Board of Public Works
Regular Meeting
May 27, 2026
4:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers
114 E. Third Street
Minutes

1. Welcome, Call Meeting to Order, and Pledge of Allegiance

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Public Works was called to order on Wednesday, May 27, 2026, at 4:00 PM. Acting Chair Barbara Curtis presided, noting that President Thomas Panetta was absent. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by a board member.

2. Roll Call

Board Members:
Barbara Curtis
D. Preston Lee, P.E.
Richard Nichols
Bob Heffernan

Absent:
Thomas Panetta

Ex-Officio Members:
Amy Marasco, Mayor – via Zoom
Robin Davis, General Manager
Sharon Sexton, Assistant General Manager
Michael Hoffman, Legal Counsel

Others present:
Kristina Keller, BPW Office Manager
Kim Bellere, BPW Finance Manager
Michael Posey, BPW IT support
Matthew Davis, Inframark
Ben Hearn, GMB
Linda Lee, Resident
Mike Desmarais, Oyster Cove Resident
Elen Lorraine McCabe, City Manager - Online

3. Consent Agenda

Acting Chair Barbara Curtis noted several corrections to the April 22, 2026, meeting minutes:

- the spelling of Sussex County Engineer Mike Harmer's surname;
- a clarification on page 3, item 9, that Sergeant & Lundy is not an employee of the electric department but rather that a representative from the firm walked the area with the electric department; and

- a correction on page 8 to contact detail ID #150001, clarifying that the flusher installed at the end of the street in the Burton subdivision was installed to alleviate discolored water, not cause it.

Acting Chair, Barbara Curtis also requested that IT explore automatically populating customer location data in contact detail reports to better track complaints such as the nine discolored water reports received during hydrant flushing.

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda with amendments to April 22, 2026 minutes was made by Richard Nichols and seconded by Bob Heffernan. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Call to the Public

Michael Damaris, President of the Oyster Cove HOA (Old Orchard Road, Lewes), addressed the Board regarding the substantial increase in sewer rates since the community was built in 2022. He noted that monthly sewer bills have risen from $108 to $144 per unit — a roughly 35% increase in under four years — resulting in a community-wide annual cost of approximately $41,472 for 24 units. He expressed concern about the lack of communication accompanying rate increases and requested that the Board evaluate the rate trajectory and consider including explanatory notices with billing statements.

5. Receive the Inframark Report

Matthew Davis, Project Manager at the Lewes Wastewater Treatment Plant (Inframark), presented the April operations report, covering several active projects.

Pump Station 6 was identified as a critical infrastructure concern. A contractor engaged to replace valves found the internal iron piping — believed to date to the early 1960s — so severely deteriorated that no repairs or replacements could be made. The existing pump is operational but is rusted to the station base and cannot be removed. Staff and GMB Engineer Ben Hearn are currently planning an emergency bypass connection to maintain operations. GMB indicated the bypass design could be completed quickly using existing survey data; once contractor design is complete, the contractor anticipates scheduling within two weeks. The complete station rehabilitation is being funded by SRF.

Board members raised questions about whether similar conditions might exist at other pump stations. Matthew Davis noted that Pump Stations 5 and 7 also show corrosion but that he has been able to service their pumps. He recommended a broader strategy of installing standardized bypass connections across all pump stations rather than maintaining inventories of spare pumps, noting that most replacement pumps can be sourced within a few weeks. Assistant General Manager Sharon Sexton confirmed that pump stations without bypasses are already called out in the resiliency study for bypass installation.

Regarding the EQ Tank, Matthew Davis reported that the failure of both mixers over a period of approximately two to three months caused a significant buildup of sediment. Running both mixers once restored caused debris to immediately bind the screens and pass into the membranes. The mixers cannot be safely operated until the tank is cleaned. A quote of approximately $34,995 was received for the cleaning. Given the proximity of peak summer flows, staff and the Board agreed that proceeding promptly was essential. General Manager Robin Davis indicated he could authorize the expenditure under O&M.

Action: Staff directed to proceed with EQ tank cleaning without delay.

Matthew Davis also raised ongoing reliability issues with the PointWatch SCADA system, noting persistent false alarms and connectivity interruptions that make it difficult to distinguish real alerts. The Board directed staff to determine what monitoring system the county uses as a potential compatible alternative, given the anticipated future integration with county infrastructure.

