

Aqua North Carolina, Inc.
Docket No. W-218, Sub 526

APPENDIX C

Aqua's Response to Public Staff Data Request 97 Q2

**Aqua North Carolina, Inc.
Docket No. W-218, Sub 526
Public Staff Data Request No. 97
Date Sent: April 17, 2020
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Subject of Data Request: Customer Service Follow-up

Question 2

- Q. Regarding the Company's implementation of AMR meters, please provide the following:
- a. A detailed description of the status of Aqua NC's development of a process to share the AMR readings (e.g., daily and/or hourly data, alerts, etc.) with customers, including customer notice of availability;
 - b. A detailed description of the status of expanding the Automated Meter Reading Application ("AMRA") and training Customer Service Representatives; and
 - c. A list including the customer address, subdivision, system, rate entity, and date of all such actual sharing of with customers from January 1, 2019, through March 31, 2020.

AQUA RESPONSES:

GENERAL RESPONSE: Please review the Affidavits previously filed with the Commission in Docket No. W-218, Sub 497A by Lisa Gresehover and Bernard F. Thompson on behalf of Aqua North Carolina, Inc. on June 18, 2019, and August 21, 2019, respectively, regarding the benefits associated with automated meter reading ("AMR") technology deployment. The information set forth in those Affidavits is hereby incorporated by reference.

In their Affidavits, Ms. Gresehover and Mr. Thompson noted that Aqua America was working to expand the Company's meter data management system ("Automated Meter Reading Application" or "AMRA") to store and present daily customer consumption data, where available, for a 12-month period to improve internal use and analytics of this data.

This information, once available in AMRA, will also be available to, and used by, Customer Service Representatives and Field Service Representatives to improve customer service. This project is managed by Aqua America Information Technology ("IT") resources with participation from several departments and requires a Company-wide effort to develop the platform---it is not North Carolina specific. The Affiants indicated that usage data was expected to be readily available for an Aqua America representative to share with customers upon their specific request by the first quarter of 2020.

The Affiants indicated that Aqua America would initiate a project to develop a long-term Strategic Plan for Meter Data Management and Advanced Analytics in 2020, and that costs for this plan were included in the five-year capital budget and would include defined and specific use cases for the 40-daily read history and other advanced AMR data-logging, business process development, evaluation of software and applications, and an implementation schedule. A deliverable of this plan would be to define the criteria for data storage (duration, location, and format), and would identify the most appropriate method and vehicle in which to share this data proactively with customers. Options for sharing this data include, but are not limited to, a self-service customer portal or an expanded daily use section on the monthly customer bill. The Affiants stated that the ability to provide this functionality to all Aqua NC customers was dependent upon the deployment of this advanced AMR technology.

According to the Affiants, this project would provide the framework for meter reading data to be easily viewed and utilized throughout Aqua America and would facilitate accurate demand trending and projections that can be useful to engineering for water management and capital planning. Other efforts that will benefit from this project include reduction of non-revenue water, accurate meter sizing, and future replacement programs for the meter asset itself. The Strategic Plan is a multi-disciplined project that will include effort from several functional departments; Aqua America anticipates that this second project plan could take up to two years to complete (currently estimated to be in 2022).

SPECIFIC RESPONSES:

a) As noted on page 7 of Affiant Gresehover's Affidavit, dated and filed with the North Carolina Utilities Commission on June 18th, 2019, in response to Ordering Paragraphs No. 26 and No. 27 of the Commission's December 18, 2018 Rate Case Order (Docket No. W-218, Sub 497), at page 186, she stated that Aqua America would kick-off a project to develop a long-term Strategic Plan for Meter Data Management and Advanced Analytics in 2020. Affiant Gresehover further stated that as part of that project, options for sharing the AMR data with customers would be evaluated and, at that time, options would include, but would not be limited to, a self-service portal or an expanded daily use section on a monthly customer bill.

The development of a Long-Term Strategic Plan for Data Management is included in 2020 IT Capital Budget, and plan development work will start in 2020. The scope of the plan contains an evaluation of all options to store, analyze, and

share the AMR data with customers, in addition to determination of the best vehicle or vehicles that will be used to share this information. The current project schedule shows a plan development start date of July 1, 2020. Our goal is to finalize the plan development by end of 2020 and begin a project in 2021 to implement our strategic data management plan. The implementation of the plan is expected to span several phases, over several years. This work will run in parallel to the implementation of additional AMR technology across North Carolina.

b) Aqua America's plan to expand the company's meter data management system ("Automated Meter Reading Application" of "AMRA") in order to store and present a graph of daily customer consumption data, where available, was targeted for completion in Q1 2020. The AMRA upgrade project was put into production in late Q3 2019 with an initial user testing being completed in Q4 2019. Several fixes/adjustments resulted and were made accordingly with the last ones placed in production in Q1 2020. Select groups are developing training materials for CSR's, which was expected to be rolled out in Q2 of 2020, but has been delayed due to COVID-19 social distancing and travel restrictions. We expect to resume this training schedule later this year. The usage data maintained in AMRA is now currently available for internal use in table and graphic form to be used for usage dispute resolution and other analysis. Links to the graphic data are available in Service Link work orders and used by field staff to troubleshoot work orders (e.g., high consumption).

c) The information requested in question 2(c) is not available nor tracked.

Prepared by: Lisa Gresehover - Aqua America Metrology Manager
Paula Frost – Aqua NC Supervisor Meter Readers