

## MEDIA RELEASE

**FOR RELEASE: Immediate, October 2, 2018**



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### **ONWASA HOLDS SPECIAL MEETING TO ADDRESS FLORENCE AFTERMATH**

ONWASA staff and contracted engineers met with the water utility's Board of Directors in a special meeting on Tuesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 9:00am. The board received reports from staff and engineers on different aspects of disaster recovery operations.

Following more field analysis of damage, ONWASA Chief Financial Officer Tiffany Riggs reported that damage to ONWASA facilities is now estimated at approximately \$6,699,200. A majority of the damage occurred at the utility's Northwest Regional Water Reclamation Facility which was inundated with up to 4 feet of floodwaters.

A wastewater plant specialist engineer from W.K. Dickson, Mr. James Holland responded to the site and began living there following the storm. Mr. Holland, along with ONWASA staff and an emergency response team from ONWASA's sister utility, Greenville Utilities Commission immediately began the plant rebuild. Mr. Holland provided an in-depth report to the Board about damage to the plant, which was the single greatest loss to ONWASA, totaling approximately \$5,000,000. Currently, the plant is running "by hand" with all electronic and computer processes replaced with human work and control. Despite the devastation to the plant, Mr. Holland reported that ONWASA's recovery work placed the plant back in operation within state-mandated limits within 12 days of the floodwaters receding.

Mr. Jeff Hudson, ONWASA CEO informed the Board that ONWASA is pursuing funds from flood and other insurance policies, FEMA, USDA Rural Development. Specifically, the utility will seek hazard mitigation grant funding to build a berm around the Northwest Facility, replace aerial stream crossings of water mains with underground bores, and further harden the utility's vital infrastructure.

To deal with the effects of the storm the Board approved emergency budget amendments in the amount of \$1,699,200, a capital project to reconstruct the Northwest Plant in the amount of \$5,000,000, a variety of fee waivers for customers during a recovery period and set a special meeting of the Board for October 18<sup>th</sup> to conduct the regular business of ONWASA. "ONWASA is committed to our community. This is our home." Said ONWASA CEO Jeff Hudson.

Customers with questions about their water utility are invited to call ONWASA at 910-455-0722.

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