virginia Department of Health allowed Hanover County to lift the boil water advisory and the system was fully fully back

[00:42:51] online so moving on to the technical evaluation so I'm going to briefly go over the overview of what I'm going to talk about so just that we ain't everybody I'm going to do brief overview of the existing water system I'm going to talk about how the water system was operated prior to the water outage and then I'll go through the steps the DPU took in more detail during the water outage I'll follow that up with the review of the steps they took and then I'll provide high-level technical recommendations for short-term and also long-term actions

[00:43:29] related to technical approach so starting with the water system overview So the Hanover Suburban Water System service about 25,000 residential, commercial, and public customers within parts of the suburban service area.

[00:43:49] The three sources of water for the system include the City of Richmond through the Lockwood Booster Station. That comprises the largest feed, so that's 20 million gallons per day. There is a docile water treatment plant, which I mentioned earlier, that has a capacity of 4 million gallons per day.

[00:44:07] and that's located on the northern end of the county and pulls from the North Anna River. And then there's also a small connection at Route 33 or Mountain Road from Henrico County, but that is typically not used. Just for comparison purposes, the demand in 2024 within the system was about 8.5 million gallons per day on average, with a maximum daily demand of about 14 million gallons per day so if you compare that to the total 24 million out of a capacity it's fairly out of capacity to handle the current

[00:44:45] demand and then the system is divided into four pressure zones and just to orient you to these so generally the block water mechanics will zone the majority of the water comes from City Richmond the majority of the DOS well zone that water comes from DOS well and then the two zones in the middle Ashland And Elmont, usually it's a blend of water, both either from Richmond or from Doswell.

[00:45:12] And this is a map. You probably can't see every single detail, but really the intent is just to orient you to the system. So the color code signifies different zones. So the cyan or the blue zone, that's the Mechanicsville zone.

[00:45:28] That's the zone that lost water. And that's served mostly by the city of Richmond on the southern side of that. The green zone in the north side, that's the Doswell zone, and that's served by the county Doswell Water Treatment Plant pulling off the North Anna River. And then the pink or magenta and then the orange and yellow zones, that's the Ashland and the Elmont zones.

[00:45:50] And again, they get blended water from either the city of Richmond or Doswell, depending on how the system is operating at the time. And you can sort of see them, but there's a number of squares with T's and P's in there. Those are really the pumping and tank facilities that help move the water back and forth from the supply points to the point of demand.

[00:46:09] And also just to give you an overview of the water storage and pumping capacity. So this is a summary of the total storage in the system. So Hanover County has 15.7 million gallons of storage available for the system.

[00:46:29] 8.9 million gallons for that comes through an agreement with the city of Richmond. So that storage is actually in the city of Richmond, but Hanover County has access to it and has credit for it. So the remainder of that is in the Hanover County system. And then just to give you an idea of what that storage is relative to what the recommendations are, so based on the maximum day from 2024, the recommended storage is about 5 to 7.5 million gallons.

[00:46:56] So to put it in perspective, the storage that Hanover County has is two to three times more than the minimum recommended storage. So moving on to how the water system was being operated prior to the outage, so the system was operated in typical winter mode, so as some of you may know, during the winter, the water demands are less, mainly because of irrigation.

[00:47:20] We also don't have industries like Kings Dominion online fully, so that calls for modified operation. So the average demand, just for comparison, was about 6.5 million gallons per day, and at the time, or before the outage, about two-thirds of that was being supplied by Richmond through Lockwood, and then about a third of that was being supplied by the Doswell water treatment plant. The water storage

operation prior to the outage, the tanks were operated about 50% full to maintain water quality. So doing an analysis based on the data available, that resulted in a

[00:47:56] total storage of about 11.7 million gallons with taking the credit from Richmond, and then about 2.8 million gallons just storage in Hanover County. So again, based on the demand during that time the the s the recommended maximum storage is about 3.85 million gallons so again still well well above um what was the minimum recommended storage capacity and the reason i highlight that is you know i've gotten questions of well why don't you just run your tanks at 100 fold give you as much storage as possible to respond to whatever happens and there's a good

[00:48:34] reason for that you always have to balance as a good water operator water age and storage so if the water sits in the pipes for too long it results in the deterioration of water quality and I pasted an excerpt from the Virginia Department of Health waterworks regulations which governs the operation and design of water systems of Virginia and that says that excessive storage capacity shall be avoided to prevent water quality deterioration so based on that, Hanover County had to just balance the storage versus maintaining water quality, which

[00:49:07] they've done a good job of that. All right, so moving on to what happened during the outage. So this generally follows the timeline, but just more focused on the technical part. So I divided into three separate phases. So the first phase was loss of Richmond supply. So at 2 p.m. on January 6th, Hanover County was informed that the Richmond water plant had an outage, and they immediately went to their published protocol which has been in place for nearly 20 years and so some of the things they did is they fully ramped up the Dosswell water treatment plant to full capacity they

[00:49:44] initially reduced the pumping rate of Lockwood from Richmond just to to help Richmond out but then once they realized that there was going to be a longer outage they cut it off which that maintained the integrity of the entire Hanover County water system and then they turned around They made some modifications to other facilities to feed all the pressure zones from the Dawsville Water Treatment Plant.

[00:50:07] They did test an emergency connection with Henrico County on Route 1 to see if they could get some supplemental supply. Based on interviews with operations staff, at the time they saw inadequate pressure. So they decided it would be a better idea to just keep it closed to ensure the integrity of the water system.

