

Wastewater Treatment Facility Long-Range Planning Workshop
May 17, 2023
City Hall Council Chambers

1. Welcome, Call the workshop to order.

President Panetta called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

2. Roll Call:

Board Members

Thomas Panetta

Earl Webb

D. Preston Lee, P.E.

Richard Nichols

Ex-Officio Members

Andrew Williams, Mayor

Austin Calaman, General Manager

Robin Davis, Assistant General Manager

Michael Hoffman, Legal counsel

Others

Hans Medlarz, Sussex County

Todd Lawson, Sussex County

Tom Biagioli, GHD

Aaron Mushrush, Cape Gazette

Sharon Sexton, BPW

Kritina Keller, BPW

Alan Roth

Sumner Crosby

Mark Prouty

Madeline Nichols

Robert Kennedy

Stephen Hazzard

Jerry Virden

President Panetta noted that last Saturday was the BPW Board of Directors election. D. Preston Lee, P.E. and Barbara Curtis were voted onto the Board. Regular Meeting moved Thursday, May 25th at 3:00pm.

3. Continued discussion of the long-range planning on the Lewes BPW wastewater treatment facility.

President Panetta stated that this is the fifth workshop for the WWTF long-range planning. GHD was first issued to the public in January 2023 and is the basis for the options and research. The BPW will continue to hold monthly WWTF workshops.

Sussex County provided a tour of the Wolfe Neck facility to BPW, city council members, and interested residents showing the area, irrigations, and maps of sea level rise. Mr. Webb stated that evergreens and deciduous trees will be planted in some areas and a walking path will be added in the back. The plant cannot be seen because it is surrounded by trees. Mr. Medlarz stated that Sussex County has a commitment to the state and to the forest to accommodate the walking path. The ability to store and allow time for discharge by containment can be seen with the size of the property. It is advantageous and allows for design options. BPW cannot

accomplish this at current facility and amount of land needed would be cost prohibitive for new site.

BPW staff and Board members met with several municipalities and discussed WWTF long-range plan with similar wastewater treatment agreements that would be necessary for option 3. Allows for lessons learned. These discussions will help shape a draft agreement that would be used to outline key business terms with Sussex County and the Lewes BPW. Mr. Lee stated that the terms of the agreement is a concern of the public and the Board. This is a crucial aspect of the study and to move forward with option 3.

President Panetta presented an updated financial impact slide. There was a calculation error in option 2A. Not materially significant in the ranking. The average sewer bill is \$77.49(4,000 gallons a month. Applied percentages of estimated costs for each option:

Option 1: \$108.50 to \$120.11

Option 2a: \$333.21 to \$344.83

Option 2b: \$255.72 to \$267.35

Option 2C: \$391.34 to \$402.96

Option 3a/b: \$77.49 to \$89.12

Individual bills will vary depending on usage. Numbers come from Appendix D and E in GHD report. Cost based on current dollars if project was implemented today. No future escalation. Time frame for any project is 5 years. Costs are subject to change depending on the design details. Other cost impacts could include rate increases, supply chain, capital projects, etc. Option 2 and 3 do not include the cost to operate BPW pump stations. Part of capital budget not operating.

Mr. Lee noted he is concerned with publishing the numbers because so much is unknown. President Panetta feels that it is important and allows the public some perspective on the costs of each option.

President Panetta stated that the Board's focus is on Option 3 a and b with Sussex County. Moving forward will be dependent upon the negotiations with Sussex County. This does not mean it is a done deal.

Sumner Crosby, Pilottown Road, stated that tour showed him that there was an opportunity for hybrid options. Discussions were had about environmental opportunities to solve different issues simultaneously. Mr. Crosby referred to purple pipe. Mr. Crosby stated that DNREC is interested in the idea of deep-water injection including treated effluent, to keep saltwater intrusion from water supply well. Not part of the GHD study but the BPW and Sussex County may benefit from consideration of other opportunities. Purple Pipe could be used to irrigate using treated effluent. There are not as many constraints at the Wolf Neck location as the BPW does in Lewes. Mr. Crosby stated is number one concern is environmental and based on the numbers provided, option 2 is "crazy town".

Mr. Crosby questioned what is going to trigger shifting focus to the other options. President Panetta stated that looking at the options will depend on the agreement with the county.

President Panetta stated that purple pipe is not a new concept. Reuse of wastewater is dependent on the cost of fresh water and would require changes to the system. Purple pipe is worth continuing to explore. Mr. Crosby stated that there is time before final design decisions are made and suggested keeping minds open.

President Panetta stated that discharging to the canal is not impacting sea level rise. Non existing that the BPW is impacting sea level rise by putting water into canal. Mr. Crosby agrees and is more concerned about adding nutrients to the canal.

Mr. Webb likes the idea of purple pipe and the opportunities that may be available while doing other projects.

Mark Prouty, Wolf Point, is concerned with high water events and saline water intrusion into the sewer system. Lagoons would make it possible to shunt saline influent before it impacts the wastewater system, and this should be part of the consideration. The Wolfe Neck plant has this benefit. It is Mr. Prouty's opinion that in option 3a and 3b the BPW would pay for the operational costs and the county would pay for the capital, is a benefit. There are ways to build a treatment facility that would decrease operation costs, i.e., power cost. The negotiations for the agreement will be important to decrease the operation costs by a higher capital expenditure. Mr. Prouty suggested constructing windmills in the fields, which not impact the growth of the trees or the discharge of the effluent via the spray irrigation.

Alan Roth submitted online question: "Early on, I raised the issue of BPW's participation in the governance of the new facility, so that Lewes is not a mere customer (a/k/a supplicant) in matters regarding O&M and other matters potentially affecting both our rates and our environment - especially years after the principals currently sitting in the room are long gone and memories of these lovely discussions are lost. There are various ways an agreement can be structured to ensure BPW has a real seat at the table for such decisions, even if the County "owns" the plant. Are these options a part of the drafting process for BPW's proposal to the County?" President Panetta stated that other municipalities have similar agreements and at this point, the discussions are in the early stages. The Board has heard the concern and will be a part of the agreement.

Aaron Mushrush, Cape Gazette, submitted an online question: "Is it correct to say that the next steps will be conversations with the county regarding options 3a and 3b? Am I to assume that options 1 and 2 are off the table unless there is a major breakdown in talks with the County?" President Panetta stated that options 3a and 3b is the direction the Board is moving in. President Panetta stated that unless something comes up, then the Board is not putting any more money into option 1 or 2 at this time.

Next workshop is scheduled for June 14, 2023, at 6:30pm in the Rollins Center.

Public comment remains open until June 2, 2023.

The BPW will work with Sussex County on a draft agreement, emphasis on draft.

Jerry Virden, Kings Highway, stated that he likes the idea of the purple pipe and of the windmills. Mr. Virden is an advocate of compromise. BPW needs to protect the water supply.

President Panetta stated that the BPW has commissioned the Delaware Geological Society to conduct an updated Wellhead Protection Study. This is a separate issue from WWTF planning.

4. Executive Session

ACTION: *Mr. Nichols motioned to adjourn to executive session. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.*

President Panetta adjourned to executive session at 7:34 pm.

5. Return to open session.

ACTION: *Mr. Nichols motioned to return to open session. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.*

6. Discussion and action on items from Executive Session, if applicable.

7. Adjournment

ACTION: *Mr. Nichols motioned to return to open session. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.*

President Panetta adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Sharon Sexton

Executive Assistant