

**CITY OF LEWES  
BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
February 26, 2025**

The Wednesday, February 26, 2025 regular meeting of the Lewes Board of Public Works was held at 4:00 P.M. in Lewes City Hall and via Zoom.

**1. WELCOME, CALL MEETING TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

President Panetta called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M. and led the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

**2. ROLL CALL**

**Board Members:**

Thomas Panetta  
Barbara Curtis  
Richard Nichols  
Bob Heffernan

**Absent:**

D. Preston Lee, P.E.

**Ex-Officio Members:**

Andrew Williams, Mayor  
Robin Davis, Interim General Manager  
Michael Hoffman, Legal Counsel

**Others Present:**

Kimberly Bellere, BPW Finance Director  
Sharon Sexton, BPW Special Projects Coordinator  
Jeffrey Kerin, Inframark  
Nathan Laucks, Inframark Regional Manager  
Ben Hearn, GMB  
Josh Gritton, BPW IT Manager  
Jackie Doherty, Recording Secretary

**3. CONSENT AGENDA**

**a. Receive Vice President Report**

**b. Receive Secretary Report**

- Approval of minutes from September 11, 2024 Finance Committee Minutes, December 12, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes, and February 3, 2025 Finance Committee Minutes

**c. Receive Treasurer Report**

**d. Receive Assistant Treasurer Report**

Ms. Curtis noted corrections to the December 12, 2024 meeting minutes. Mr. Heffernan requested the Treasurer's report be pulled for review.

**ACTION:** *Mr. Nichols made a motion to approve the consent agenda; Ms. Curtis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a vote of four (4) with Mr. Lee absent.*

In answer to Mr. Heffernan's question about the decrease in revenue and expenses listed in the Treasurer's report, Ms. Bellere stated the projected year-end amounts are included in the quarterly update, and she will be providing this information.

**ACTION:** *Mr. Nichols made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report; Ms. Curtis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a vote of four (4) with Mr. Lee absent.*

#### **4. Receive the Inframark Report**

- **January Veolia Report, Work Orders, Flow, DMR**

Mr. Kerin reported:

- The missed sample due to a lab error discussed at the December meeting is included in the DMR report, a letter was submitted, and the issue has been resolved; this is considered a missed sample and is noted in the DMR report.
- Burned-out UB bulbs were replaced last month; the quote to replace UB panel system was received by Mr. Davis today; quote was for an inline system as opposed to an open ditch for easier, lower cost maintenance using half the number of bulbs; replacement cost is included in the Capital Budget.
- Pump Station #15 rebuilt pump and new piping were installed; failed floats at Hoornkill pump station were replaced.
- Contacted STH about the Tower Hill pump station, and they will be changing the valve for the swing arm sensors causing pumps to fail, tomorrow morning.
- Blower system for Pump Station #19 has been installed, except the electrical system delayed due to rain and snow, and the new panel will be installed next week.
- Spike of 10" for effluent due to rain and snow noted on Trend Chart.
- The reason why the work orders completed for the prior month only list the proactive and not the corrective actions is because there was a change in the person entering the data, this is a transitional issue that will be corrected.

Mr. Kerin reviewed the new system used to clean the membranes. The tanks are drained several times, back flushed with clean water, followed by chemical cleaning for the membranes instead of physically picking the membranes clean. This has resulted in lower costs for man hours and maintenance. Full cycle cleaning is now three days compared to three weeks.

Mr. Kerin reported the kick plate repair to the crane has resolved all issues.

President Panetta commented on the cleanliness of the plant being the cleanest he has seen in his eight years on the Board.

## **5. Receive the President's Report**

President Panetta reported he did the quarterly walkthrough of the plant along with Mr. Heffernan; attended meetings with the City about the Army Reserve Building and joint sessions; conducted six screening interviews for General Manager candidate; interviewed five for General Manager with the Board during Executive Session.

President Panetta stated he met with the County concerning the wastewater treatment issue with Rehoboth Beach. Last Friday they declined joint use of the outfall with a vote of 5 to 2. We will now review the alternatives. On March 11<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 P.M. in the Rollins Center, there will be a workshop meeting to present the pros and cons of moving forward and ask for public comments.