[00:50:26] So that was on the protocol. but they also took additional actions which were above and beyond just based on their operators knowledge experience and really understanding the system so they did a they reduced the operation of their pumping stations to lower pressure and what that did I think a lot of people in mechanics will probably saw this there was lower pressure when you sold service it reduced the actual demand so it prolonged the time that the water was available and then they very methodically slowly used available storage uh in the system to slowly supplement the supply deficit so that those

[00:51:03] actions actually uh in in my uh in my opinion probably prolonged the availability of water mechanics flow for at least six to twelve hours so definitely a very you know quick thinking proactive actions on dpu's part so phase two so that's uh when the mechanical zone did lose water. So eventually, because the supply was less than the demand, the available storage ran out around 2 p.m., and then that's where Hanover County took quick measures to isolate the Ashland zone from the Mechanicsville zone. So again, the rest of the system,

[00:51:42] you know, Ashland, Dosville, Elmont still maintained service. The Mechanicsville area lost pressure. So again, in the updates, there was a lot of conversations or discussions of east 95 versus west 95 and that's really what happened is dpw staff isolated the two systems and allowed west 95 to maintain service they issued a boil water advisory for mechanicsville but again maintained service for the rest of the system for the duration of the event those phase two so phase two went on until dpw started getting flow back from the city of richmond by gravity

[00:52:21] It was about 4 p.m. on that Wednesday, January 8th, and so DPW staff wanted to make sure there weren't any other issues associated with re-pressurizing the system. So that can happen where if you re-pressure the system too fast, you can actually cause water main breaks and other issues and actually extend the duration.

[00:52:40] So they actually went out there manually to their facilities and slowly ramped up the pumping rate and monitored the pressure and activity of the rest of the system over a four-hour period. Once they were satisfied that the system could return to automatic operation, they put it in auto, and then that system, the mechanical system, repressurized overnight.

[00:53:02] And then DPW operations staff next morning proactively started a six-hour flushing program to ensure that all the water is flushed out. There was a good chlorine residual in there so that when they took those bacteriological tests, they passed the first time.

[00:53:18] And that was really key to ensuring that the system was able to put online and having the boiled water advisory eliminated as soon as possible. So, again, once they did that, they worked closely with VDH to get that boiled water advisory lifted, and the mechanical pressure zone was back in operation.

[00:53:37] So, some takeaways of DPW's response and action. So, DPW staff, once they were informed of the outage, performed really well, they were definitely hampered by the slow communication and miscommunication by the city, especially in the first day.

[00:53:55] But once they got that information, they followed the protocol line by line, and then also based on their operational expertise, they had some added value to really extend service and mechanics and then also bring that the system as quickly as possible it also really important note that because of their quick thinking actions they were able to maintain water service to two-thirds of the system throughout the duration of the entire outage that's something that the city Richmond couldn't say or Henrico so both of them had to issue boil water notices for their entire system so that's a huge win for Hanover County and so you know in general you know the

[00:54:34] response was was top-notch and I was definitely impressed by not only interviewing staff but also looking at all the the data and operation logs that they shared with me I do have some recommendations for yeah after review so technically so at the end of the day the reason that the mechanics full zone ran out of water was because we couldn't keep up with the demand so the supply from the other or treatment like couldn't keep up the demand entire system so some short-term recommendations I said earlier Hanover County looked at potentially looking at supplemental water from Henrico County or at one

[00:55:13] found that to not be feasible at the time I do think it it makes sense to do some short-term studies to evaluate how we can best use that direct connection that's already there so in the future if there

is an outage getting some supplemental water from Henrico could extend the ability for Hanover County to serve the citizens. So pretty, pretty low cost options. Long-term recommendations, again, that's not going to be a long-term option. It's to complete a comprehensive study to evaluate additional long-term water supply sources. As you can see, the balance of the water is currently coming from

[00:55:50] the city of Richmond. So to do that would be prudent and advisable. And then also, if you have your water supply sources in different parts of the county, it's also important to get the supply to where it's needed so I would also recommend doing a transmission study to make sure that you could get the water from any supply point to any demand point within the system now just increase redundancy so that's the conclusion of the technical evaluation portion I'll turn it over to Mike to talk about the communications part thank you for having me today we're very

[00:56:30] honored to be called in the to take care of this communications piece of report. Water PIO, my firm was founded in 2017. We're based outside of Wilmington, North Carolina, but we work with utilities, engineering firms, industry organizations, state agencies to improve customer media and crisis communications. We have a special kind of focus on crisis comms because of my work and some members of our team's work in the news media. I've been in water since 2007, and as was mentioned by Matt, I was a news producer for a decade. We are

[00:57:06] certified crisis communicators. We use the National Incident Management System and the Incident Command Systems for crises with our water clients across the country. We were brought in post-Texas freeze with Austin Water because they lost water for a million people during that crisis, and in Asheville before Hurricane Elaine, they had a water crisis where they lost water for six days. They used our recommendations and the technical recommendations from the committee we were on to fix those problems so that they lost water for 53 days after Hurricane Helene and they got through that event we were first hired

[00:57:43] by Hanover County Public Utilities to help with lead and copper rule communications because that was kind of a flashpoint in our industry last year so we had a good working relationship when they brought us on board to do this report a little bit about our process it's designed to get candor and open opinion of the participants and we use the process that we use for the after action reviews in Austin and in Asheville the interviews were conducted with leadership staff local news media everybody who could provide input to help us give you a full report for an evaluation of your performance and recommendations of where you can improve because you can always improve

[00:58:23] after a crisis. We normally use interviews, but because we have the compressed time frame, we use questionnaires. So everyone got the same set of questions. They were asked about what they did, what their role was, what they did during the crisis, and how they felt about the response.

