



Orange Water and Sewer Authority

OWASA is Carrboro-Chapel Hill's not-for-profit public service agency delivering high quality water, wastewater, and reclaimed water services.

January 27, 2021

Mayor Pam Hemminger
Town of Chapel Hill
405 Martin Luther King Jr.
Blvd Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Mayor Lydia Lavelle
Town of Carrboro
301 West Main Street
Carrboro, NC 27510

Chair Renee Price
Orange County Board of
Commissioners
Post Office Box 8181
Hillsborough, NC 27278

Dear Mayor Hemminger, Mayor Lavelle, and Chair Price:

We are pleased to submit this report on our services, projects, and initiatives since October 2020. This report includes information on the following items:

1. Care to Share Day
2. Financial Update
3. Standard Collection Practices
4. Long-Range Water Supply Plan
5. COVID-19 Wastewater Testing
6. Youth Water Academy
7. Energy Management/Solar PV
8. New General Manager of Operations
9. Key Infrastructure Investments
10. Upcoming Board Appointments

Care to Share Day:

Care to Share Day 2020 was celebrated on November 19, 2020. OWASA launched a social media campaign using Twitter and Facebook to raise awareness of and funds for the bill-assistance program known as Care to Share that is administered in partnership with the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service.

We got the initial word out about Care to Share Day through an interview as part of Wonderful Water on WCHL on Monday, November 16. The concerted push on social media on Care to Share Day and throughout the campaign was successful in pushing more traffic to the website, where individuals could either sign up for monthly Care to Share donations or make a one-time gift to the IFC for Care to Share. This was boosted by our government partners and other stakeholders being aware of the effort ahead of time and helping to share OWASA's original messages or creating their own content to share.

The IFC reported more than \$6,000 in direct donations associated with the timing of Care to Share Day. OWASA also saw an increase in on-bill contributions correlating with this push.

OWASA would like to thank all of our government and non-profit community partners who helped make Care to Share Day a success.



Financial Update:

Water sales remain below what would be considered normal as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our community.

We budgeted revenue for the first six months of Fiscal Year 2021 to be down by 12%, or about \$2.2 million, from what we would have expected, if not for the pandemic. Actual revenue was lower for the six months ending December 31, 2020, down 1.1% or roughly \$193,000 from the already-decreased budget for the combination of water, sewer, and reclaimed water revenue.

In anticipation of lower revenue, we asked each department to avoid spending on non-essential purchases until we have a better grasp on how long the lower water demand will last. For the six-month period ending December 31, 2020, expenses were roughly \$1.1 million under what was budgeted. However, continuing to defer operating expenses, including not increasing employee salaries, and delaying critical infrastructure projects is not a sustainable solution for the community.

We will continue monitoring water sales and work to reduce operating expenses where possible.

Standard Collection Practices:

Orange County extended its local State of Emergency related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic through March 31, 2021. Using the local State of Emergency as guidance, OWASA has deferred resuming standard bill collection practices for residential customers until a to-be-determined date in 2021. OWASA has committed to giving a 30-day notice before resuming standard collection practices.

Under standard collection practices, customers who miss two consecutive payments of their monthly bill risk service disconnection. OWASA will offer payment plans of at least 12 months.

OWASA has been tracking and communicating with customers who are past due on their accounts and encouraging them to seek assistance from various resources to pay down any balances, including OWASA's Care to Share bill-assistance program. These various funding resources have also been updated on OWASA's website throughout the pandemic, including the Orange County Housing Helpline. There was also large demand for the NC HOPE program using federal funds distributed through the State of North Carolina to assist with rent and utility payments. The \$117 million program announced it was accepting applications on October 15, 2020. By November 11, 2020, the applications were closed because the funding had been depleted. We are expecting this program to be revived with additional federal funding being allocated, but there has been no indication as to when that program will be accepting new applications.

Long-Range Water Supply Plan:

OWASA is in the process of updating the community's Long-Range Water Supply Plan.

We are currently soliciting community feedback, which has included stakeholder feedback, an appearance on Wonderful Water on WCHL, a webinar that was held for the community in November, and presentations in mid-January to the Town Councils in Carrboro and Chapel Hill.

A similar presentation to the Orange County Board of Commissioners is scheduled for February 16.

The work to date on the Long-Range Water Supply Plan indicates that OWASA has enough water for the next few decades. However, we are vulnerable during extended or back-to-back droughts. While OWASA plans to continue to use its local water supplies and encourage conservation, OWASA's Board recently acted to ensure there are no policy restrictions limiting OWASA's use of our Jordan Lake allocation. There is no way at this time, however, to guarantee accessing that allocation, particularly in a time of drought.

