A Letter from the President

As the rains of August fill our streets it is a proud honor to announce that a sewer rehabilitation project has been completed. Some of our original sewers from the late 60s and early 70s were allowing rain water to infiltrate and burden our waste water treatment plant. Problem areas were identified, modern “sleeves” were inserted, and a 20% decrease in rainwater intrusion was accomplished. The work involved about 21,000 feet of old pipes and cost about $2.2 million. Replacement with new pipes would have cost three to four times as much and would have caused serious interruptions in service. Good work by our professional managers and workers.

South Walton Utility Company is preparing its physical plant to accommodate water and sewer needs when “build-out” of our service area occurs in several years. The latest step is to complete the planned General Bill Brown wellfield near the old American Farms north of Freeport. The final well will meet the maximum flow permitted in our Northwest Florida Water Management District CUP (Consumptive Use Permit). The new well is scheduled to be in service in 2017, a year ahead of our requirement to get a renewed CUP in 2018. The $1.25 million cost is shared equally with Destin Water Users.

Replacement of old and defective water meters with new self-reporting meters has begun. Over about the next five years all residential meters will be replaced. The five year program allows us to make the change without having to borrow money and raise rates. The new meters will be monitored continuously by SWUCI making it possible to alert members when an unusual spike in consumption occurs. This will help avoid unexpected large bills due to leaks.

In mid-July we said farewell to a 27-year utility employee, Mr. Bruce Morrison, our Operations Manager. He has played a primary role in operating our efficient, DEP-award winning utility. He was liked and respected by all. And we will all miss Bossy Bruce’s favorite phrase at the end of training and employee ceremonies, “Now get back to work!”

Finally, this is to give an update on a water main line break near McCaskill Jewelers on August 6th. The break was apparently caused by a lightning strike that split the pipe causing loss of pressure to many members west of Holiday Road. Our crews repaired the leak within four hours of discovery, but the break triggered a Precautionary Boil Water Notice (PBWN). After required testing, Public Health approved rescinding the boil-water notice on August 9th. We are aware that a number of members did not receive the boil-water notice in a timely way. Our staff is preparing several ways they will immediately alert affected members if another PBWN occurs. This outage and resulting PBWN was our largest since Hurricane Opal in 1995.

Sincerely,

Michael Flynt