

Lewes Board of Public Works
Regular Board Meeting
Meeting minutes
January 28, 2026

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

President Thomas Panetta called the January 28, 2026, Regular Meeting of the Lewes Board of Public Works to order at 4:00 PM. The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence.

2. ROLL CALL

All Board members were present at the commencement of the meeting. Treasurer Richard Nichols departed during the meeting.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

Action: Barbara Curtis, Vice President, moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Richard Nichols seconded the motion. Motion Passed unanimously.

4. Call to the Public

No members of the public addressed the Board during this portion of the meeting.

5. Receive the Inframark Report

Jeffrey Kerin informed the Board that his office is relocating to Elkton, Maryland, and he will be serving as Area Manager while remaining available to the Lewes plant. Matt Davis was introduced as the newly promoted Project Manager who will be on-site in Lewes. Davis has nearly 20 years of experience and is a state-licensed operator in Delaware.

Davis provided an update on ongoing and completed projects. The compactor remains down and is operating only in manual mode due to a suspected PLC issue. A JWC technician is needed to diagnose the proprietary system. Keystone has been unable to resolve the problem, and staff is concerned that turning the unit off may result in it not restarting.

Davis reported on various maintenance activities, including installation of a new mixer in the EQ tank, membrane swaps, cassette recovery cleaning, and multiple pump and float replacements at various stations. Pump Station 17 continues to be a significant problem due to ragging from non-flushable wipes. Two pumps failed simultaneously in January due to massive rag clumps, and both will require rebuilding at approximately \$7,500 in total cost. The station has already incurred \$30,000 to \$40,000 in pump rebuild costs over recent years. The pumps at Station 17 date to 1984.

Vice President Curtis inquired about various work orders and raised questions about terminology and repair details. Davis and Kerin clarified that "sand cleaned" in one work order was a typographical error for "inspected and cleaned," and that Station 6 on Connecticut Avenue has a pump issue that cannot be fixed without scheduling a vacuum truck due to failed isolation valves.

The Board discussed the ongoing problem at Station 17 and the need to either eliminate the station or implement a solution to address the chronic ragging issue. Staff noted that plans to address Station 17

have been on the agenda multiple times. President Panetta suggested a public education campaign targeting the specific areas contributing to the ragging problem, particularly neighborhoods served by Stations 17 and 19.

6. Receive the Presidents Report

President Panetta reported attending the leadership meeting to set the agenda for the joint meeting with the Mayor and City Council. He participated in EOC briefings for the recent storm and noted that the wastewater treatment facility lease has been signed by both parties and recorded. The next step involves approximately two years of canal studies by Sussex County. The County is obtaining revised designs from GHD, and design meetings involving President Panetta and Secretary Lee will commence thereafter.

7. Receive the General Manager's Report

Robin Davis, General Manager, presented her report, which included detailed departmental activities for office administration, IT, finance, electric, water, and sewer departments. The electric department conducted nine callouts during the reporting period and is performing preventive tree trimming and transformer swap-outs. The water and sewer departments addressed major leaks on Gill's Neck, Savannah Road, and McPhee Street, and replaced fire hydrants on Pilottown, Cedar Avenue, and Bay Avenue.

Davis highlighted that the IT and finance departments, with Kimberly Bellere, Finance Director, have finalized the financial framework for budget forecasting.

Development project updates included the water tower, where contractors mobilized in January and remain on schedule for September 2026 completion. The Hoornkill project is expected to go to bid in January/February 2026 with an estimated October 2026 completion. The Fourth Street/Park Avenue project's supplemental funding application, incorporating Burton, Painter, DuPont, and Johnson Streets, has been submitted to state agencies. A WEACTION meeting is tentatively scheduled for the end of March 2026. The Capes Cove contractor has mobilized and begun off-site work, with an expected completion by the end of July 2026.

Davis recognized three staff members for longevity: Laura (27 years), himself (4 years), and Eric Wharton in water production (3 years). The BPW has achieved 161 injury-free days. Future safety training will include CPR refresher and defensive driving courses. Vice President Curtis requested that CPR training be offered to Board members.

Davis reminded the Board that elections will be held this year for two seats currently held by Secretary Lee and Vice President Curtis.