6. Receive the President's Report

No report was presented in the absence of President Panetta.

7. Receive the General Manager's Report

General Manager Robin Davis reported on the following key activities and projects:

The PFAS emerging contaminant grant is progressing, with test and monitoring wells being installed at the well field. Discussions with Abbott Park are ongoing regarding a draft development agreement for upgrading water and sewer infrastructure. Staff and the Assistant General Manager attended a Hoornkill community meeting in preparation for that project, which was well received by residents. Construction is anticipated to begin in June or July 2026.

The elevated water storage tank project is progressing on schedule, with sandblasting and paint preparation underway; completion is still projected for September 2026. The 4th Street project streetscape design was approved by City Council. The CDS funding application is being supported by the offices of Senator Blunt Rochester and Senator Coons. The Capes Cove project is expected to be completed by July 2026. Two lead service lines were replaced, and two temporary pump stations and force mains were installed for homes on Savannah Road as part of the Alaska Avenue project.

The BPW received the 2025 APPA Certificate of Excellence in Reliability for Electric — its third consecutive year of recognition. New hire William Hague Jr. joined as Meter Reader/Water Technician. Service longevity recognitions were noted for Sharon Sexton (5 years) and Emmett Foraker, Water/Sewer Supervisor (13 years). The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 24, 2026.

8. Receive the Finance Manager's Report

Finance Manager Kim Bellere presented the unaudited Quarter 4 / Year-End financial report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026. Key highlights included:

Ending cash and cash equivalents of approximately $11.1 million. Operating reserve transfers exceeded budget by approximately $1.2 million, with a total reserve balance of approximately $10.1 million. Capital project spending was approximately $2.8 million under budget, primarily due to delayed timelines on the Hoornkill, Capes Cove, and Monroe/Railroad projects. Net income from operations exceeded budget by approximately $440,000, with revenues 1.7% over budget and expenses 0.1% under budget. Impact fee collections were approximately half of what was projected, largely due to slower-than-expected buildout at Tower Hill and Dutchman's Harvest. The Board also noted that the AMI project procurement RFP is being issued June 26, 2026, with vendor selection targeted for December and full installation planned for the following year.

9. Swearing In of Elected Board Members

Office Manager Kris Keller administered the oath of office to re-elected board members D. Preston Lee and Barbara Curtis.

10. Open forum/general discussion of the election of Officers of the BPW for the upcoming year

Legal Counsel Michael Hoffman presided over the election of officers. All incumbent officers were re-elected by unanimous vote to the following positions:

- President: Thomas Panetta — nominated by Board Member D. Preston Lee, seconded by Board Member Bob Heffernan. Motion Passed.
- Vice President: Barbara Curtis — nominated by Board Member Lee, seconded by Board Member Bob Heffernan. Motion Passed.
- Secretary: D. Preston Lee — nominated by Board Member Barbara Curtis, seconded by Board Member Bob Heffernan. Motion Passed.
- Treasurer: Richard Nichols — nominated by Board Member D. Preston Lee, seconded by Board Member Barbara Curtis. Motion Passed.
- Assistant Treasurer: Bob Heffernan — nominated by Richard Nichols, seconded by Board Member Barbara Curtis. Motion Passed.

Old Business

11. Open forum/general discussion on reinstating the Mitigation Committee and establishing a new scope

Legal Counsel Michael Hoffman presented Resolution No. 26-003 for the reconstitution of the Mitigation Committee. Discussion focused on the appropriate deadline for the committee's final report and the composition of its membership. The Board agreed to set a deadline of December 31, 2026, allowing for approximately six months of monthly meetings. Two amendments were adopted: replacing "co-chairs" with "chair" in Sections 54–55 and allowing two Board members (rather than one) to serve on the committee, with the chair selected from among those Board members.

Motion was made by Richard Nichols to read Resolution No. 26-003 by title only and seconded by Bob Heffernan. Motion Passed.

Motion to adopt Resolution No. 26-003, a resolution of the Board of Directors of the Board of Public Works of the City of Lewes regarding the recreation of a Mitigation Committee, as amended, was made by Richard Nichols and seconded by Bob Heffernan. Motion passed unanimously with one absence.