We are continuing to solicit community feedback before bringing an update to the OWASA Board of Directors in March.

COVID-19 Wastewater Testing:

OWASA is continuing to support COVID-19 research by providing wastewater samples to track the virus.

OWASA began providing weekly wastewater samples to researchers with the North Carolina Policy Collaboratory in mid-July. The goal of this phase of the project, which ended in December, was to perfect the analytical methods and to contribute valuable information to the State of North Carolina on the presence and persistence of COVID-19. A full report is under development and will be available by the end of January; we will share this report with our Board of Directors and local government partners as we receive it.

Meanwhile, North Carolina is one of eight states participating in the National Wastewater Surveillance System being initiated by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the United States Department of Health and Human Services. OWASA was contacted by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services in December to participate in this national surveillance monitoring.

Youth Water Academy:

OWASA was thrilled to be able to host the third-annual Youth Water Academy this year in a virtual setting.

Twelve water-conscious scholars from local high schools took part in the program this fall. The course covered five weeks and included virtual tours of OWASA's Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants, a career panel, a "choose your own adventure" game where they made choices to repair a broken water line, and a capstone project focusing on a water-related subject of their choice.

One new aspect of this year's Youth Water Academy included a scavenger hunt where participants could identify OWASA infrastructure in the community or create water-related educational content.

We look forward to hosting the next Youth Water Academy in the Fall of 2021.

Energy Management/Solar PV:

OWASA is making significant progress toward our energy management goals. An updated Energy Management Plan approved by the Board of Directors in November 2020 reported a reduction in our use of electricity by 29% and of natural gas by 28% since 2010. These results are a result of an organizational-wide commitment to energy conservation and investment in cost-effective energy efficiency projects. Our energy management efforts avoided over \$565,000 in energy costs last year, and these savings are expected to increase in future years.

To help us achieve our stretch goal of a 35% reduction in purchased electricity by 2022, we are currently installing three solar photovoltaic (PV) systems on OWASA facilities. Collectively, these solar PV systems will generate almost 428,000 kWh of clean energy every year (equivalent to the energy use of over 40 homes). Through a lease agreement with private partners and rebates from Duke Energy, we are able to install these systems for no additional cost to OWASA customers in Year 1. In future years, we project to spend less on lease payments than we save on our energy bill.

New General Manager of Operations:

Orange Water and Sewer Authority is excited to announce that Mary Darr has been selected as the next General Manager of Operations following a nationwide search.

Darr has most recently served as OWASA's Director of Engineering and Planning. She is succeeding Todd Taylor in the role after Taylor was named OWASA's Executive Director in July 2020.

In this role, Darr is responsible for overseeing OWASA's various operations, including the Water Distribution and Wastewater Collection Department, OWASA's Water Treatment Plant and Wastewater Treatment Plant, and OWASA's reservoirs and other land resources.

Darr's first day as General Manager of Operations was November 1.

Key Infrastructure Investments:

OWASA has made progress on several critical infrastructure projects since October 2020.

A water line replacement project in the Kensington Drive neighborhood was recently completed. A project replacing water and sewer lines in the area around Dobbins Drive near the intersection of Erwin Road and Fordham Boulevard was also recently completed.

Meanwhile, several other projects are in their early stages. A contractor will soon begin work to replace the water line on Bolinwood Drive at the bridge over Bolin Creek. OWASA construction crews are also starting a water line replacement project in the Kings Mill – Morgan Creek neighborhood.

Several projects are also underway at the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) on Jones Ferry Road. The projects total a roughly \$6 million investment to improve drinking water distribution and

treatment facilities at the WTP. Water line improvements directly in front of the WTP will build in additional redundancy and resiliency to support the community's water infrastructure and maintain a high level of service for customers. As part of the WTP improvement work, contractors will be making improvements to the WTP finished water pump system. Contractors will also be installing a new bulk chemical storage containment area, as well as making improvements to the existing bulk storage area.

Upcoming Board Appointments:

OWASA will have openings on its Board of Directors this year to be appointed by each local jurisdiction - Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Orange County. A letter was sent to each local government partner on January 19, 2021, with information to assist with recruiting and selecting members to the OWASA Board. In addition, we have posted [information on our website](#) regarding Board Member recruitment.

Recruitment for Board applications is ongoing. We are committed to promoting Board membership in our community engagement efforts and appreciate your assistance in attracting a diverse applicant pool, as well.