8. Receive Finance Manager's Report

Kimberly Bellere, Finance Director, presented financial reports for November and December 2025, Quarter Three, and Year-to-Date projections.

Vice President Curtis requested that decimal numbers include a leading zero for clarity. President Panetta noted that January electric bills will likely be significantly higher due to the recent cold weather.

Old Business

9. Open forum/general discussion on amending the Lewes BPW Compilation of Policies to include penalties for introducing prohibited substances into the Lewes BPW sewer system

Sharon Sexton, Assistant General Manager, reported that the proposed resolution was posted for public comment and no feedback was received. Staff recommends moving forward with the resolution establishing a \$1,000 per day violation fee for each violation of prohibited substance discharge into the sewer system.

Michael Hoffman, Legal Counsel, clarified that the Board's charter allows penalties up to \$1,000 and the Board should establish the specific amount. Discussion ensued regarding whether to implement a tiered penalty structure or maintain flexibility.

Secretary Lee suggested adding specific limits for BOD (Biochemical Oxygen Demand), TSS (Total Suspended Solids), and TKN (Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen) from page 12 of the reference document, particularly relevant for higher-volume dischargers such as the brewery. Vice President Curtis questioned whether these limits should apply specifically to industrial users, and staff confirmed they could apply more broadly.

Treasurer Nichols questioned the practicality of enforcing the \$1,000 per day penalty for residential violations such as flushing non-flushable wipes, suggesting investigation and education should precede penalties.

Legal Counsel Hoffman recommended a tiered penalty structure: \$500 per day for the first offense, \$750 per day for the second offense, and \$1,000 per day for the third and subsequent offenses. The "per day" language would remain, meaning continuing violations would accrue daily penalties at the applicable tier. The Board could also exercise discretion in cases of inadvertent violations by homeowners.

Vice President Curtis suggested that radioactive materials and heat prohibitions, also from the reference document, be added to the resolution. Staff indicated these could be more appropriately included in a comprehensive tariff or ordinance to be developed later, though radioactive materials and heat could be added to the current resolution language. Curtis proposed modelling after Sussex County Code.

Secretary Lee requested that BOD, TSS, and TKN limits be added to the resolution. Staff agreed to incorporate these elements and the tiered penalty structure into a revised resolution for consideration at the next meeting.

The Board took no formal action, tabling the matter until the February meeting to allow staff to incorporate the requested revisions regarding tiered penalties and specific discharge limits.

10. Open forum/general discussion on the update for Fourth Street project and Burton Neighborhood

General Manager Davis reiterated that the supplemental funding application for the Fourth Street/Park Avenue project, which includes Burton, Painter, DuPont, and Johnson Streets, has been submitted to state agencies. The feedback from state agencies appears favorable. The WTAC meeting is scheduled for the end of March 2026, and the Board will not know the funding decision until after that meeting votes on the application. Design work continues in the interim.

11. Open forum/general discussion on the annual Fire Department donation

Assistant General Manager Sexton reported that the BPW typically makes one annual donation to the Fire Department, and \$30,000 was approved in the current fiscal year budget. Staff recommends maintaining the \$30,000 donation in alignment with the approved budget. Any future changes to the donation amount should be addressed during the April budget approval process.

President Panetta made his standard request to increase the donation in future years, emphasizing the critical role of the Fire Department and Ambulance Corps in protecting BPW personnel working in risky endeavors.

Asst. Treasurer Heffernan indicated he would support increasing the donation to \$50,000.

Vice President Curtis moved to accept the staff recommendation for a \$30,000 donation to the Fire Department. Bob Heffernan seconded the motion. Asst. Treasurer Heffernan voted against the motion, preferring a \$50,000 donation. Motion Passed 3-1, President Panetta voted in favor because the amount was already budgeted, though he supports increasing the donation in the future.

New Business

12. Open forum/general discussion on pump station capital improvement priority

General Manager Davis explained that the Board previously asked staff to prioritize five pump stations for upgrades from the sixteen identified in GMB's pump station resiliency study. Last month, the Board selected stations 6 (Connecticut Avenue), 5, 15, 74, and 83 for priority consideration. GMB provided detailed cost breakdowns for the required upgrades, which are included in the meeting packet.