[00:58:40] When we had unique answers, we followed up with unique questions for the participants. With the news media, we interviewed a few members of the news media to get their evaluation on how well the county did its job. And so in exchange for us providing some inside information, those interviews were held off the record, but we are open to interviews after the report is released.

[00:59:02] That's our agreement with the press. The process was in place to enable the participants to be protected. No direct quotes were used in our report. We had paraphrase used. When comments mirrored each other, we kind of grouped them together so you couldn't pull out one person when they came up with their with their comments we believe the process worked I think you'll see in the report we had an open

and honest review of the work that was done of the challenges that you faced how you came through and the recommendations for the future including the input from the press so the table

[00:59:38] set the situation the incident challenges you know they were referred to earlier you know during the first 24 to 36 hours as event the poor communications from the city of richmond hampered the response especially on the communication side uh in that timeline that dan showed you know it it laid out how the communications were were dealt with when it came to the county what was said and what led to some communications that maybe the county would not have put out if they had known the full story of what was going on you know the event was downplayed you had that initial communication of voluntary restrictions and we'll talk about that later on, and then, of course,

[01:00:16] immediately switch gears to a more serious event within 24 hours, you lose credibility in those situations. And in this case, it was not the fault of county staff when they put out the communications because of what they were receiving from the city of Richmond.

[01:00:32] Fortunately, you know, because Hanover County was involved in the operations, the operational response, if you will, the city's, or sorry, The county's comm staff was able to get up to speed and correct the communications that were put out in that first chaotic 24 hours.

[01:00:50] The process for communications, you know, I'll say this. We did some interviews. We gathered some information about how the city handled its communications during the event. So we had a good view in our report of what took place.

[01:01:05] And their process for communications did not help you in getting out timely information, correct information to your residents throughout the event. Fortunately, because your staff was there at the plant working on the problem, they were able to relay through your strong internal communications process what was going on so your county comm staff could do their jobs well.

[01:01:28] As the event moved forward, because of that situation, there wasn't a lot of trust between your county staff and what you were receiving from the city during the event. So they kind of, your staff operated on its own, and in this case, it worked well. That's not the ideal situation. Obviously, you'd like to have every jurisdiction working together.

[01:01:47] But in your case, the county staff had to come through and kind of go beyond that. This report doesn't provide a comprehensive look at Richmond's communications, but like I said, we had some initial conversations. You know, in my world, when this happened and you saw what was taking place, there were a lot of conversations in the water world about what was going on.

[01:02:07] So there were already kind of information being kind of relayed about what was taking place before we were even brought on board. Conversations, interviews, and questionnaires revealed a lot of common themes and issues that we'll talk about here.

[01:02:23] Again, Richmond failed to properly inform comms throughout the event, but you had those strong internal communications met on down it really was impressive including the county administrator to get that information throughout the the comp staff throughout your customer service staff so you could properly help out your residents during the situation your customer service staff was able to extend their hours have proper messaging to give to anybody who was calling on the phone to find out what was going on it was very helpful you know there was some initial blowback on social media about what was taking place but because your

[01:03:00] communications were so strong it turned. In crisis communications one way we know how the comms team is performing is if that audience online kind of changes its reaction to everything. You know we always talk about five to ten percent of people online are always angry and in a crisis they kind of take over and kind of overrun the information that's out there. Because your staff did their jobs well, those always angry people were kind of isolated. There were people taking the side of the county on social media, and that's always a sign of strong communications during the event.

[01:03:35] There were some minor to moderate gaps that we'll address in the recommendations, but we believe they're very easy to address by the staff you have and by the process that will be in place. Number one recommendation, I'll get into that, is the creation of a water utility-specific crisis communications plan. And we'll talk about why you didn't necessarily have one in place for this event. So our overview, I kind of gave away the story a little bit. You have a solid team of pros in place. You have the comms role clearly defined in the process, the crisis response. They're clearly respected. You saw that in the internal communications. No one was kept out. No one was

[01:04:13] put in an arm's length or left out of key decisions. And we see that all over the country on crisis communications with water utilities. There's kind of an operational response that takes place. We'll solve the problem, and then we'll let you know what to say. And that's always a mistake that we see in crisis comms.

[01:04:31] Here, the communications team, customer service, everybody was in the mix for the process. Everybody was sharing key information. So you had a lot of accuracy and speed with your communications once they got going after that initial 24 hours or so.

[01:04:48] You didn't use the county's crisis communications plan because there was a belief it was for fire EMS and police that maybe a water crisis didn't rise to that level So that's where you'll see our initial our main recommendation But despite this lack of a plan your staff acted as if they were under a plan Everything that I would have in a crisis communications plan the staff did and did very well without having that structure in place The mistakes I put it in quotes because really they were hiccups. They were minor They didn't hamper your response, they didn't hurt your credibility.

[01:05:22] You know, they used Facebook Live early in the process, there were some hiccups around the first use of that and pushing out information afterwards, but once that was ironed out, you got on a regular consistent flow of information during the crisis and that's always a sign of a good effort.

