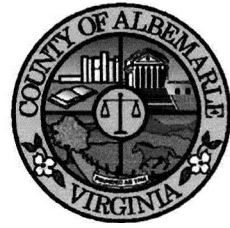




Albemarle County
Service Authority



Citizens Receive Progress Update on Implementation of the 50 Year Community Water Supply Plan

Unexpected Challenges Arise as Consultant Finds Fracturing in Supportive Rock Bed

TO: Local Media

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA – Community leaders met today to update the public on the progress of the 50-year Community Water Supply Plan and to outline the findings of the initial underground survey work done in preparation for the construction of a larger Ragged Mountain dam. The plan, approved by the Boards of the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) and the Albemarle County Service Authority as well as the elected bodies of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors and the City of Charlottesville City Council, calls for a dam to be built at the Ragged Mountain reservoir to replace two older dams to increase the area's water capacity and meet future community needs. The remaining major components of the plan include a new pipeline between the South Fork and Ragged Mountain reservoirs that will replace the aged Sugar Hollow Pipeline, rehabilitation or replacement of aged piping, pumping, and treatment systems, and expansions to water treatment capacity. The plan provides improved stream flows to area rivers, preserves 75,000 feet of stream with wide buffers in a permanent conservation easement, provides 200 acres of new forest and four acres of new wetlands, avoids impacts to endangered species and preserves habitat and enhances water quality for the Buck Mountain watershed. As the public process evolved this plan was considered to be the most responsible solution to providing an adequate and healthful water supply to City and County residents for many decades to come and has subsequently been determined by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to be the most environmentally-friendly and practical option available.

Members of the Board of the RWSA are committed to keeping the Charlottesville/Albemarle County community updated as milestones in this long term process are reached. One of those milestones occurred last month as Gannett Fleming, the selected firm tasked with designing, engineering and construction, reported to staff preliminary conclusions from a necessary geophysical survey of the ground below the future Ragged Mountain dam that will serve as its foundation. The report noted that although rock is near the ground surface in most locations, they have recommended additional features not included in the original estimate to address fractures and weathering of rock. Given this information, which was not available until August, engineers with the firm are now recommending a significantly larger underground foundation and core side walls to construct the new dam. Due to these new features along with regional and global impacts on the cost of construction since the initial conceptual estimate by the firm, Gannett Fleming raised the estimated construction costs of the Ragged Mountain project to approximately \$70 million, compared to \$37 million which was the original estimate put forward before this detailed analysis was conducted.

Because this estimate was substantially higher than previous figures, the RWSA staff felt it prudent to engage a second firm with similar expertise to review the data and suggest alternatives that would safely address these new findings. In August staff requested Gannett Fleming to stop work while the firm of Schnabel Engineering analyzed the new geophysical data and the revised cost estimate to provide the best independent recommendation to address this new concern. Results of their study showed that, despite the newly discovered fractured rock, a similarly safe approach could be achieved at a minimum cost savings of nearly \$13.5 million from Gannett Fleming's revised estimate. In addition, the firm recommends some additional geophysical data be collected to confirm the extent to which fractured rock can be grouted and remain in place, a measure Schnabel believes is likely to result in further savings.

Given the critical priority of issues related to community safety and fiscal responsibility as part of the overall water supply plan, RWSA staff is recommending to the RWSA Board of Directors that an independent outside panel be engaged consisting of at least three members with specific knowledge of dam design, costs, and construction. That panel would be charged to review the two estimates and assist in recommendations to the Board and the community for the best path forward. At this juncture, the Board of Directors has been informed of the findings of this survey but has not endorsed any of the recent estimates as being representative of probable project costs for budgeting purposes nor has any decision been made on next steps. A beginning discussion will be held at the regularly scheduled Board meeting this afternoon at 2:00pm at RWSA headquarters. The public is invited to attend and is encouraged to visit the RWSA website at www.rivanna.org for more information.

The Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority Board of Directors, the Albemarle County Service Authority Board of Directors, the Albemarle Board of Supervisors, and the City of Charlottesville City Council remain solidly behind to the 50-year Community Water Supply Plan endorsed by the community. The RWSA is committed to continuing this citizen-driven planning process in the most financially-responsible manner possible in order to establish the healthful and reliable water supply vital to our community.

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