Staff recommends completing one pump station upgrade per year, beginning in fiscal year 2027-2028, with projects funded through SRF (State Revolving Fund) financing. This approach allows prioritization based on recommendations from GMB and Inframark while spreading costs over multiple years.

Benjamin Hearn from GMB explained the cost estimates provided. For Station 6, the base upgrade cost is approximately \$469,625. An optional add-alternate to relocate the wet well out of Connecticut Avenue would add approximately \$150,000 in construction costs plus associated engineering and contingency, bringing the total to \$713,375.

Davis and Hearn noted that Station 17, which continues to experience chronic problems, is already slated for upgrade in the upcoming fiscal year along with Station 34.

Vice President Curtis expressed concern about the significant cost difference between the base upgrade and the add-alternate for relocating wet wells, questioning whether relocating the Station 6 wet well is necessary given the nearly \$244,000 additional cost.

Secretary Lee questioned some individual line items in the estimates, particularly a \$33,700 cost for a support structure for the control panel at Station 5 and a \$60,000 cost to raise the control panel at Station 34. Hearn explained these costs include electrical equipment replacement totaling \$75,000 and metal frame support structures, though specific engineering details would need to be reviewed.

Mayor Marasco asked if the projects could be submitted for the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) federal grant program. She explained that Senator Lisa Blunt Rochester's office is seeking one submission from Lewes and is considering including BPW pump station projects. The WRDA program offers 100% grant funding but is highly competitive. Projects would be vetted by June 2026, with potential funding release in March or April 2027, though federal timelines are uncertain. The Senator's office has requested project descriptions and costs by January 30, 2026.

Davis and Mayor Marasco discussed applying both for SRF funding and WRDA grants. The consensus was to proceed with Station 6 through the traditional SRF application process to avoid delays, while submitting Stations 5, 15, 74, and 83 for the WRDA grant opportunity. If WRDA funding is not awarded, the BPW could apply for SRF funding for those stations in subsequent years without losing a year of progress on Station 6. SRF funding decisions occur before WRDA decisions, so there is no conflict in dual applications. The WRDA program is multi-year, so future stations could be submitted in later years.

Secretary Lee noted concerns about pipe replacement costs in the Burton neighborhood, particularly a very old 36-inch to 42-inch corrugated metal pipe running from Blockhouse Pond to the Overfalls area, which will be expensive to replace.

Hearn added that establishing easements for PS not currently in easements is another important consideration for future planning and determining responsibility for maintenance.

Treasurer Nichols asked for clarification on the Board's direction. Staff confirmed the plan is to include \$100,000 (increased from \$50,000) in the next fiscal year's capital budget to address minor pump station improvements in-house, while pursuing SRF funding for Station 6 and WRDA funding for Stations 5, 15, 74, and 83.

Secretary Lee moved to accept the staff's recommendation to update the capital budget to include pump station improvements as discussed. Vice President Curtis seconded the motion. Motion Passed unanimously. The motion directs staff to pursue SRF funding for Station 6 and WRDA grant funding for Stations 5, 15, 74, and 83, and to increase the in-house capital improvement budget line item from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for minor pump station repairs.

13. Open forum/general discussion on the acceptance of bid acceptance for the Alaska Avenue sewer relining project

Benjamin Hearn from GMB explained that the Alaska Avenue project was rebid after receiving only one late bid in the previous solicitation. Bids were opened on January 15, 2026, and one bid was received from In Situform Technologies in the amount of \$390,828. In Situform previously performed work for the BPW and recently acquired SPS, which completed the effluent pipeline lining project in 2016-2017.

The base bid (Schedules A and B) includes lining the sewer main from Cape Henlopen Drive through the marsh to American Legion Road, and structurally lining manholes to reduce infiltration and inflow (I&I). Schedule B includes contingent items such as pipe joint repairs that may or may not be needed during construction.

Schedule C, covering eight residential laterals from houses on Savannah Road, was priced at \$263,000 (approximately \$33,000 per lateral). This schedule included installing clean-out stacks and lining laterals that currently lack accessible clean-outs. GMB recommends not awarding Schedule C and instead seeking alternative approaches with known contractors rather than In Situform's subcontractor.