[01:05:41] There was a little bit of a delay in an internal joint information center being created and that can easily be addressed. biggest gap we saw was with some complaints within the news media when we interviewed them that the process was one-way not two-way because of the use of Facebook live as a kind of de facto press conference they didn't complain about the information that was relayed however it was clear it was comprehensive but they wanted more of an opportunity to interact with staff and I'll get into why staff operated that way it was there was no concerted effort to keep the

[01:06:16] immediate at arm's length or anything like that. It was just a matter of process that can be addressed moving forward. The crisis communications plan, like I said, is our number one recommendation. What's in that plan? Well, your team operated at a high level, but you don't have a specific plan for water situations, and so that is where you will have that gap filled with a water crisis specific plan. You can get the county up to speed fast. It helps with speed and accuracy, and it guards against misinformation and disinformation.

[01:06:49] Again, they operated so well without a plan that the misinformation online was reduced pretty quickly. However, with a plan in place, you have that structure and you just go. You have quality control, you have an approval process already set, you have templated information that they can use to increase that speed.

[01:07:09] That was one comment that we received from several people with the development of a plan. You'll have templates in place you can put in the information and go even faster it will also prevent those gaps like we said with the news media with elected officials critical customers we heard comments about pulling in community organizations and having them help out that would all be in the plan school systems there was a few comments about including the school system to help out with with communications that can all be part of this communications plan and of course your customers the steady flow of needed information throughout a crisis is essential. And that's what a plan will do. But again,

[01:07:48] their work mirrored as if they had a plan in place. So the creation of a plan shouldn't take that long. And actually, they can take the lessons learned from this incident and craft that plan and make it strong right off the bat. The internal comms, this was a particular strength. And this was, you know, unfortunately, a necessity. Because of the poor communications from the city, there was a gap and fortunately you were able to fill it because you had teams on site relaying information through the appropriate processes through the county administrator through the

[01:08:23] customer service staff through the comms team they were able to get out the information quickly and avoid that operational approach that i talked about so it wasn't like hanover county's team was on site at the plant and not saying anything to county staff about what was going on they knew what was going on through your process and that helped avoid the mistakes that the city was making during the event.

[01:08:48] So we found it was strong across all levels. The fact that an ore chart is in place, you know, you hear the term silos and guarding information from crossing over into departments. Everybody was involved and that helped you with your strong, extra communications.

[01:09:04] And so in my past, I was a communications director that was just given a customer service department one time for a quarter million people. It's kind of weird how it shakes out in water sometimes. So we were always mindful of the fact of where customer service staffs might not be fully integrated into a response. Here they were. They were able to quickly expand their hours for their call center. Their staff was, I wouldn't say scripted, but they had all the information they needed to interact with the residents. And they had an escalation process. So obviously you're

[01:09:39] going to get some calls from people who are concerned or and are not necessarily believing everything they're hearing especially when you had the issue going on with the city of richmond and the news that was that was hitting at the time that can overlap saying you must be having the same problems you must have you know a lot of the issues that were thrown out there in this case customer service staff was able to have all that information have an escalation process And that enabled you with what we call frontline success.

[01:10:10] You know, if your customer service staff is communicating well with your customers, that takes a big, that helps you. That's a big advantage for you to keep misinformation and disinformation growing. The external communications, again, we felt that the leadership, Tom's staff and other employees was excellent.

[01:10:32] That helped you with your external communications, I'm sorry, with some outreach gaps that I talked about. The information was clear and accurate at all times. You did not have to go back and change your information because of inaccuracy. You know, the first information that you put out about voluntary restrictions, yes, that ended up being wrong and had to move, but that was based on the information you were getting.

[01:10:54] So the error that was made was, you know, garbage in, garbage out is a phrase we use a lot in communications. That was not a full assessment of the situation, and therefore you put out those communications. Your social media use was excellent.

[01:11:10] Like I said, if we see people online taking the side of the entity, if you will, versus someone who's always screaming and yelling, that's a sign that your communications are working well online with social media, and that's what we saw. The Facebook Live use, it was the first time use, so you had those kind of minor issues at the start.

[01:11:29] But once they got rolling, that information was there for people to get and have a rundown of the situation from the county's point of view, directly from the county. As we mentioned, the press felt, well, if this is going to be a press conference, we should be there, and we'll address that in a second. The website was excellent. You had clear, comprehensive information, easy to get, easy to find, clear, easy to use format. You clicked on it, you saw the latest update. You also could pull up the previous update. Some websites, you have like a 30-page scroll to get information throughout the entire event. That didn't happen here.

[01:12:06] You had a nice design and flow to your website. I mentioned customer service. And again, I mentioned this before. The news media had issues with access, but they didn't have issues with the information. It was clear and comprehensive. The press releases covered a lot of ground.

[01:12:23] And when they had follow-up questions, staff was very responsive and helped put together follow-up interviews based on the information they were seeing. Once again, we talk about the need for increased outreach to community, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations. That can all be built into a plan where you get contacts, you develop relationships, so that when you have an emergency, you can put out that information.

[01:12:46] And those people serve as force multipliers for the information that you need to put out, so you can cover more ground. You know, you have a natural path with your customers, but you can always use additional help during a crisis. The news media, I mentioned this before. Let's talk about it in a little bit more detail. Again, the information was full. They had issues with engagement. They pushed out information with limited engagement. But again, comp staff was complimented on that information and their willingness to help and follow up.

