PRESS RELEASE

The Brodhead Creek Regional Authority, Economic Growth, and Ken Brown

The Brodhead Creek Regional Authority announces the proposed retirement plan of long-time Manager, Kenneth R. Brown. Mr. Brown has informed the Authority’s Board of Directors of his intention to retire no later than December 31, 2017. While December 31, 2017 seems a long time away, Mr. Brown indicated the reason for his announcement at this time was based on the necessity of a succession plan being immediately developed and implemented so that the numerous ongoing projects of the Authority may continue on schedule while allowing Mr. Brown to assist in the transition. Mr. Brown has been an instrumental figure in the development and sustainability of economic growth in the Monroe County area.

Mr. Brown joined the Authority as Manager in February of 1995. Prior to joining the Authority, Mr. Brown was the Borough Manager for East Stroudsburg Borough. Mr. Brown started with East Stroudsburg Borough in 1979 and was appointed Manager for the years 1986 through January of 1995. At the time of his move to the Authority, Mr. Brown attained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Biology from Millersville State College (1974) and a Master’s Degree in Public Administration from Marywood College (1991). Mr. Brown also possessed both a Pennsylvania Water and Wastewater Operator’s License. It is with this educational and work background that Mr. Brown undertook first the revitalization of the then Stroudsburg Municipal Authority and second, the central commercial corridors of Monroe County.

In 1995, the Stroudsburg Municipal Authority had ten employees and a 2.2 million dollar budget. The service area consisted of Stroudsburg Borough and parts of Stroud Township serving approximately 10,000 people and businesses with 3,500 billing accounts. The daily water production was 2.2 million gallons per day (MGD), of which there was a 48% unaccounted water loss. In addition, Mr. Brown was charged with completing a 10 million dollar upgrade to the water treatment plant and distribution system. Mr. Brown faced significant hurdles when he started as Manager at the Stroudsburg Municipal Authority.

It was clear from the start that Mr. Brown understood the importance of the Authority and how it could be utilized to provide sustained economic development and growth for the betterment of all Monroe County. In 1998, Smithfield Township requested the Authority provide water to portions of that Township. This request started a new era of intergovernmental cooperation. In order to service the area, the Authority entered into bulk water services agreements with the Borough of East Stroudsburg. These agreements are still in place. The importance of the agreements could not be overstated. Between 1998 and 2004, the Authority was able to expand its water distribution system into Smithfield Township along Routes 209 and 447 as well as into Stroud Township on Routes 611, 209, and 447. The implementation of public water in these areas opened up major commercial business districts in the County.

Economic development continued between 2002 and 2004 when, at the request of Pocono Township and Sanofi Pasteur, the Authority expanded water service into a part of Hamilton Township and all along the Pocono Township Route 611 corridor, again opening new
areas for well-planned commercial development. The initial expansion of the water service area continued through 2006 with an investment by the Authority of over 15 million dollars.

As a result of the unprecedented expansion of its water service area, the Board of Directors, through the guidance of Mr. Brown, approached Stroudsburg Borough to purchase the Water Authority from the Borough in order to provide a voice in its governance to all municipalities served by the Authority. In 2005, the Stroudsburg Municipal Authority became a true Regional Authority owned by five municipalities, the Townships of Stroud, Hamilton, Pocono, Smithfield, and the Borough of Stroudsburg. The reconstituting of the Authority as the Brodhead Creek Regional Authority came at no cost to the new owner municipalities since the buyout of Stroudsburg was and is being paid through the water rates of the customers of the system.

Incredibly, Mr. Brown was able to oversee this dramatic expansion and transformation of the old Stroudsburg Municipal Authority into the Brodhead Creek Regional Authority while maintaining a tight control of water rates. When Mr. Brown became Manager, the Stroudsburg Municipal Authority was charging $52.51 per Equivalent Billing Unit (EBU). Between 1996 and 2000, Mr. Brown sought and obtained from the Board of Directors a reduction in the EBU rate to $43.95. This rate has remained unchanged since 2000. There have been only two minor increases in the usage charge between the years 2006 and 2016. Residential rates are still lower than they were in January of 1995.

Mr. Brown understood that economic development was crucial to the continued viability of the Authority. He also understood that good stewardship of the waters used by the Authority was tantamount to survival of the region. In 2002, the Authority, the County, and the Brodhead Water Association worked together to establish a “Source Water Protection Program” for the Brodhead Creek. As part of this environmental initiative, the Authority instituted the award winning Dr. Waters Educational Program which continues to this day to educate the public about source water protection initiatives. The Authority has also developed an award winning annual newsletter which has been heralded for its clear, concise reporting of the water quality of the water distributed throughout the Authority service area. Mr. Brown was also able to reduce the unaccounted water loss in the system from 48% to less than 8% of production by implementing an aggressive leak control program.