Asst. Treasurer Heffernan confirmed that Schedule C could be pursued separately later without affecting Schedules A and B.

Hearn explained that the pipe will be CCTV inspected prior to lining, which will provide detailed condition information. This inspection is particularly important because the City's Overlook development project will result in repaving Alaska Avenue, and the BPW needs to ensure the sewer infrastructure is sound before new pavement is installed. The sewer main dates to the 1960s and is PVC located six to eight feet deep in an area with high groundwater.

Secretary Lee suggested it would be better to prevent problems through inspection and lining rather than having to excavate and repair after new pavement is installed.

Assistant General Manager Sexton noted that the budget allocated only \$100,000 for this project, so the budget will need to be adjusted to \$290,828 to cover the actual bid amount for Schedules A and B. Finance Director Bellere confirmed the contractor can complete the work by the end of the current fiscal year (March 31, 2026).

Secretary Lee moved to accept Schedules A and B of the bid from In Situform Technologies in the amount of \$390,828. Vice President Curtis seconded the motion. Motion Passed unanimously.

Vice President Curtis moved to adjust the capital budget to reflect the accepted bid amount. Secretary Lee seconded the motion. Motion Passed unanimously.

14. Open forum/general discussion on Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)

Assistant General Manager Sexton and Joshua Gritton, IT Manager, presented an update on Advanced Metering Infrastructure. AMI has been in the capital budget for some time, including the current fiscal year, but grant funding through DEMEC and AMP was not awarded, so the project was deferred.

Sexton and Gritton have evaluated multiple contractors and system types. Staff recommends a mesh network system for both water and electric meters, as it can utilize existing infrastructure and lower costs compared to point-to-point systems that require battery-powered meters. The mesh system allows electric meters to backhaul data from water meters at the same property, and meters can relay data from multiple neighboring meters if direct communication is unavailable.

Water-only locations would have a slightly different setup since there is no electric meter to backhaul data. Staff recommends beginning the project in the next fiscal year (FY 2026-2027) rather than the current year.

Asst. Treasurer Hefferna asked about communication range. Gritton explained that range depends on numerous variables, but 400 feet between properties is likely at the edge of reliable range, though the mesh network's ability to relay through neighboring meters mitigates this concern. Most AMI systems now use some form of mesh technology, which has become the predominant approach.

Secretary Lee asked if this is the dominant system type. Gritton confirmed that mesh networks are the most common AMI solution currently deployed.

Vice President Curtis asked if additional IT staff would be needed to manage the system. Gritton explained that staffing needs depend on how much is contracted out versus brought in-house. Subcontracting maintenance and support increases dues, subscriptions, and professional services costs, and makes the BPW dependent on vendor response times. However, bringing functions in-house requires additional staff and expertise.

Gritton and Sexton have interviewed other municipalities that use the systems being considered and have not encountered significant negative feedback, though technology choices always carry some risk.

The primary benefits of AMI include real-time leak detection, time-of-use data that supports variable rate structures, remote disconnect capability (though this is not a priority given the BPW's low disconnection rate), and reduced wear and tear on staff and vehicles. Currently, it takes four to seven days to complete meter reads by driving routes, and capturing incremental time-of-use data would extend that timeframe. AMI would automate the collection process and provide hourly or customizable interval data.

Secretary Lee asked about the update frequency. Gritton explained the system would automatically collect reads according to a customized schedule—potentially hourly, every six hours, or daily depending on the meter and BPW preferences. This is fundamentally different from the current drive-by collection, where a single read is captured once per billing cycle.

Time-of-use data would allow the BPW to capitalize on time-of-use rates charged by energy suppliers and potentially offer variable rates to customers to incentivize off-peak usage. It would also identify high-demand periods and transformer stress, enabling proactive infrastructure management.

Vice President Curtis asked about budget implications. Sexton noted that \$865,000 is budgeted in the current year's electric fund, but no funding is allocated in the water fund. If the Board wants to proceed with both systems simultaneously, water funding would need to be approved in the April 2026 budget process.

