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Court-Appointed Receiver Warns of Looming Public Health Crisis in Prichard and Chickasaw Without Immediate Action

Receiver calls for transfer of Prichard Water Works & Sewer Board to MAWSS; Asks residents to contact their state and federal legislators to get needed funds

Prichard, AL – In a stark warning, John S. Young, Jr., the court-appointed Receiver for the Prichard Water Works & Sewer Board (PWWSB), has declared the utility system serving Prichard and Chickasaw faces some serious challenges —with potential negative implications for public health and generational well-being.

Upon releasing his Supplemental Report to the Draft Master Plan on March 31, 2025, Young emphasized the only viable path forward is the full transfer of the utility to the Mobile Area Water & Sewer System (MAWSS), a solution overwhelmingly affirmed by the technical, management, and financial analysis in the report.

“For decades, PWWSB has repeatedly failed its more than 10,000 customers through mismanagement, political interference, and financial negligence,” said Receiver Young. “Without immediate actions to transfer this system to MAWSS, Prichard and Chickasaw customers face significant higher water bills and potentially a public health and environmental emergency.”

Dire Conditions and Deteriorating Infrastructure

The Receiver’s recently released Supplemental Report to the Draft Master Plan details a broken utility plagued by:

- **Over 60% water loss** from deteriorated infrastructure.
- **Exorbitant water bills** and substandard service.
- **The inability to meet ADEM Consent Orders** for water and wastewater compliance.
- **The ineligibility for critical grant funding** due to technical and financial shortcomings present with the current governance structure for PWWSB.
- **At least \$10 million a year in capital needs** to steadily restore the system.

“This is not just a financial issue. This is potentially a public health crisis,” said Young. “If we do not act now and transfer the system to MAWSS, Prichard could easily become the next Jackson, Mississippi, or Flint, Michigan—other national examples of infrastructure failure and government neglect.”

Receiver’s Progress: Early Steps for a Long-Term Turnaround

Since his appointment in November 2023, Young has worked to address immediate and short-term problems including but not limited to:

- Securing **\$5.8 million in grants**, with an additional **\$49 million applied for in grant requests from the State and USEPA**.
- Stabilizing the system operations and finances.
- Completing a full TMF (Technical, Management, Financial) Capacity Analysis.
- Repaired major leaks, some of which were losing **millions of gallons of water each month**.
- Garnering **over 500 resident signatures** supporting the transfer to MAWSS.
- Restored the trust of regulators, including ADEM

MAWSS: The Only Viable Path Forward

The Supplemental Report confirms that transferring the system to MAWSS is the **only viable, long-term solution**. Under MAWSS ownership:

- Rate increases would average **just 3% annually**, compared to **25% per year under PWWSB**.
- The MAWSS could access critical grant funding currently unavailable to PWWSB.
- Infrastructure investments would be directed by proven utility leaders and professionals.
- Customer service and system reliability would dramatically improve.

“Only MAWSS has the scale, expertise, and financial capacity to rescue and restore this system for Prichard and Chickasaw residents,” said Young.

Rejecting Privatization and Political Control

Young warned against efforts to pursue a private concession agreement, such as the one proposed by Prichard Water Partners, LLC. “The concession is not a solution in the best interest of customers but a desperate attempt by the local Board with no other options,” said Young.

Young cautioned against returning control of the system to local political boards: “This Board has already repeatedly failed. Political appointees without experience in water utilities should not be entrusted with public health and safety.”

A Call to Action

Young urged all stakeholders, including customers in Prichard and Chickasaw, the court, state and federal funders, and elected officials—to act now before it’s too late.

“The time for debate is over,” Young concluded. “The evidence is overwhelming. The people of Prichard and Chickasaw deserve clean, affordable, and reliable water.”

About the Receiver

John S. Young, Jr. was appointed by the Circuit Court of Mobile County in November 2023 to serve as Receiver for PWWSB. He brings decades of experience in utility management and turnaround leadership, with a proven track record of securing funding, restoring public trust, and driving large-scale infrastructure reform.