

Water Industry – A Utility Perspective

Challenges to Solutions – Closing the Gap

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SUBMISSION TYPE

Keynote Presentation

KEYWORDS

Aging Infrastructure, Regulatory Requirements, Project Delivery, Water Supply and Energy, Technology, Municipal Bankruptcy

ABSTRACT

The water/wastewater industry has numerous challenges that must be addressed for utilities to be sustainable and provide safe, reliable service. These challenges include deteriorating infrastructure, source of supply adequacy/climate change and regulatory requirements. Additionally, a changing customer and utility workforce contribute additional issues when confronting the implementation and funding of solutions. Fortunately, in most cases, there are technical, equipment and policy approaches available to assist with needed solutions. However, the bigger challenge is to determine how to finance these needed improvements. Financial options and enhancements include more efficient operations, higher utility rates and the availability of federal/state funding.

The presentation will also provide a utility perspective to the two (2) largest U.S. municipal bankruptcies – Jefferson County, Alabama and Detroit. In Jefferson County, corruption, mismanagement and politics resulted in a default on \$3.2B of utility debt and regulatory noncompliance. In Detroit, affordability, pension obligations and regional issues continue to threaten the long-term sustainability of water service.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



John S. Young, Jr. P.E. has worked in the water utility industry his entire career. In 2010, John retired from American Water, the largest water/wastewater utility in North America, after a 33 year career. At American Water, he served in numerous technical and management positions including Vice President- Engineering, President – American Water Works Service Company, Chief Water Technology Officer and Chief Operating Officer. He retired from American Water to undertake the unique challenge of being the Court-appointed Receiver of the Jefferson County, Alabama Environmental Services Department. In this role, he addressed utility mismanagement and corruption issues that resulted in the default of \$3.2B of sewer system debt and, at the time, the largest municipal bankruptcy in US history. Recently, as a utility consultant, he has supported or assessed numerous water utilities including the New York City Department

of Environmental Protection, Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (during the Detroit bankruptcy) and PRASA.

John is an active member of several professional organizations, including being a past Board Chair of the Design/Build Institute of America, a past Board Member of the American Water Works Association and the WateReuse Foundation, and a past member of USEPA's National Drinking Water Advisory Council.

John is a registered professional engineer. He holds a B.S. in Civil Engineering from Duke University and an M.S. in Environmental Engineering from the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill. Contact: j.young109@comcast.net.