## **6. Receive the General Manager's Report**

Mr. Davis reported Teal has completed the Canal Crossing Project connection on Gills Neck Road and installation of pipe and connection on American Legion Road. Filling the pipe began on Monday to be followed by purging air from the pipe, pressure test, bacteria testing, ODW approval, five service lines on American Legion Road, all to be totally up and running. The timeline is about three weeks. There will be a 2" curb connection to the line on Gills Neck for irrigation purposes, as request by the City. The City has also discussed having a water bottle filling station at the end of the trail.

Wellfield Header Project in the process of having the individual wells tied into the main line and all should be completed soon. Pre-construction meeting on January 3<sup>rd</sup> for the Water Tower Project; obtained required building permit from Sussex County; contractor is submitting cutsheets to GMB for review.

Mr. Davis continued stating he attended Mayor and City Council meeting for work on the Pump Station Resiliency Study, joint meeting with the City, progress meetings for ongoing development projects, Finance Committee meeting, met with GMB and the City Building Department to discuss ongoing stormwater paving project on Oceanview Boulevard.

## **7. Receive Finance Manager's Report**

- **Revenue and Expense Report**
- **Year-to-Date Report**
- **Cash Graph**

Ms. Bellere reported utilities are performing better than budget with electric usage higher in January. There is still an issue with the state park water meter, but it should be resolved after the meter reading this month. Investments made about \$450,000 year-to-date with interest and change in market value. The cash balance is \$4M, and there will be a transfer to the Money Market account.

President Panetta spoke about the electric revenue increases due to lower-than-normal temperatures in January and February and not because there was a rate increase.

Ms. Bellere stated purchase power is 20% over budget because of increased usage.

## **Presentation**

### **8. Presentation of the Strategic Plan by Spotts, Stevens, and McCoy.**

#### **INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/ACTION (Spotts, Stevens, and McCoy)**

Patrick McCoy was present via Zoom providing the report with changes to the plan as requested by the Board in January. This final plan includes strategic objectives for the five-year plan.

After discussion, it was decided to accept the plan and begin work on an implementation plan.

**ACTION:** *Ms. Curtis made a motion to approve the plan; Mr. Nichols seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a vote of four (4) with Mr. Lee absent.*

## **Old Business**

### **9. Open forum/general discussion on the WWTP long range plan update.**

#### **INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/ACTION (Thomas Panetta)**

President Panetta stated the workshop meeting scheduled for March 11<sup>th</sup> will include discussion of environmental and cost options.

### **10. Open forum/general discussion on the Indian River Plant shutdown and the impact to BPW rates. INFORMATION/DISCUSSION (Robin Davis and Kimberley Bellere)**

Ms. Bellere reported she attended the recent DEMEC meeting stating presently we in a holding pattern until it is determined by audit if the \$3.3M is an offset of the payments we have been making. DEMEC will then vote on the use of any excess funds as a resiliency fund or to reduce rates. Preliminary numbers for capacity auctions are \$700 with current numbers in the \$200s.

## **New Business**

### **11. Open forum/general discussion on possible upgrade options for Pump Station #4.**

#### **INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/ACTION (Robin Davis and GMB)**

Mr. Hearn stated there was a discussion at the December meeting regarding improvements to the pump station. The question is whether the improvements will be postponed due to the Rehoboth Beach decision. Review of the list for 16 pump stations may wait until the resiliency study is complete and grant applications are submitted. DEMA has stated the study needs to be completed to apply for the grants. There was discussion at previous meetings about improvements to Pump Stations #3, #4, #5 and #8, and we are currently reviewing this with the electrical engineer.

Comments and concerns included:

- Why Pump Stations #4 and #8 are not considered a priority since wastewater will be going to Wolfe Neck regardless of the Rehoboth Beach decision.
- Mr. Lee has stated upgrades are needed for Pump Station #4 as the regional station to include a new station at the site.

- Cost-effective solutions.
- Options to be reviewed in phases to decide on improvements, replacements, and relocations as presented by Mr. Hearn; Phase I to begin immediately, cost is \$22,500.
- Is there a safe location on the other side of the canal to build a new Pump Station #8 that is capable of carrying the flow from the town side and beach side to Wolfe Neck.

**ACTION:** Ms. Curtis made a motion to approve the GMB proposal dated February 18, 2025 for Phase I Hydraulic Study of Pump Stations #4 and #8 at a cost of \$22,500; Mr. Nichols seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a vote of four (4) with Mr. Lee absent.