[01:13:18] The Facebook Lives did become de facto press conferences, and that's something to think about moving forward. All the press wanted invites. Even if they couldn't get there, they wanted to know that they were welcome there and they could get there, and here was a time that you could be there. The explanation we got from staff was from multiple people made sense.

[01:13:40] In the past, you haven't had a lot of coverage for maybe non-emergency events. You haven't had media come to you because of distance and time, especially in a situation like this. There's a thought, well, if we handle it this way, we're making it easier for the press to cover the story, not harder.

[01:13:57] Because here's the information, you can get it without coming to us. That was the main kind of thought behind the process. So we didn't find any kind of willingness to say, no, we want to keep the press away at all. So that kind of, I guess you could say, debate between press and comp staff, that can easily be ironed out now.

[01:14:21] That's a gap that we've found. The press also differed on the schedule of communications. We found the regular rhythm that the comps team got into to push out information to staff and elected officials, community leaders, customers.

[01:14:37] It was a two-a-day schedule. Some press felt that was great. Other press said, well, we would have liked the information a little bit earlier for our newscasts later in the day. So maybe a 3 o'clock or 3.30 release versus a 4.30 release.

[01:14:55] Again, these are matters that can be addressed in a comms plan. But again, some of the press we interviewed didn't have an issue. Some did. Secondary findings. Unfortunately, I've been in a lot of water crises where we have tried to issue voluntary restrictions.

[01:15:15] It is a best practice in our industry, so there was no error made in coming up with voluntary restrictions in the situation. Unfortunately, what we find in crisis moments, especially ones where it's kind of blowing up at the time, that people increase their water use.

[01:15:33] They figure, well, if I'm going to lose my water, I might as well load up. So you saw increased demand, increased water uses with the issuance of voluntary restrictions. It's unfortunate, but that is just the way it works. And we found this everywhere we've been.

[01:15:50] So one of our recommendations is you come down to a decision of how are we doing on water use. If you think you might need to go to mandatory restrictions and that is a proper move to make, then that's what you should issue. Some will say that you can issue voluntary restrictions with an admonition that, you know, if you use too much water, we could lose fire protection, which is the top message to use to get people to not use their water.

[01:16:17] Um, it's kind of a, it doesn't quite work because a voluntary restriction is a softer message, but if you use water, you could lose fire protection is a harder message. So we prefer as a best practice. If you have to, if you believe you might have an issue with water, you should go to mandatory restrictions. Um, the water distribution communications, you know, this was an issue where they got out notice a couple, you know, I think it was three and a half hours before the stations were set up around that time.

[01:16:49] that's a lot of notice that's proper notice to give unfortunately in this case because people immediately went to the scenes um there was an issue with a water truck getting to the site for distribution of water it's just one of those things that happens in a crisis sometimes i wouldn't say it was a mistake for staff to put out that information when they did because they said it would be open at x time um perhaps for the future we just make sure logistically that the water is closer to being on site or on site before it's announced. But that's just one of those things that happens sometimes. So we do a lot of crisis work. And this is a recommendation we're going to

[01:17:27] make with a little bit of a caveat. We were told top to bottom throughout everybody we interviewed that your current process where county administrator or the incident commander, if you will, is your lead spokesperson at the event. And this has served you well for years. In our crisis response, it's a best practice to have someone else as your lead spokesperson for an event like this other than the incident

commander. It just gives them a bit more, it frees them up to focus a little bit more on the response than have to deal with the messaging. And in this

[01:18:03] situation, you were secondary. It really wasn't your fault what was going on. You were dealing with the response. But in a situation where perhaps it's more something that you are personally responsible for, that could be an issue where dealing with the press at the same time you're trying to solve the problem could be a bit too much for an incident commander.

[01:18:22] That's why under the National Incident Management System, it's not done that way. It's a recommendation because, again, top to bottom, everybody we spoke with said that this process has worked and worked well for years. Two other things, greater use of Code Red and Hanover Alert.

[01:18:39] We develop a system up outside of Washington, D.C. for use of Code Red for all major water emergencies. We were first to do it across the country. It can work and work well. That's factored into this crisis communications plan that I talked about.

[01:18:56] So you can have greater coordination and greater use for events. For something like this, if you can mark an area, you had a clear boundary of who was having water supply issues and boil water advisory and who wasn't, You could use that and mark those lines with your communications during the crisis.

[01:19:14] It also helps with renters and non-customers. That's the toughest piece of this. We saw Austin Water and Austin, Texas had 50% of their community as renters. That was difficult for them to get information into those hands, if you will. Where handover alert, code red could help out is with those people specifically.

[01:19:33] And training for comm staff, it's a day or two of training to make sure everybody knows how to use the system, because you never know when a crisis may occur. In Asheville, we dealt with the fact that it happened on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. So some people were simply not available. So you have to have that built in. And then, as I mentioned earlier, use of community organizations, faith-based organizations, school systems, anybody who might be willing to help you out during the crisis to get out messaging that helps protect public health, they should be enlisted in the crisis communications plan and a relationship developed where basically

[01:20:11] they're helping you get out the information push out the information and if they have questions obviously they have someone they can directly talk to as they conduct that work and that ends my presentation thank you well thank you very much to all three gentlemen for your presentations and your comments so now open the floor for board member questions and comments and then after that we will hear from our county administrator first uh board members who wish to ask questions mr

