

Comments by Betty Mooney at the public hearing before City Council on the proposed 50-year water supply

November 19th, 2007

Charlottesville's water usage has dropped and will continue to drop; as we improve our storm water drainage system. We must replace and repair the parts of our water system that are failing, but it is not the city of Charlottesville that is driving the enormous costs of this plan and we depend on you to make sure that we do not bare the heaviest burden.

Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority's whole-sale water rates have doubled since 2000, and there has been no increase in capacity supplied or maintenance of our reservoirs provided. In the 30 benchmark cities we are compared to, we once had the 4th lowest rates and now are the 3rd highest.

Community support for staying within the watershed for the 50 year water plan is overwhelming

The necessary safety repairs to the dam and maintenance to the system should proceed immediately, but are you ready to walk away from the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir, the Sugar Hollow Pipeline and Sugar Hollow Reservoir, the 180 acres of Natural Area at Ragged Mt. (30-54,000) trees lost, as calculated by the Virginia Forestry Service, the loss of water in the Rivanna River, and the lack of any money or planning for siltation control in our watershed.

We respectfully ask council to request the following:

1. RWSA should develop and distribute a written watershed plan with clearly defined objectives, alternative options, and cost estimates for all options and phasing-in schedules.

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2. Expert specialist consultation should be obtained by the City of Charlottesville to develop feasibility and cost estimates for restoration and preservation, including dredging of the South Fork and Sugar Hollow Reservoirs.
3. It is suggested that Albemarle county secure similar consultation for the restoration and preservation of the Mechums and Moormans River ecosystems.
4. An objective assessment of the true costs of the watershed plan must be developed, with a fair ratio apportioning the costs between city and county residents

The letter from 17 community leaders written to Council and the Board of Supervisors wisely counsels:

“This community values rural and natural landscape. This stewardship is embedded in both City and County comprehensive plans. While the RWSA must advise elected officials on a course they believe will be most acceptable to the regulatory agencies, elected officials must choose the course that will be most acceptable to this community. Otherwise comprehensive planning would be a meaningless process. We cannot ignore the ecology, health and stewardship of our local reservoirs and streams. “