

**Mayor George – Opening Remarks
Charles Town Utility Board
September 23, 2026**

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for joining us tonight.

I know many of you are here because of the proposed water bottling plant in Middleway and the stormwater construction permit associated with the project.

I want to begin by acknowledging the concerns that have been raised by members of our community. We hear you, and I want you to know that this Board takes your concerns seriously.

Before we begin public comment, I think it is important to clarify the Utility Board's role and responsibilities.

The Utility Board does not determine whether a private development receives land-use approval. Those decisions are made by the appropriate state and local authorities.

However, we do have our own responsibilities as a public utility.

We have an obligation to evaluate requests for utility service fairly and consistently, in accordance with applicable law and our existing agreements. We also have a responsibility to ensure that any infrastructure we own or operate is safe, environmentally responsible, financially sustainable, and compliant with applicable regulatory requirements.

Those responsibilities are particularly important when considering a project that may involve significant new infrastructure and long-term obligations for our utility and its customers.

Recently, our staff completed a review of the stormwater construction permit and supporting documentation associated with the Sidewinder Raw Water Line project.

We also have reviewed comments from the public and understand that there are questions concerning the permit application, environmental documentation, public notification, and the engineering and financial implications of the proposed water treatment facilities.

Our responsibility is to carefully evaluate those matters, obtain appropriate professional and legal guidance, and determine the appropriate next steps.

We also recognize that members of the public have raised important questions about the transparency of this process and the opportunities available for public participation.

We are committed to keeping our community informed and engaged.

That means making relevant information available, providing meaningful opportunities for public input, and ensuring that the Board has the information it needs to make informed decisions.

I also want to emphasize that reviewing the permit does not, by itself, determine the future of the Sidewinder project. The Board must consider its regulatory responsibilities, existing contractual obligations, and the engineering and financial implications of the proposed infrastructure.

We have a responsibility to approach those questions carefully and in the best interests of the utility and the customers we serve.

At the end of the day, we are members of this community, too. We care about our county, our neighbors, and the future of our communities.

We appreciate everyone who has taken the time to attend tonight, submit comments, ask questions, and hold us accountable.

Your participation is important, and we thank you for being here.

Public Comment Procedures

Before we begin public comment, I would like to briefly explain tonight's procedures. Each speaker will have 3 minutes to address the Board.

We have two podiums available and will alternate between them to help keep the process organized and provide everyone who has registered with an opportunity to speak.

When your name is called, please come forward to the designated podium. Once recognized, please introduce yourself before beginning your comments.

We ask everyone to be respectful of the speakers and allow each person to complete their remarks without interruption.

Our first speaker is _____. Please come forward and introduce yourself.

Our second speaker is _____. Please come forward to the second podium, and we will recognize you shortly.

Thank you.