[01:20:42] hudson either or sir i don't particularly have any questions but i did enjoy the uh comprehensive report um first i just want to as a supervisor want to thank the citizens i don't believe i do try to advocate for my district but i don't think i've ever heard the word mechanicsville so many times uh in my life so maybe you elevated us in some way even though it was a kind of a terrible time but i think the citizens of of the mechanicsville district for um how they looked after

[01:21:19] one another and we had neighbors helping neighbors dropping water to each other checking in on each other and that really meant a lot as your supervisor i did uh field between text messages phone calls and emails hundreds of responses and um you know i just want to say uh thank you to all of our

county staff and how hard that they worked um and communicated um well really with all of us but to me um specifically as my area probably was the most affected because it was just a hundred

[01:21:56] percent of us um were without water um so that's really just what i want to say that even in a time crisis that our citizens really shined and i'm grateful to be a part of this community so thank you mr chair thank you mr hudson anyone else on the board mr stoneman thank you mr chair i just have a question yeah you brought up um is one of the options to uh is to increase the storage or

[01:22:29] the connect or test the connection from henrico so yeah so if we're having a crisis it's coming from richmond would that not affect them as well i mean is that a viable option So in this situation, it probably wouldn't have helped, but in a lot of situations, you have a long water transmission main that doesn't impact Henrico at all, coming directly from the city of Richmond.

[01:22:54] So if you have a major outage in that water transmission main, or it's isolated in a certain part, Henrico may not be affected. And in that case, if only Hanover County is affected, that could be a short-term viable option. And that would be part of the evaluation, look at those scenarios and where it would make sense and where it wouldn't.

[01:23:12] So I got a couple of questions. So for the Dawesville plant, once we received information that we were going to have a crisis, would it have been a good idea to increase water flow from the Dawesville plant to the storage tanks or to try to fill that area up so that we had a little more water?

[01:23:31] So would that be something we'd want to look at? Correct. Yeah. So that's actually what DPU staff did once they were notified. So I think they were notified about 2 p.m. I think shortly after that, within half an hour, they ramped up the Doswell water treatment plant. If they had gotten noticed at 6.30 a.m. when the plant actually went out, they would have had a lot more time to start filling up the rest of those tanks. So that would have made a difference.

[01:23:56] So, and one other question, what options would you, I mean, I guess we'll get into this later, but as far as to increase storage maybe in remote, through remote locations so that we can access, I mean, would that make more sense rather than, you know, so have 50% storage in more areas?

[01:24:18] So, yeah, I mean, so if you looked at the graphs or the figures that we showed, Hanover County has a lot of storage relative to what it should have, And I think if you have too much of it, you're just going to have issues with water age and water quality.

[01:24:33] I think my recommendation would be to have a redundancy in water supply sources and then making sure that if you have one water source out, that you can transfer that water to any location that's impacted.

[01:24:52] And so a lot of the county system does have a lot of transmission redundancy. so the fact that dpu staff was able to turn the water around from doswell all the way to mechanics ville while that water was still available it definitely is a testament to the years and decades of planning that andrew county has done to make this system resilient it's really just a matter of there was enough supply to keep up with that demand for that long the time thank you yes sir mr davis thank you mr chairman uh mr chairman members of the board and i think there's clearly three things that we might need to look at first of all as regional policymakers

[01:25:29] in a situation like this we are a recipient but we we pay for these these resources and I think we need immediately need to work with our colleagues in the region to establish some protocols where folks like director longshore and our staff are allowed to to be on site on a regular basis in a critical supply facilities such as as Richmond I believe we're gonna have to start talking and having substantive conversations in-house here with the policymakers in Hanover about some additional supplier redundancy measures

[01:26:08] and then lastly while we do have this agreement with Richmond and it is concerning with the communication and the lack of communication but we figured that out now we know what happened and we can put some measures in place I I would suggest that while we're still in this agreement at this time, we need to have some talks with our colleagues in the region and maybe establish a board or a commission.

[01:26:36] We have a number of regional boards and commissions that work very, very well. We do this with the airport. We do it with the Central Virginia Transportation Authority. We know how to do it. I would encourage my colleagues to support the creation of a regional water board, not necessarily an authority for the daily operations of that Richmond plant, but a body that convenes on a regular basis in order to have better communication and keep up with some of the official information that comes into that plant, EPA audits and those types of things.

[01:27:16] It would be important and we already have a successful establishment for that type of that type of foundational Board, I would encourage folks to not only support it here, but Speak with their their colleagues and their friends and other areas And I would ask Mr. Badesky and the county attorney to start working on some framework to present to the board If my colleagues would so kindly agree. Thank you, sir Supervisor Pritchard, Mr. Davis, you might have just answered my question. Thank you, Mr. Chair I thousand percent support what you just said we need regional oversight and I think it's a shame

[01:27:55] this is how we had to find it out but having never dealt with it before we know now my question is where do we start who who initiates such an authority and where where does that begin but it's a question well mr. chairman thank you sir my belief would be to leverage the relationships that we have within within the region now uh as county administrators start talking to the county administrator and the other localities and for those of us who serve in regional capacities which

[01:28:30] a number of us do on this board reach out to our colleagues uh in in in that in the other regions the jurisdictions specifically within the msa and talk about this uh would be my suggestion to to start that through the conversations with the established relationships that we already have thank you mr thank you mr davis any other board members i do have a couple questions i think this is more on the technical side possibly for the engineer sir just out of curiosity and i know that demand's different for different times of year as you mentioned in your presentation

