This reorganization will also support the work of the CWD Turnaround Project as it moves into Phase 2, primarily focused on the installation of automated meter readers and the supporting technology.

CLEVELAND – On Tuesday, Mayor Frank G. Jackson announced the first phase of a restructuring plan for the Department of Public Utilities designed to focus the organization on customer service delivery. To support this move, Jackson appointed Ollie Shaw as assistant director of Public Utilities for customer service operations.

Key support functions, including Human Resources, Information Technology, Finance and Public Affairs, are also being consolidated and will report directly to Barry Withers, the director of Public Utilities.

This first phase of reorganization will begin in the Cleveland Division of Water (CWD) and builds on two years worth of work by both external efficiency consultants and employee project teams in the Department of Public Utilities.

“My primary goal is to create a new organizational structure that is more efficient, delivers excellent customer service, and is more accountable to customers. By consolidating customer service and support functions at the department level, we are re-focusing the Cleveland Division of Water on its core mission, which is to provide high quality, safe and clean water to our customers,” said Jackson.

“For the Department as a whole, we will improve the efficiency of service delivery by leveraging resources across divisions.”

Key among the structural changes outlined by Jackson is the elevation of oversight of customer service functions to the department level. Under the new structure, Assistant Director Shaw will assume direct control of CWD’s customer service operations and operational oversight of customer service in Cleveland Public Power and Water Pollution Control (WPC).

Shaw will be responsible for managing the meter operations, customer billing, customer call center, and collections.

The critical support functions that are being consolidated across the department will each have a lead staff member in the director’s office. Existing managers in these areas have been reclassified into other positions in the organization that better align their individual skills with job responsibilities.

Jackson also appointed Jason Wood, PhD, as chief of Public Affairs and Keith Cromer as interim chief financial officer. Wood holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Cincinnati and has extensive government, consulting, and non-profit experience. Cromer previously worked for the State of Ohio Auditor before joining the Department of Public Utilities Fiscal Control section as the comptroller.

Until filled on a permanent basis, daily human resources, and IT functions will be overseen by Assistant Director Shaw because they are vital to the continuation of customer service improvements.

Jackson stated that he is implementing this restructuring plan so that the Department of Public Utilities and CWD can maintain and build upon the customer service improvements made over the past several months and the ongoing work of the CWD Customer Service Turnaround Project, which involves a combination of technical system and process fixes designed to revitalize CWD's customer service operations.

Through the combined efforts of external consultants and CWD employees, since the beginning of the Turnaround Project in June 2011, CWD has reduced average wait times in its call center to approximately 30 seconds, down from almost 16 minutes in January. The number of problematic bills has been reduced and disconnections for non-payment are occurring at the highest rate in four years.

This reorganization will also support the work of the CWD Turnaround Project as it moves into Phase 2, primarily focused on the installation of automated meter readers and the supporting technology.