## **12. Open forum/general discussion on undergrounding electric on Fourth Street.**

### **INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/ACTION (Barbara Curtis)**

Ms. Curtis reported the DEMA grant application must be submitted by March 18<sup>th</sup> for a decision by September. The engineering work would be completed in order to submit for the construction funds in time to coincide with the construction work for the piping. GMB cannot have the proposal completed by March 18<sup>th</sup>. Funds are on hold with the new Administration, and schedules may be postponed for a few months. One option is to install conduits funded by BPW with the undergrounding done at a later time when grant funds are available. The engineering design grant application is sent to DEMA who will forward to FEMA for funding.

Comments and discussion included:

- Number of conduits; will Comcast and Verizon agree to change their cables.
- Approximate cost for conduits only is \$130,000, which was the amount for Pilottown Village.
- After conduits are installed, electric wires and cable will remain on the poles; it is not recommended that conduit for Comcast and Verizon be installed on the same line.
- Sargent & Lundy to write a proposal with their engineering costs for GMB to submit the application.
- Main concern by DEMA is resiliency.

Mr. Hoffman stated the agreements with Comcast and Verizon need to be reviewed.

Mr. Hearn spoke about the timing of the Fourth Street construction. The concern is the application for design may change construction dates. The suggestion is for BPW to fund the design portion, with the first step to obtain a cost estimate for the design.

**ACTION:** Mr. Heffernan made a motion to approve obtaining a cost estimate for an engineering design from Sargent and Lundy; Ms. Curtis seconded the motion.

Discussion Included:

- Concern that the conduit installed underground will remain empty for a long time due to the high cost of undergrounding.
- Verizon may consider replacing the cable with fiber.
- Review of the sequence of new conduit connections to the transformer with at most one or two hours of lost power to residents.
- Will Sargent and Lundy charge a fee to give the cost estimate; \$10,000 limit.

*After discussion, Mr. Heffernan made an amendment to his motion to direct the General Manager to pursue the cost estimate not to exceed the amount of \$10,000. Ms. Curtis approved the amendment to her second. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of four (4) with Mr. Lee absent.*

**13. Open forum/general discussion on 2025/2026 Capital Budget.  
INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/ACTION (Kimberly Bellere)**

Ms. Curtis questioned the number for the saltwater monitoring well as low. In the discussion with DNREC, they suggested three wells.

Mr. Davis stated the estimate is for one well. The \$16,000 estimate is for monitoring devices for the wells. There is a secured spot on the Mitchell's Corner property with an easement. There was previous discussion regarding repurposing the existing well on Schley Avenue, but this will be a different price. There is also an existing well at the Rollins Center. Another well monitoring will be needed at the New Road and Canary Creek area.

Mr. Davis continued with a review of the projects that are currently funded and those that will be funded by BPW. There was a discussion about undergrounding an electric line beginning on Burton Avenue ending between the school property and Mariner's Retreat for accessibility. It has been difficult since the school added a track and Mariner's Retreat was built to have our trucks drive into these areas. This has been on the Capital Budget for a few years and may be an issue in the future. The Itron system equipment is for water and electric.

Mr. Gritton stated the Itron system equipment will still be needed with the addition of AMI to assist in the walk-by and trouble readings. There is an issue when the water pits are filled and the problems with transmitting through water. The system change is needed soon.

Mr. Gritton explained how the two hand-held readers attached to a stronger antenna operate.

**ACTION:** *Ms. Curtis made a motion to approve the 2025/2026 Fiscal Year Capital Budget; Mr. Nichols seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a vote of four (4) with Mr. Lee absent.*

**14. Open forum/general discussion of the 2025/2026 O+M Budget.  
INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/ACTION (Kimberly Bellere)**

Ms. Bellere provided the presentation, breakdown of accounts for each category, graphs to show comparisons from last year, composite of revenues and expenses, O+M notes, actual cash reserve policy, and the O+M revenue and expense budget.

Ms. Bellere reviewed the following:

- Electric--\$1.8M surplus.
- Capital—self funding \$1.1M; \$62,000 in developer projects.
- Final cash investment balance at the end of this coming fiscal year \$3.6M in unrestricted and \$435,000 in restricted.
- Over the needs for operations according to Cash Reserve Policy, and underfunded in capital with a total shortage of \$45,000.