OWASA embraces diversity and inclusion in everything we do, and we would like to encourage all interested candidates to apply for Board appointments. Our Board addresses a wide range of issues. The only true qualification needed is a genuine commitment to serve the community.

Thank you for your continued support in appointing members to OWASA's Board of Directors. If we can assist you, please let us know.

We would be happy to provide you more detailed information on the items above or other topics of interest as desired. Please feel free to contact our Executive Director, Todd Taylor (ttaylor@owasa.org or 919-537-4216), or me.

Sincerely,



Raymond E. DuBose, P.E., Chair
OWASA Board of Directors

Attachments

cc: Mr. David Andrews, Carrboro Town Manager
Ms. Bonnie Hammersley, Orange County Manager
Mr. Maurice Jones, Chapel Hill Town Manager
OWASA Board of Directors
Todd Taylor, OWASA Executive Director

MONTHLY SUMMARY OF CALLS AND E-MAILS TO OWASA
FROM NEIGHBORS REPORTING ODOR
FROM THE MASON FARM WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
January	11	3	9	0	8	3	8	1	3	3	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	7	5	2	0	8	0	4	1	0	3	3	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0
March	9	0	7	1	10	4	1	1	0	2	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
April	9	2	4	0	9	3	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	6	0	2	5	8	3	2	5	4	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
June	4	1	1	1	5	1	8	8	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
July	1	0	2	0	0	2	6	3	2	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
August	1	0	4	3	11	2	9	0	1	1	2	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	0
September	2	5	2	2	9	3	1	1	5	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
October	2	6	1	1	8	8	2	0	3	3	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
November	0	0	1	7	2	6	7	1	1	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
December	3	3	2	5	8	10	2	1	1	6	3	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	55	25	37	25	86	45	51	23	23	30	27	11	17	3	0	2	3	0	1

January-2002 to December-2019 History and Present (2020)

An “odor event” is defined as: One or more odor reports received during a 24 hour period from WWTP neighbor(s). Each odor event shall be considered to be “verified” unless OWASA determines conclusively that an alternative source other than the WWTP created the odor.

**LOG OF CALLS AND E-MAILS TO OWASA
FROM NEIGHBORS REPORTING ODOR IN THE MASON FARM
WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT (WWTP) AREA**

January 2020 – December 2020

Date call received	Time call received	Location
January 2020	No Reported Odors	N/A
February 2020	No Reported Odors	N/A
March 2020	No Reported Odors	N/A
April 2020	No Reported Odors	N/A
May 2020	No Reported Odors	N/A
June 2020	9:11 AM	1016 Highland Woods Road
July 2020	No Reported Odors	N/A
August 2020	No Reported Odors	N/A
September 2020	No Reported Odors	N/A
October 2020	No Reported Odors	N/A
November 2020	No Reported Odors	N/A
December 2020	No Reported Odors	N/A

DISTRIBUTION OF OWASA E-MAILS ABOUT OFF-SITE ODOR ELIMINATION

Location	Name
Highland Woods	Paul Neebe
	Mary Turner
	Malcolm Forbes
	Natalia Lebedeva
	Gary Richman
	Gail Wood
	Robert and Melissa Porter
	Robin Casey
	Joseph Clancy
	Ann Schwab
	Seth Kingsbury
	Amanda Kingsbury
	Freeman and Angela Kirby
	Reed Johnson
	Kay Johnson
	Rex Bartles
	Lisa Bartles
	Ann Alexander
	Nortin Hadler
	Carol Hadler
	Frank P. Rexford
	Scott Brees
	Kendall Brees
	Rainer Blaesius
	Elisabeth Schweins
	Susannah Shearer
	Fred Hall
	Lawanda Rainey-Hall
	Katie Jamieson
	Richard Harrill
	Angel Smith
	Jordon Sharome
	Cameron Williams
Marian Rice	
Janet McLamb	
Michael Henning	
Benjamin Duan-Porter	
Matthew Mauck	
Finley Forest	Adam Kimplead
	Cindy Underwood
	Dan Puckett
	David J. Polewka
	Kathryn Conard
Laurel Hill	Michael Sharpe
	Julie Maness
	Bob Wendell
	Carol David