Asst Treasurer Heffernan asked if customers would have access to their own usage data. Gritton confirmed that some vendors offer customer portals, and staff is working to determine if these portals can integrate with the BPW's existing customer portal rather than requiring a separate login.

President Panetta noted that mesh network technology has matured significantly over the past five years, reducing the risk of selecting an obsolete system.

Mayor Marasco asked if AMI projects qualify for SRF funding. Sexton and Hearn confirmed that SRF funding is available for water infrastructure, though electric infrastructure would not qualify.

The Board reached consensus directing staff to bring AMI proposals for both water and electric systems to the Board at the beginning of fiscal year 2026-2027, with funding for both systems included in the upcoming budget process.

15. Open forum/general discussion on Lewes BPW stormwater management overview

General Manager Davis explained that GMB was asked to review the BPW's major drainage areas and evaluate the stormwater system generally, following up on the Duffield report from 2014 and a presentation by GMB in October 2023.

Benjamin Hearn from GMB presented a summary of the stormwater management overview. GMB created a map of major watersheds and drainage sheds in the city and reviewed issues identified in the 2014 Duffield report to determine what has been addressed and what remains outstanding.

The Duffield report identified 24 failing catch basins; few have been repaired, though some will be addressed by projects currently in development. The report also identified numerous pipes that are at capacity, over capacity, or under capacity; none of these pipes have been addressed yet, and none are included in currently planned projects. Additionally, the report identified locations where outlet pipes are positioned above inlet pipes, causing backups, standing water, and potential mosquito issues. Only one of these issues will be addressed in the Fourth Street project; the remainder have not been corrected.

Hearn noted that some minor items can be addressed by BPW water department staff. The BPW currently has \$50,000 budgeted for stormwater capital improvements, but larger projects will require engineering, design, and significantly more funding.

Vice President Curtis noted that the BPW charges only a few dollars per month for stormwater service, which is inadequate to address the identified infrastructure needs.

Asst. Treasurer Heffernan observed that the limited stormwater fee revenue is why essentially nothing has been addressed since 2014. General Manager Davis confirmed that staff can handle some minor repairs in-house but that larger pipe replacement and relining projects will require outside contractors and engineering.

Secretary Lee asked about the large corrugated metal pipe at the Overfalls, noting it is an "ancient" 36- to 42-inch pipe that was bolted together in sections. Davis confirmed that replacing this pipe, which is taped in another location, is included in the upcoming budget and will be a costly project.

Hearn emphasized the importance of establishing easements for stormwater infrastructure, as it is unclear whether all pipes are located in easements. Determining ownership and responsibility is necessary for long-term capital planning.

Asst. Treasurer Heffernan asked what action the Board should take. The consensus was to develop a plan to address minor repairs in-house while researching and prioritizing larger projects for future budgets.

Mayor Marasco asked why the BPW does not apply for SRF funding for stormwater projects. Hearn confirmed that SRF can fund stormwater infrastructure. Mayor Marasco noted that with the loss of BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) grant funding, municipalities will

increasingly turn to SRF for anti-flooding and resilience projects. She recommended the BPW apply for SRF funding for stormwater projects, selecting one or two priority projects from the GMB report.

Mayor Marasco suggested coordinating a meeting with GMB to review the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) road projects and identify stormwater priorities that align with planned roadwork, as pavement projects are typically the driver for underground utility work. The SRF Notice of Intent (NOI) is due February 18, 2026.

Secretary Lee asked if GMB considers drainage when prioritizing road projects. Hearn confirmed that stormwater infrastructure is evaluated as part of road project planning. Mayor Marasco emphasized that stormwater is BPW's responsibility, while the City handles surface drainage (catch basins on the street surface).

Davis noted that increasing the stormwater capital budget from \$50,000 to \$100,000 would allow the BPW to tackle more projects immediately. The final amount will depend on coordination with the City's road project priorities.

The Board reached consensus directing staff to increase the stormwater capital budget from \$50,000 to \$100,000, coordinate with the City on CIP road priorities, and work with GMB to identify one or two stormwater projects to submit for SRF funding by the February 18, 2026 deadline.

