SOUTH NORWALK ELECTRIC AND WATER
GENERAL MANAGER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT
POSITION IN BRIEF

The General Manager/Chief Executive Officer provides leadership and strategic direction for the water and electric utility customers and residents of the Second Taxing District in Norwalk, CT. The Second Taxing District owns and independently operates South Norwalk Electric and Water (SNEW), a water and electric utility. The utility serves 6,500 customers with electric in South Norwalk and over 9,500 water customers throughout neighborhood sections of Norwalk. SNEW’s General Manager/CEO oversees a $26 million budget and 38 full time employees.

THE SECOND TAXING DISTRICT

SNEW’s service areas of South Norwalk, East Norwalk, West Norwalk, Rowayton, Silvermine and Wilton are on the northern shore of Long Island Sound, equidistant from Stamford to the southwest and Fairfield to the northeast along the I – 95 corridor. The area is approximately 50 miles from New York City. SNEW’s central operations are in South Norwalk, a neighborhood of the City of Norwalk, and officially known as the Second Taxing District.

According to Isabel Bullen writing for Discover Norwalk South Norwalk, beginning in 1873 and in the following half-century, became the economic center of Norwalk. With a port and a railroad, it was the center of Norwalk industry, providing employment to thousands of Norwalk factory workers. The City of South Norwalk was authorized by the Legislature in 1875 to provide public water, and in 1892 to provide electrical service to the City of South Norwalk.

Prosperous and self-sufficient, the City of South Norwalk had little financial incentive to join in the 1913 consolidation. Residents feared higher taxes if they lost their city status. In 1902 South Norwalk tried to leave the Town of Norwalk entirely, and, along with East Norwalk, become a completely separate Town. At the time the mayor said that South Norwalk had “a large water system, a splendid electric light plant, a separate sewer system, a public library and a library building and schools second to none.” In 1903 the State legislature passed a bill to create the independent Town of South Norwalk, but it was vetoed by the governor.

With many of its citizens dreaming of independence, there was little support in South Norwalk for the 1913 consolidation proposal and the referendum on consolidation was soundly defeated in South Norwalk. However South Norwalk was outvoted by the rest of the town, and the consolidation became law. The Second Taxing District of the City of Norwalk was constituted under Special Law No. 352 of the Connecticut General Assembly in 1913. Special Law No. 352 consolidated three separate government forms located within the City of Norwalk. The former three government forms continued in part as the First, Second and Third Taxing Districts, each with their own separate Charter. South Norwalk ceased to be a city and became the Second Taxing District of the new City of Norwalk. However, South Norwalk retained much of the infrastructure of a city, as it was proud of its modern electric works and water department, and of its Carnegie library building, newly opened in 1913.

Until the middle of the twentieth century the Second Taxing District remained prosperous. By the 1950s and throughout the 1970s the area saw many changes through cycles of industrial decline, to historic preservation. Today, the heart of South Norwalk has been restored, and the main street – Washington Street – became a shopping and restaurant center for a revitalized South Norwalk. In 1988 the Maritime Aquarium was opened in South Norwalk, in what had been an old factory building. Out of its industrial past the area was reborn as a regional tourist center. Throughout these changes the Second Taxing District Commissioners continued to provide local utilities to the area, and to support the growth of South Norwalk.

Information about the neighborhoods of South Norwalk, East Norwalk, West Norwalk, Rowayton, Silvermine and Wilton – which are in SNEW’s service area – can be found at Discover Norwalk’s The Neighborhoods of Norwalk.

A snapshot of Norwalk’s demographics can be found in the Town’s community profile.
SNEW—Norwalk, CT—General Manager and Chief Executive Officer

**SNEW’S SERVICES**
The Second Taxing District owns and independently operates South Norwalk Electric and Water (SNEW). The utility serves some 9,500 customers with water throughout sections of South Norwalk, East Norwalk, West Norwalk, Rowayton, Silvermine and Wilton, and approximately 6,500 customers with electric in South Norwalk. The District is considered a corporate and politic body, and as such, has the ability and power to sue and be sued, acquire and sell real estate, possess a common seal, levy taxes, “together with all the rights, powers, franchises, privileges and immunities granted to the former City of South Norwalk …”.