[01:29:09] the the storage that we have in hanover approximately how long did that last before it it ran out well so um the richmond water supply was cut off at around 4 p.m on monday and uh so with the demand at the time and only doswell i believe it was about a day that it lasted yes that was my theory sir because i reside very close to the creighton road water tower i think the report showed us about a million gallon capacity there and my water went out about

[01:29:46] four o'clock at Tuesday and it was back on about the same time on Wednesday. So I think my water was at about 23 to 24 hours. So I think your report is accurate on those points. The next question I

have, and I know Mr. Stoneman touched on this already, you had mentioned the Henrico water supply possible option. I thought Henrico was served by the water treatment plant. Do they have another source they do so they have a their own water treatment plant uh off three trout road

[01:30:23] in the west end um that pulls off the james river as well um and so and again every situation is different and so i'll caveat it with saying that um this you know what i'm talking about is a short-term emergency uh evaluation to see if during a event in which henrico or henrico doesn't get water from and right or from City Richmond and RICO does have available water supply put in practice a standard operating procedure to get some sort of supplemental supply from either that route 33 connection or the

[01:31:00] route 1 connection it's sort of a short-term emergency procedure just to see if they could because if you had a little bit of additional supplement water supply even for another day maybe we could have extended mechanics for another day and by the time Richmond came back maybe it would have been okay but in In this instance, it didn't work because Enrico County was put under a boil water advisory anyways, so it wouldn't have made a difference, I don't think.

[01:31:25] But there are instances where Enrico could not be affected, but Hanover could, and that could be a good, redundant supply. Thank you, sir. Thanks again for your presentations. That's all the questions I have for you. I do have a few comments. I do agree with Vice Chair Davis and Supervisor Purchard on exploring the possibility of adding a board.

[01:31:49] We have more regional boards than I thought. SeaTac is one of them. Anybody willing to serve on urban transportation, please let me know. That's one of them. We do have the airport, and I think it would be wise to have something like this in the future.

[01:32:07] And, of course, we would need some willing citizens who would be willing to serve on that, and I think we have some right now. I do think, even though this was a very difficult time, that there were some positives from this experience.

[01:32:23] It could have been a lot worse, and it could have been a lot longer. My water was out about 24 hours. That's not very long compared to 35 years that we've been on the system. And I think when we have a tough time like this, it is important to recognize the 35 years that it did work very well for our citizens and our community.

[01:32:44] And I think that's a positive. I do think there was a lot of good community teamwork. We saw Wegmans, we saw Walmart, who donated bottled water to our sites, and we thanked those community partners for their donations.

[01:33:01] We saw, well, I saw, I'll speak to myself, at Cold Harbor Elementary, our Hanover Fire and EMS team stepped up strong, had great organization at the water distribution site. They had people on the site. As the vehicles were rolling into the parking lot, we were opening the doors, And the water was going in in a very timely and efficient manner.

[01:33:26] And I think the citizens that showed up that day appreciated that. They saw that it was organized and it was efficient. At one point, there was one gentleman working the forklift, moving the water around, and there were different people doing different things.

[01:33:42] Very well managed by hand over fire and EMS, and I thank our fire chief for that. A couple comments also on the use of the media. I do think there is a possibility that we could work with our media

partners just a little better.

[01:33:58] I think we utilized Facebook Live very well, and I think that was very beneficial. I'd just like to point out that we have a lot of citizens who are not routinely active on Facebook. I did one of my own studies about two years ago, and I found that at least 10% of the citizens in the Cold Harbor District are actively on Facebook.

[01:34:22] maybe 20 percent have accounts others have accounts that have been dormant they don't use them so i would say about 70 percent of our citizens in our area really don't get a lot of information from facebook and i think our media partners could really benefit our community because someone who may not be on facebook they may be watching channel 6 or channel 10 or channel 8 or channel 11 or whatever they may watch um one other point i would like to bring up you know one of the

[01:34:56] concerns i had is you know for those who are not on social media how do they get the information that this water crisis is going on or is getting ready to affect them and one thing i found out was we have a program that's available on our hanover county website hanover alert and before i turn this over to our county administrator i would ask mr county administrator if you could address for our citizens hanover or alert our hanover alert system or if we have someone on our team in the

[01:35:31] room he can do that and finally uh mr bedesky you know this was a very challenging time it was very challenging this is very stressful for a lot of citizens and your job as it is has a lot of responsibility and a lot of demands on it and i would like to compliment you in general for the work that you did in getting the information uh through our media team out into the public that concludes my comments and i'll turn this over to mr bedesky thank you mr chair members of the board

[01:36:08] and thanks for the kind words but this was truly a team effort to respond to our community's needs on an incident that that was not necessarily of our making on january 6th i do want to thank both consultants for the work and diligence you put into this in short order we promised our residents a 30-day after action report and you helped us deliver on that so thank you very much we know that this was a major lift as it was for us to to address what we needed to do on behalf of our residents this process isn't unusual when we go through an issue we always do after action

[01:36:47] reports so we can try to identify ways to continuously improve how we support our organization and the business we conduct on behalf of our citizens this particular day was an interesting day it was a day not too dissimilar to actually yesterday we were actually closed the county was closed due to a storm on monday january 6th a number of us were actually working in the building even though we were closed to the public that day and at two o'clock we got a call which we thought