16. Open forum/general discussion on the Hertrich Parcel water and sewer service extension

General Manager Davis explained that this item is a follow-up to a discussion during the Capes Cove project bid review. The Board elected not to fund Schedule C of the Capes Cove project, which would have extended water and sewer lines across the front of the Hertrich property (formerly owned by Mr. Perez) and installed connection points.

Hertrich has expressed interest in connecting the property to water and sewer. To do so, the BPW must obtain an easement from Hertrich, as the property is outside the BPW's water service territory and requires a CPCN (Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity) process.

Staff recommends mirroring the approach used for Mr. Gunther's property, where the BPW obtained an easement for sewer infrastructure near the roundabout and installed a water and sewer connection at no cost to the property owner. Under this arrangement, the BPW would absorb the cost of installing connection points, and Hertrich would be responsible for impact fees, running lines from the property to the connection points, and all user fees. The Capes Cove contractor, Teal Construction, provided a quote of \$7,500 to install the connections as part of the ongoing project.

Davis noted that connecting to public sewer would allow Hertrich to eliminate a septic system that occupies significant space on the property and provides additional parking capacity.

Asst. Treasurer Heffernan asked if the costs might be lower because the contractor is already on-site. Staff confirmed that the \$7,500 price is favorable because the work can be performed as part of the active Capes Cove construction.

Secretary Lee moved to engage Teal Construction to install the water and sewer connection for the Hertrich property at a cost of \$7,500. Vice President Curtis seconded the motion. Motion Passed 4-0-1, with Treasurer Nichols abstaining.

17. Open forum/general discussion on the Hoornkill Avenue MOU with the city

General Manager Davis explained that this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the BPW and the City outlines funding and reimbursement details for the Hoornkill Avenue project. The MOU is very similar to the agreement signed for the Fourth Street/Park Avenue project, except that the Hoornkill project includes a principal forgiveness component. The agreement has been reviewed by legal counsel for both the BPW and the City. The City will need to approve the MOU after the BPW.

Vice President Curtis moved to approve the Hoornkill Avenue MOU with the City. Secretary Lee seconded the motion. Motion Passed 4-0-1.

18. Open forum/general discussion on the city's tide gate project

This agenda item was moved to a future meeting and was not discussed.

19. BOARD OR STAFF REQUESTS FOR AGENDA ITEM(S)

Board members were reminded they may submit agenda item requests at any time. No specific requests were made during the meeting.

20. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

No members of the public addressed the Board during the second public comment period.

21. CALL TO THE PRESS

Bill Shull, Cape Gazette asked about the status of the floodgate project grant application. Mayor Marasco reported that the decision would be made on Friday (January 31, 2026) and estimated an 80% chance of approval.

Bill Shull, Cape Gazette asked if BPW participated in emergency management coordination ahead of the recent storm. General Manager Davis confirmed that the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) held briefings prior to the storm, and staff participated. No EOC briefings are currently scheduled for the upcoming weekend's potential storm, as the forecast remains too uncertain. President Panetta noted that Emergency Management Coordinator Tim Cooper sends information to key personnel, but formal EOC activation depends on forecast confidence.

Bill Shull, Cape Gazette asked if the BPW sustained any damage from the recent storm. President Panetta reported that, other than residents with sore backs from shoveling, there was no significant damage. The southern part of the state received far less snow and no icing on power lines compared to northern Delaware.

Bill Shull, Cape Gazette asked about the water tower construction timeline and whether large components would be transported through town. General Manager Davis confirmed that components have already been delivered, and the tank bottom and shaft construction has begun. Tank pieces are brought in sections and welded on-site.

Assistant General Manager Sexton has photos of the construction that could be shared with the Board. Sexton agreed to send photos.

Vice President Curtis noted that GMB appeared to have new letterhead. Benjamin Hearn confirmed that GMB updated its letterhead at the beginning of the year and staff is still adjusting to it.

22. Executive Session

No executive session was held

23. Return to open session

No executive session was held.

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

Not applicable.

25. ADJOURNMENT

Vice President Curtis moved to adjourn the meeting. Secretary Lee seconded the motion.
Motion Passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:46 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kristina Keller
Office Manager



D. Preston Lee, P.E., Secretary

3/25/20
Date