The District is governed by a Board of seven elected Commissioners, who each serve six-year terms, and also serve as Water and Electric Commissioners. The Commission has the power and authority to handle the affairs of the District in much the same manner as selectmen of towns. The District also maintains parks and other public spaces in the South Norwalk community. (Sources: CT Municipal Electric Energy Cooperative and SNEW)

**THE ORGANIZATION AND GENERAL MANAGER/CEO POSITION**
SNEW’s General Manager/CEO oversees a $26 million budget and 38 full time employees. Two General Managers have served SNEW in the past 50 years.

As for financial management, the next General Manager should know that the District is comprised of three separate accounting funds: The Second Taxing District General Fund; the Water Fund; and the Electric Fund. The District’s accounting system is a multi-company, computerized accounting system. The General Fund utilizes the following modules: general ledger, accounts payable and purchasing.

Water and Electric utilize the following modules: general ledger, accounts payable, purchasing, accounts receivable, inventory control and a project controller. A full-function computerized customer information system, developed by National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) was deployed in the past few months and is used for both Water and Electric customer billing. The system is anticipated to be replaced with a modernized system with additional capabilities in the current fiscal year.

As it concerns personnel administration, the General Manager has six direct reports including the Director of Water Operations, Director of Electric Operations, Director of Finance and Services, Director of Customer Care, Key Accounts Manager and Office Manager/Executive Assistant. Most of these directors are new to their positions within the last six months – three years.

In December 2017, a number of employees voted to name the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 420 as their collective bargaining agent. Negotiations began in February 2018, and continued into early calendar year 2019. Twenty-five bargaining sessions were held between February 2018 and February 2019. A settlement was reached and was ratified by union membership and approved by the District Commission in March 2019. (Source: SNEW CAFR)

**OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**
SNEW’s General Manager is the agency’s chief executive and leader. Developing and cultivating relationships with the Commissioners, Directors, and all levels of employees, both union and non-union employees alike, is paramount. In addition, the General Manager/CEO is an organizational and community leader, one that is expected to interact with a variety of community stakeholders. Proven communication, interpersonal and human relations skills, and the ability to interrelate with a wide variety of people are all important and desirable qualities for the next General Manager.

Key issues identified as areas of importance include:

**Strategic Planning.** While the Second Taxing District has been providing electric and water for more than 100 years, the merger of the two utilities came about within the last 20 years. Merging organizational cultures and mapping out a path that treats both utilities as equal entities has been a challenge largely due to time constraints and issues of immediacy stepping to the forefront. Yet, Commissioners and employees alike recognize a need for the agency to spend the time and resources to develop a strategic plan that will chart out a course for increased organizational effectiveness and efficiency, as well as a more systematic approach to infrastructure and capital planning. Consequently, the next General Manager can expect to lead the effort to develop and implement a multi-year strategic plan.
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES (cont’d)

Recent Initiatives, Economic Conditions and Outlook. According to its recent comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR), SNEW has continued activities in support of construction at the SoNo Collection mall, and has invested approximately $1.6 million in new facilities and system reinforcement to install a dual-loop redundant system to provide electricity service to the mall. Water facilities have been installed to provide for potable water and fire service. SNEW successfully supported the construction schedule with no delays. In order to complete construction project, SNEW will install one remaining multi-position switch when it is received from the manufacturer.

SNEW intensified its ongoing efforts to improve water infrastructure, despite the challenges of operating a water utility in the current rate environment. A number of initiatives were begun and/or completed, including:

- Installation of a new water main under the Norwalk River to serve East Norwalk.
- Replacement and upgrade of the membrane filters at the Wilton water treatment facility.
- Improved production metering and pumping efficiency at the filtration plant.
- Numerous reservoir and dam improvement projects.
- Aggressive repair of main and service leaks.
- Continuing efforts to manage THHM (disinfection byproducts) levels in the water system.
- Coordinating SNEW’s response to and participation in State and local efforts to understand the impact of PFAS chemicals in the State’s water supply.

Looking ahead, according to the CAFR, the Second Taxing District is not likely to experience major population or commercial growth. However, a number of housing and commercial projects are currently under development in the District, which will add modest numbers of customers and concomitant sales.

Demand for water has exhibited a mixed trend over the last decade, with declines resulting from conservation and plumbing efficiency standards continuing to have an impact on usage, but also exhibiting impacts due to rainfall cycles. Electric sales have been largely stagnant over the same period, reflecting increasing average power usage by customers, somewhat offset by statewide and national conservation efforts.