[01:37:19] was a call to plan on the following tuesday's snow impacts and had learned of the issues that occurred in the city as you now are aware issues that had occurred a little over seven hours earlier that day as soon as we were made aware of those issues we engaged our public utility staff and our regional partners that certainly included the city but henrico and chesterfield as well and i am really proud of the response of the regional public utilities teams i think working together

[01:37:58] our staff focused on what the initial priority was which was getting the plant back and operational that had to be our top priority or we would have never been able to come out of the issue in the first place and collectively our utility staff working together with the city were able to do so by late tuesday night restoring water to our residents on wednesday that time of notification gap that we had and i

believe the questions were asked earlier we probably could have stored more water we could have responded to our residents earlier we could have stood water support up for

[01:38:37] our residents even earlier i can assure you that in conversations that we've had with the mayor and follow-up and their staff they understand the concern that we have on behalf of our residents of that never happening again and as it was said earlier this hadn't happened since we begun this relationship in 1994 but one time was one time too many for our residents and so as we move forward working with the city as you know you saw in the reports earlier that four-fifths of our water right now we are reliant through our agreements with the city of richmond

[01:39:15] that is not going to go away overnight however our focus on resilience for our residents and long-term water supply planning is undergoing as we speak this will continue to be a priority for us as we move forward this can be solved not alone by hanover and i we've begun conversations with our regional partners in henrico county there is opportunities potentially for capacity and working with them with their cobs creek reservoir project there's the interconnect projects that you had heard about today that we can look to to bolster our system and build

[01:39:50] resilience and we certainly need to assure that the operation in the city of richmond is operating as professionally as it possibly can to assure our residents the reliability that they deserve and that we pay for as customers of that system and so the in our conversations with our regional partners as this board has directed my office to do so we're committed to working with the region on a regional solution the city has been a long-term partner and will continue to be a partner

[01:40:24] but as we move forward we have to based on this instant make sure that our residents needs are always first and those solutions and and may not always be so our primary responsibility of the city as our primary water provider and we will be looking at those alternatives as we move forward and look forward to working with our partners in henrico chesterfield in the city moving forward there were a few recommendations made here today our communications strategy as it relates to water

[01:40:59] emergencies ironically was actually underway while this incident took place. And so we had already begun adding that water component to our emergency communications plan and we'll operationalize that here in the weeks and months to come as well. I am proud of the work that our communications department did. We were responding very quickly with sometimes very limited information and based on the facts we were able to get by having staff embedded at the plant and with our

[01:41:35] communications team we got information out as quickly as we possibly could. While we did rely on the Facebook live we also did record those in other formats and made them available on our website so that not always was Facebook the primary resource folks could have accessed those videos through our website and other social media platforms as well but it's not want to be clear we did not turn down a single request from the media and in fact we were grateful for the media's support in helping get the word out. We also had a number of residents in Hanover County that

[01:42:10] were not able to go pick up water at our distribution facilities and to be able to establish delivery for some of the shut-in residents and we had board members delivering cases of waters to residents homes and other volunteers throughout our community mr Hudson you said it earlier the resilience of our residents was pretty amazing throughout this process and so while it will be our job moving forward to to avoid this from potential reoccurrence we couldn't do this without our residents and I so I believe not only working together but being able to

[01:42:48] use that force multiplier that was mentioned earlier of reaching out to whether it be our faith communities or our not-for-profit communities to make sure that everybody in our community is as informed as possible will be critical as we move forward. So while today is the 30-day after action report that really focused on Hanover's response from two o'clock on Monday the 6th until water restoration that Saturday at 11 30, there is a substantial amount of work yet to be done and as you are aware there's a regional report that city's working on that report will more specifically detail what actually caused the issues at 6 30

[01:43:26] that morning and we we have offered and welcomed the opportunity to engage all of the information we've provided here today through our consultants through our research to the city's folks that are working on that report it's critical we find out those issues and understand them fully and avoid that reoccurrence but i do believe that it's going to take a substantial regional effort to assure long-term success substantial investment to assure long-term success um and we're gonna not we're gonna need to do it together and so i appreciate the board's support and in that

[01:44:04] direction um thank all the staff that was involved and the residents that stepped up we had volunteers through our cert teams and mrmc volunteers and others we could not have done this without you and so while we we hope we're not in this situation again i'm very proud of the response that had occurred that time and look forward to working with our regional partners as we move forward to to assure that that this does not reoccur again thank you mr chair thank you very much mr bedesky and thanks to the three gentlemen again for your presentations okay moving on next

[01:44:42] will be closed session uh before we go to closed session i'll mention that after closed session the remainder of the agenda is board announcements and adjournment so the schedule for today is winding down i will now recognize mr vice chairman davis mr chairman i move that the board of supervisors move this meeting into closed session set closed session pursuant to virginia code section 2.2 37 11 for items identified on the agenda as 10 a and 10 b second all in favor please indicate by

[01:45:19] saying aye we are now in closed session this matters as were identified in the

[01:46:54] closed session motion were discussed in accordance with freedom of information to active Virginia second all in favor please indicate by saying aye aye any opposed seeing none we are now back in open session at 5:16 p.m. next on the board agenda item 11 announcements any board member have an announcement mr.

[01:47:20] County Administrator seeing none agenda item 12 adjournment to 2:00 p.m. The next board meeting will be Wednesday February the 19th 2025 for a special budget meeting to be held right here in the Hanover County boardroom administration building 7516 County Complex Road we are adjourned