Location	Name		
St. Thomas More Church and School Morgan Creek area	Pat Evans Ewan Rodewald and Sharon Hodge Marcella Grendler Kay Goldstein Ann Wilson Louis Fogleman St. Thomas More Church staff		
	Ellen Johnson Aldersgate United Methodist Church Betsy Malpass Hanson Malpass Jeannie Cox Laura King Moore Jeanne Langley AW Carr Marilyn and Don Hartman Robert Huls		
	Ronald McDonald House Family House	Shelly Day Greg Kirkpatrick, Executive Director Janice Ross, Operations Manager	
		Reserve	Matt Hapgood Steve McPhail James F. Howard Steven and Susan Frye Doug Longman Barbara and Edward Paradise Jeanne and David Jarrett Nadine O'Malley Mark Witcher Ralph Abrahams Kathy Abrahams
	Bayberry Drive area UNC		William Ware Johnny Randall, NC Botanical Garden Jennifer Peterson, NC Botanical Garden Phil Barner, Energy Services Director Margaret Holton, Water, Sewer & Stormwater Coordinator Mary Beth Koza, Director, Environment, Health and Safety Ross Fowler, Finley Golf Course Michael Wilkinson, golf pro Andrew Sapp, Men's Golf Coach UNC Tennis Center UNC parking Mike McFarland, University Communications Scott Ragland, News Services Linda Convisor, Director of Local Relations UNC Farm (Faculty Staff Recreation Association) Frank Maynard, Athletics/ Finley Golf Course

Distribution of OWASA E-mails About Off-Site Odor Elimination

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Location	Name
	Robert Costa, Athletics/ Finley Golf Course
	Mark Steffer, Athletics/ Finley Golf Course
	Jeff McCracken, Public Safety
	Kate Luck
UNC Healthcare	Mel Hurston
	Karen McCall
	Keith Morris
Town of Chapel Hill	Maurice Jones, Town Manager
	Florentine A. Miller, Deputy Town Manager
	Ann Anderson, Town Attorney
	Lance Norris, Public Works Director
	Chris Roberts, Town Engineer
	Richard Terrell, Public Works Operations Superintendent
	Jeanne Brown, Assistant to the Mayor
	Sheila Stains-Ramp, Development Services Planning
	Sabrina Oliver, Town Clerk
	Amy Harvey, Public Affairs and Communications
	Chris Blue, Police Chief
	Bryan Walker, Captain/Police Information
	Josh Mecimore, Police Information Officer
	Allison Weakley
	Kiel Harms
	Ran Northam, Interim Communications Manager
	Ross Tompkins
City Schools	Bill Mullin
	Todd LoFrese, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services
	Jeff Nash, Community Relations
	Crystal Jones
	Chris Liles
	Darlene Ryan
Other Utilities	Indira Everett, Duke Energy
	Brenda Duke, Duke Energy
	Steve Small, Duke Energy
	Billy Miller, PSNC
	Time Warner Cable
Orange County	Orange 911 Center Supervisor on duty
	Connie Pixley, Environmental Health Supervisor
Other	Bill Ferrell, Meadowmont Community Association
	Chamber of Commerce
	Michael Hughes
	Post Office

**SUMMARY OF ON-SITE HYDROGEN SULFIDE (H₂S)
ODOR MONITORING**

Month and year	Headworks Monitor			UNC Monitor			Digester Monitor			Switchgear Monitor		
	Average H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Minimum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Maximum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Average H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Minimum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Maximum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Average H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Minimum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Maximum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Average H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Minimum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Maximum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)
October 2020	0.0000	0.0000	0.000 ¹	0.0009	0.0000	0.0010 ²	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ³	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁴
November 2020	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁵	0.0010	0.0000	0.0010 ⁶	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁷	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁸
December 2020	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁹	0.0010	0.0000	0.0010 ¹⁰	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ¹¹	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ¹²

Monitor Locations:

Headworks Monitor (#1) – Monitor located at Headworks Facility

Digester Monitor (#2) – Monitor located between Digester #1 and Digester #4

UNC Monitor (#3) – Monitor located at Primary Sludge PS

Switchgear Monitor (#4) – Monitor located at Switchgear Building

¹ Maximum reading zero all of October 2020

² Maximum reading occurred on October 4, 2020

³ Maximum reading zero all of October 2020

⁴ Maximum reading zero all of October 2020

⁵ Maximum reading zero all of November 2020

⁶ Maximum reading occurred on November 24-30, 2020

⁷ Maximum reading zero all of November 2020

⁸ Maximum reading zero all of November 2020

⁹ Maximum reading zero all of December 2020

¹⁰ Maximum reading occurred on December 1-13, 2020

¹¹ Maximum reading zero all of December 2020

¹² Maximum reading zero all of December 2020