In addition to the above environmental initiatives, the Authority engages in extensive water testing and stream monitoring at significant costs to the Authority. The Authority supports the Brodhead Water Shed Association Stream Watcher Program and the Pocono Creek Gaging Station. The Authority has worked closely with its owner municipalities in developing its property with trails in order to allow for connectivity and greater use of adjoining municipal open space.

Under Mr. Brown’s guidance, the Authority has also added an additional high-yield well. The necessity of finding and developing a new water source was of particular import since the existing facilities were all located in one central area and, therefore, susceptible to pollution or extreme weather events. The production well, well 3, was designed to provide a sustainable water source for the customers of the Authority in the event that the preexisting water sources
were ever compromised or depleted. Long-term strategic planning has been the hallmark of Mr. Brown’s term with the Authority.

The final expansion of the water system to date occurred at the request of Pocono Township and Tobyhanna Township in 2013. At that time, the Authority worked with those municipalities, Kalahari Water Park & Resort, and Pocono Manor Investors to provide water service to the Kalahari project. The Authority received approximately six million dollars of infrastructure in order to service the new Kalahari Water Park and subsequent project phases at no cost to the customers of the Authority. Sewage service was also implemented ensuring that water which was pumped to the top of the mountain is returned to the Brodhead Creek watershed.

The above efforts were overseen by the Authority’s Board of Directors, but the guiding hand in accomplishing all the necessary tasks, including the coordination of multiple partnerships, all fell on the shoulders of Mr. Brown. It was no surprise then in 2008 that four of the owner municipalities approached the Authority about constructing and operating a new regional wastewater treatment plant. While many would have been content with resting on the significant laurels mentioned above, Mr. Brown saw the challenge and the possibilities that a regional wastewater treatment plant presented. Mr. Brown quickly embraced the idea, and with the blessing of the Board of Directors, the Authority assumed control of the Stroudsburg sewer plant in March of 2011. The Authority oversaw a 40 million dollar expansion of the old wastewater treatment plant from a 2 million gallon per day facility into a 4.5 million gallon per day wastewater treatment plant. The expansion of the plant was timely completed and on budget with no litigation. The wastewater treatment plant operates today accepting and treating sewage from five municipalities, once again opening up strategic commercial corridors in Monroe County.

The transformation from the small Stroudsburg Municipal Authority to the growing Brodhead Creek Regional Authority continues today. In 1995, the Stroudsburg Municipal Authority provided water service to Stroudsburg Borough and a small portion of Stroud Township. Today, the Brodhead Creek Regional Authority provides water and wastewater services to six municipalities with distribution lines running over 20 miles in a north/south direction. The Authority is currently in negotiations with Pocono and Jackson Townships and the Pocono Jackson Joint Water Authority to take over water service in that Authority’s water service area.

Now, in 2016, the Authority employs 27 full-time employees and has budgets totaling over 14.7 million dollars. Separate budgets account for receipts and expenditures for water, wastewater, and capital projects. Service is now provided to 5,700 billing accounts, encompassing over 30,000 customers which include over 1,070 industrial commercial and institutional accounts. Because of water saving initiatives, including leak detection, the Authority has managed all of the above while only increasing its daily production of water from 2.2 MGD in 1995 to 2.8 MGD in 2016. Clearly, the vision of Mr. Brown in creating a vital economic force through the Authority while strictly adhering to sound water stewardship practices has been achieved.
The Authority, its Board of Directors, and the customers of the Brodhead Creek Regional Authority owe a great debt of gratitude to the vision and foresight of Kenneth Brown. While his retirement announcement may bring concern and feelings of loss, the Board of Directors are excited for what is to come. Mr. Brown is not leaving in a vacuum. He will be involved in creating and implementing a well thought out strategic plan. If the past is any guide, then Mr. Brown’s strategic transition plan will leave the Authority in good and able hands to continue his work far into the future – no greater legacy could a public servant leave. Thank you Mr. Brown.

Interested parties for the position of Manager of the Brodhead Creek Regional Authority should review the Authority’s website at: www.bcrawater.com for a copy of the job description as well as directions on how to apply for the position. If interested, all letters of interest with resumes should be sent via mail to the Brodhead Creek Regional Authority, Attention: Mary Beth Brush, Human Resource Manager, 410 Mill Creek Road, East Stroudsburg, Pa., 18301, or electronically to: mbrush@bcrawater.com. Questions or inquiries will be answered by Brodhead Creek Regional Authority Chairperson, John H. Parker, Jr. To contact Mr. Parker, please call Mary Beth Brush at (570) 421-3232.