Board of Public Works Regular Meeting

Meeting Minutes

July 22, 2026, 4:00 PM

114 E. Third Street, Lewes, DE, US

1. Welcome, Call Meeting To Order, And Pledge Of Allegiance

President Tom Panetta called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Public Works to order at 4:00 PM on

2. Roll Call

Board Members

Thomas Panetta
Richard Nichols,
D. Preston Lee, P.E.
Bob Heffernan;
Barbara Curtis (remote)

Ex-Officio Members

Robin Davis (General Manager)
Sharon Sexton (Assistant General Manager)
Michael Hoffman (Legal Counsel)
Mayor Amy Marasco (remote, departed during meeting, replaced by Trina Brown Hicks)

3. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda was made by Bob Heffernan and seconded by Richard Nichols. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Call To The Public

No members of the public requested to address the Board.

5. Receive the Inframark Report

Matthew Davis, Project Manager for Inframark, presented the monthly operations report and highlighted several key operational matters.

Station 6 Bypass: Coordination with Sprig is ongoing to redesign bypass plans. A mix-up regarding the desired configuration has been resolved, and updated cost figures have been forwarded to Assistant General Manager Sexton.

Train 4 Gate Replacement: The replacement gate is expected to arrive by July 28th.

Ditch Valves: A design flaw was discovered — the valve assemblies arrived with incorrect horizontal orientation. The vendor will supply retrofit parts at no cost to BPW, as the error was on the vendor's side.

Membrane Condition: No new membrane damage has been observed since last inspection. The Board discussed the root cause, attributing historic damage to a prior practice of removing and drying cassettes outside of water, a procedure that ceased after the headworks upgrade. Viola is confident that damaged strands can be repaired by cutting and sealing with silicone, leveraging the plant staff's familiarity with the cassettes.

InSight Report / Dissolved Oxygen: President Tom Panetta noted an anomalous upward trend in dissolved oxygen on the pre-anoxic zone chart. Matthew Davis attributed this to aggressive blower ramping in response to elevated phosphorus removal challenges during the summer heat. He committed to providing further detail at the upcoming plant walk-through.

Insight Report Clarification: President Tom Panetta noted a discrepancy in the year-over-year legend on the report. Matthew Davis agreed to follow up with Viola directly, as Inframark does not produce that report.

EQ Tank: The CES tank cleanout has been completed, and both mixers are back in operation.

DNREC Inspection: A compliance inspection conducted the prior day went well, with inspectors noting the plant looked good.

4th of July Flows: Flows peaked near 1.5 million gallons per day. Going forward, Matthew Davis stated that Sussex County flows will be proactively reduced ahead of major holiday weekends. Al from Wolf Neck was acknowledged for responding promptly overnight to cut flows when requested.

Storm Event (July 21–22): A rain event of approximately 3.5–4 inches caused high-level alarms at multiple pump stations, including Stations 1(700 Pilottown Rd), 2(across 604 Pilottown Rd), 13(221 Schley Ave), 11(13 Hoornkill Ave), and 4(101 Gills Neck Rd). The EQ tank reached 11 feet and trains reached 124 inches. Three staff members managed the event overnight with no sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs). Station 2(across 604 Pilottown Rd) pump capacity during the event was flagged for further investigation.

Sussex County Flow Reduction for Membrane Work: Matthew Davis confirmed that Sussex County has been notified of the anticipated need to reduce flows beginning in September during membrane repair work. Flows are expected to be manageable at approximately 100,000–150,000 GPD during off-peak season.

Monthly Expense Attachments: Following discussion, the Board agreed to discontinue including copies of individual purchase receipts in the packet going forward, retaining only a summary-level expense overview. Barbara Curtis and the Board concurred.

Work Order Clarity: Board Member Preston Lee noted that generator work orders appeared duplicated. Matthew Davis clarified that entries represent both monthly and annual inspections at three separate stations (main plant, Station 4(101 Gills Neck Rd), Station 8(116 American Legion Rd)), and agreed to add location labels going forward.

Viola Follow-Up (May 11 Performance Note): Board Member Barbara Curtis referenced a prior action item from last meeting regarding a Viola report notation about a performance step improvement on all trains on May 11th. Matthew Davis indicated he had reached out to Viola but had focused on the turbidity spike rather than the performance notation. Action Item Assigned — staff to review the prior meeting packet and clarify the specific item with Viola.

6. Receive the President's Report

President Panetta reported attending the DEMEC Legislative Roundup and a water tower coordination meeting. He highlighted BPW's strong response during the 4th of July heat event, noting the water tower was temporarily very low and a conservation blast was issued requesting residents to adjust irrigation schedules. PJM and the local grid held through the event. The City was commended for modifying event schedules. The Board discussed the potential long-term installation of a misting system as a more water-efficient alternative to the sprinkler setup used this year.