New Business

12. Open Forum/general discussion on Mitigation Committee members

Board Member D. Preston Lee presented a proposed slate of committee members. The committee will include D. Preston Lee (Chair), Bob Heffernan (second Board member), Danielle Swallow, Tracy Hancock (former EPA), Mark Prouty, and a nominee to be designated by the City, as required by the resolution.

Motion was made by Richard Nichols to approve the proposed Mitigation Committee members; seconded by Bob Heffernan. Motion Passed.

13. Open forum/general discussion on cost-of-service proposals

Finance Manager Kim Bellere presented proposals received from three firms — UFS, Raftelis, and Waterworth — for cost-of-service analysis, financial projections, and rate-setting services. The Finance Committee recommended awarding the primary engagement to Waterworth, which offers a 10-year software-based model covering all four utilities at a cost of $79,100, as well as a concurrent engagement with Raftelis for electric utility cost-of-service work only, at $32,480, to validate Waterworth's newer electric module. The combined cost represents a budget increase of $28,980 to the O&M budget. The software platform will replace the current in-house Excel model, provide unlimited professional support, reduce manual labor, and improve succession planning. Implementation is targeted for October 2026, with the model ready to support the November budget process.

Motion to approve Finance Manager Bellere's recommendation to award the cost-of-service engagement to Waterworth for all four utilities and to Raftelis for electric, with a budget increase of $28,980, was made by Richard Nichols and seconded by Bob Heffernan. Motion passed unanimously.

14. Open forum/general discussion on the AT&T Water Tower Lease Agreement

General Manager Robin Davis presented the status of lease renewal negotiations with AT&T (New Cingular Wireless) for communications equipment on the Schley Avenue water tower. The current agreement, effective September 15, 2008, with a current annual rent of approximately $37,400, is due to expire on September 14, 2028. AT&T requested early renewal and sought a reduction in rent to approximately $26,083 annually, citing above-market rates. Staff recommended rejecting the rent reduction, noting that another provider on the tower pays a comparable rate of approximately $38,000 annually. Three outstanding language differences were also discussed: AT&T's request to extend the renewal notice period from 12 to 18 months; to reduce the holdover rate from 150% to 103% of base rent; and to extend the equipment removal period from 6 to 18 months. Staff recommended maintaining the BPW's standard form agreement on all three points. Legal Counsel also recommended removing Section 6B and Section 7C language relating to title reports and new construction, which are inapplicable to an existing installation.

Motion to accept staff's recommendations on Sections 3B, 5, 9D, 6B, and 7C and to direct staff to continue negotiations on rent was made by Richard Nichols and seconded by Bob Heffernan. Motion Passed.

15. Open forum/general discussion on accepting the supplemental funding resolution for the Fourth Street & Park Avenue Project

General Manager Robin Davis presented Resolution No. 26-004, authorizing borrowing of $4,413,565 from the Delaware Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund and $2,241,347 from the Delaware Drinking Water State Revolving Fund for supplemental water and sewer improvements on Fourth Street and Park Avenue, including replacement of approximately 29 house service pipes with potential lead components. The City Council is expected to adopt a companion resolution at its June 8, 2026, meeting, after which loan closing documents will be finalized.

Motion to read Resolution No. 26-004 by title only was made by Bob Heffernan and seconded by Richard Nichols. Motion Passed.
Motion to adopt Resolution No. 26-004 was made by Bob Heffernan and seconded by Richard Nichols. Motion passed unanimously.

16. Open forum/general discussion on accepting the developer's agreement with Abbott Park

This item was removed from the agenda. General Manager Davis noted that Abbott Park was unable to submit the necessary documents in time and that the agreement will be brought forward at the June 2026 meeting.

17. Board or Staff Requests for Agenda Item(s)

No requests were made.

18. Call to the Public

No members of the public requested to speak.

19. Call to the Press

No press comments.

20. Executive Session

None

21. Return to open session

22. Discussion and action on items from Executive Session. If applicable

No executive session

23. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 6:13 was made by D. Preston Lee and seconded by Richard Nichols. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted
Kristina Keller
Office Manger

D. Preston Lee, P.E., Secretary

22 JULY 26
Date