Water review:

- Water--\$3.2M surplus
- Capital—self funding \$465,000; debt payments \$146,000 including one payment for Canal Crossing this year; \$220,000 in developer projects.
- End of next fiscal year \$2.5M in unrestricted \$1.8M for restricted.
- Over the Cash Reserve Policy requirement.

Wastewater review:

- Wastewater--\$1.4M surplus.
- Capital--\$645,000 for cash funded Capital Budget.
- \$1M in debt payments including one payment for Headworks this year; \$180,00 for developer projects.
- Cash investment balance \$2.4M in unrestricted and \$276,000 in restricted.
- About \$1M shortage for wastewater funding.

Stormwater review:

- Stormwater--\$165,000 surplus.
- \$275,000 self-funding Capital Budget; \$12,000 in developer projects.
- End of fiscal year \$125,000 in unrestricted and \$25,000 in restricted.
- Since there is no impact fee for stormwater, there is no way to build capital reserves and will always show as a shortage; \$742.00 shortage. The policy for cash reserves will be reviewed by the Finance Committee.

Ms. Bellere provided a PowerPoint Presentation with a detailed review of the O+M Revenue and Expense Budget for Electric, Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater. Also included was a report showing the impact on residential customers regarding costs, and a report on unknowns and risks.

Ms. Bellere stated all reports were reviewed by the Finance Committee and approved for presentation to the Board today. The budgets show BPW is sound and can afford everything needed and all projects.

Mr. Hoffman recommended the budget be accepted today and reviewed for any changes and approval at the March meeting.

**ACTION:** *Mr. Nichols made a motion to accept the budget presentation; Ms. Curtis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a vote of four (4) with Mr. Lee absent.*

**15. Interview of General Manager Candidate. (Thomas Panetta)**

President Panetta stated RKL, who we have used before for recruitment services, provided seven candidates. Official screening was done, and there are now five candidates. These five were interviewed by the Board during Executive Session, and we found that Robin Davis is the best qualified. We will interview Mr. Davis today, and the public may also ask questions.

Mr. Hoffman advised that under FOIA, a public body is required to present its finalist in an open session for the final interview and public comments.

President Panetta conducted the interview for Mr. Davis.

Mr. Davis spoke about his time as BPW's Assistant General Manager and Interim General Manager over the past three years, his time in the Air Force, previous work for the Town of Milton, and in the Building Department for the City of Lewes. Mr. Davis gave a review of his work experience stating he has had a Master Plumber license for the past 20 years.

**16. Open forum/general discussion on General Manager position.  
INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/ACTION (Thomas Panetta)**

**ACTION:** *Ms. Curtis made a motion to approve the hiring of Mr. Davis for the open position of General Manager of the Lewes Board of Public Works; Mr. Nichols seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a vote of four (4) with Mr. Lee absent.*

Mr. Hoffman stated the question now is does the Board want to proceed with the contract discussion for approval.

President Panetta provided the Board with the draft contract for Mr. Davis. The key points state this is a renewable contract, and salary is \$150,000 per year.

**ACTION:** *Mr. Heffernan made a motion to approve the contract; Mr. Nichols seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a vote of four (4) with Mr. Lee absent.*

Mr. Davis accepted.

**17. BOARD OR STAFF REQUESTS FOR AGENDA ITEM(S).**

Future agenda items include approval of the O+M budget in March and direction regarding Pump Station #3; standing items to review grant applications and a report from the Financial Committee.

**18. CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

No comments today.

**19. CALL TO THE PRESS**

No comments today.

**20. Executive Session**

**ACTION:** *Mr. Nichols made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session at 7:00 P.M.; Ms. Curtis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.*

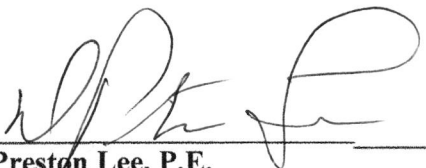
**21. Return to open session.**

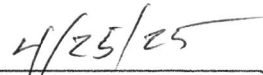
**22. Discussion and action on items from Executive Session, if applicable.**



- 23. CALL TO THE PUBLIC**  
**24. ADJOURNMENT**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jackie Doherty, Recording Secretary  
Lewes Board of Public Works

  
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D. Preston Lee, P.E.

  
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Date