The “SoNo Collection,” an upscale, department store-anchored mall (with Nordstrom and Bloomingdale’s as anchor tenants), has added over 700,000 square feet of retail space to the area. SNEW supported the development with major infrastructure investment, both on- and off-site, during the construction phase. The mall had its grand opening in October 2019. When fully occupied and operational, the SoNo Collection could add as much as three to four megawatts to SNEW’s peak demand and 15 million kWh in sales.

The Utility’s Finances. SNEW’s current financial condition and future position will take an adept hand and strong financial leadership on the part of the new General Manager. The electric utility is in solid shape. The water utility, however, is shouldering considerable debt from a new, $20 million water treatment plant brought on-line less than 10 years ago. In the meantime, SNEW is also addressing, in a pay-as-you-go fashion, the replacement of older mains, filters, and water meters. Rates for both utilities are considered competitive, but must be measured alongside its customers’ ability to pay.

Staff Development, leadership and labor-management relations. The new General Manager is expected to step into the position and provide the leadership to identify, filter, and address organizational concerns that may be impacting the agency. Team-building, too, is important for SNEW’s directors, having joined SNEW within the last three years. Some have tenure of less than six months. Overall, the agency’s workforce has turned over about 50% in the last five years.

The General Manager will be charged with advancing the organization to new levels of success. Along these lines, the next General Manager will formalize programs to recruit, train and develop personnel in the agency and identify critical elements for developing and preparing future workers and leaders. With working in a collective bargaining environment, the new General Manager will need to appreciate and honor the fundamental provisions of the collective bargaining agreements, but seek and value input from all segments of the organization to develop the organization, and the talents of its staff.
THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Must haves:
Candidates should also have an equivalent combination of education, training and experience which provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities, as outlined below:

• A bachelor’s degree in engineering, business administration, computer science or related field. An MBA and/or Professional Engineering designation is preferred.

• Ten years of progressively responsible and technically complex public sector engineering, administration, public works and/or utility managerial experience, or any equivalent combination of education and experience, is desired.

• Experience managing a public water and/or electric utility.

• Working knowledge of federal, state and local policies, practices, and standards used in providing public water and electric utility services.

• Experience and ability to formulate, initiate, administer and deploy policies, procedures and equipment affecting all elements of a public utility.

• Have experience in preparing and presenting complex department and utility budgets, complemented with an understanding of the principles of government budgeting, recognizing the long-term cost implications of proposed new programs.

• Experience as a skilled financial manager including long-range capital planning.

• Have familiarity with systems and metrics which measure the success and effectiveness of organizational programs.
Leadership Skills and Management Style

- Have a demonstrated ability to provide strategic leadership and long-range planning practices.
- Have a track record of assessing the skills and abilities of existing personnel in an effort to maximize their talent and expertise, including opportunities for employees to take on new challenges and “stretch” as professionals.
- Have a professional record of diplomacy and respectful candor with elected officials, customers and employees.
- Have excellent oral and written communication skills with the ability to effectively, openly, and with clarity, relate to a range of stakeholders, with a dedication to transparency in public utilities.
- Have experience in and knowledge of employee and labor relations and possess a reputation for dealing openly and fairly with both individual employees and employee groups.
- Experience evaluating organizational structure effectiveness and staffing needs and implementing changes to meet current and future fiscal and program service needs.
- Be flexible, have an open, friendly personality and management style and be one who can establish trust quickly with others; have excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to work with differing personalities.
- Be an effective delegator, allowing latitude to staff to carry out their responsibilities independently while remaining knowledgeable and accountable for the utilities’ operations.
- Have strong analytical skills, developing reports and well-reasoned recommendations based on a thorough analysis of the relevant data; and be able to present these recommendations in a logical, understandable manner.
- Be proactive, anticipatory and innovative.
- Be a team-oriented, transformational leader who can coach and develop employees to manage organizational change, and who can motivate employees to meet their individual performance goals.
COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS
The starting salary range is $200,000 - $250,000 +/- DOQ. SNEW offers a highly competitive benefit package.

HOW TO APPLY
Candidates should apply by February 24, 2020 with resume, cover letter and contact information for five work-related references to www.GovHRjobs.com to the attention of:

Heidi Voorhees, President and Lee Szymborski, Senior Vice President
GovHR USA
630 Dundee Road, #130
Northbrook, IL 60062
Tel: 847-380-3197.

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