7. Receive the General Manager's Report

General Manager Davis summarized recent departmental activities:

- Coordination with Abbotts Park on a development agreement involving water and sewer infrastructure replacement is ongoing. The development agreement was approved at the prior meeting and is pending the developer's response to a requested change regarding liability.
- Assistant General Manager Sharon Sexton is coordinating with Sargent & Lundy through DEMEC on a hosting capacity study (see Item 8 below).
- The electric department completed transformer swaps, cleared vegetation around head-mounted transformers in Bay Breeze, and worked with GMB on water service locating on Fourth Street.
- Office staff attended a net metering training webinar.
- A FEMA application is being prepared by Assistant General Manager Sharon Sexton and Kris Keller to seek reimbursement for the generator breaker damage at the wastewater plant caused by the February snowstorm.
- Michael Posey was recognized for 4 years of service.
- Elevated Water Storage Tank: Photos from the inspection company were shared showing painting and logo work in progress on the Cape-facing side of the tank. The color and siting were well-received by the Board. Electric and fiber optic connections are being completed, with a chance of finishing before the September operational requirement.
- 4th Street Project: The project remains on schedule for bid release in August. A CDBG funding application has been submitted, supported by Senator Blunt Rochester and Senator Coons, with results expected in a couple of months.
- Fishers Cove / Capes Cove Project: All homes are connected. The contractor is working through punch list items.

**8. Formal invitation to DEMEC's Annual Dinner.
INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/ACTION**

Scott Lynch, Vice President of Asset Development for DEMEC, presented two items:

Hosting Capacity Study: Lynch explained that the study, funded through a federal grant administered by DNREC, assesses BPW's existing electric infrastructure — conductors, transformers, and feeders — to determine how much additional distributed solar generation the system can absorb and where. The study accounts for clustering of solar installations and the need to prevent reverse power flow to Delmarva Power under the interconnection agreement. Sargent & Lundy, who has prior familiarity with BPW's system, is conducting the study. On-site data collection regarding circuit and feeder locations is expected imminently. The study is anticipated to conclude within a few months.

The Board discussed that recent legislation removed the prior percentage-based net metering cap and replaced it with a "good utility practice and safety" standard, which gives BPW authority to deny new solar interconnections in segments of the system that cannot safely accommodate additional generation.

DEMEC Annual Dinner: Scott Lynch formally invited the Board to DEMEC's Annual Dinner at Bally's in Dover on Wednesday, September 9th, 4:30–8:00 PM. The featured speaker will be PJM Senior Vice President Asim Hague, presenting on grid developments and data center impacts. Forty-four pieces of state energy legislation were tracked this session — double the prior year.

Floating Solar Ribbon Cutting: Scott Lynch invited the Board to attend the ribbon-cutting for DEMEC's floating solar project at a Middletown wastewater lagoon on Friday, July 31st. The project, ten years in development, is approximately 50% deployed. Several Board members expressed interest in attending together.

9. Open forum/general discussion on the update for the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Board Member Barbara Curtis provided an update on the City's Comprehensive Plan process. The community survey is now live online and had received at least 75 responses as of July 15th. The City is expected to receive a report from the Office of State Planning Commission the following day summarizing progress since the 2015 plan. Through the end of August, topic leads will interview key stakeholders using a template form. Board Member Barbara Curtis has requested assistance from General Manager Robin Davis and Assistant General Manager Sharon Sexton in developing the infrastructure and utilities section, with a meeting planned for the following week. She also expressed interest in interviewing Board Member Preston Lee and President Tom Panetta individually on infrastructure and electricity matters, respectively.

10. Open forum/general discussion on a resolution accepting the utilities for Donovan Smith Mobile Home Park.

This item was pulled from the agenda.

11. Open forum/general discussion on a resolution accepting the utilities for Fishers Cove.

This item was pulled from the agenda.

12. Open forum/general discussion on Trimble handheld GIS equipment proposals. Option 1 and Option 2.

General Manager Robin Davis presented a staff recommendation to replace the department's GIS data collector, originally purchased in 2013, which has reached the end of serviceability — parts are unavailable, and software is no longer current. Two options were evaluated: a lower-cost unit at approximately $8,000, which was found unsuitable for BPW's operational needs, and the Trimble unit at $24,693, which offers greater compatibility, accuracy, and automated data upload compared to the existing equipment. The higher-cost unit also carries a lower annual subscription rate, with projected full cost recovery within four years. Because the capital budget had only allocated $10,000 for this line item, board approval was required to authorize the additional expenditure.

Motion to approve the purchase of the Trimble handheld GIS unit for $24,693 per staff recommendation was made by Board Member Richard Nichols and seconded by Board Member Bob Heffernan. Motion Passed unanimously.

13. Open forum/general discussion on budget adjustment.

Finance Manager Kim Bellere (attending remotely) presented a capital budget amendment to account for the approved Trimble equipment purchase and its allocation across all four utilities. The adjustments were as follows:

- Electric (Line 17): increased to $203,900 (up $9,400)
- Water (Line 41): increased to $44,050
- Wastewater (Line 38): increased to $6,100 (up to $6,700)
- Stormwater (Line 20): increased from $3,000 to $3,150
- Total increase: $14,700

Motion to approve the budget amendment as presented was made by Richard Nichols and seconded by Bob Heffernan. Motion Passed unanimously.

14. Open forum/general discussion on updating the BPW Electric Tariff.

Assistant General Manager Sharon Sexton introduced a comprehensive redline draft of the BPW Electric Tariff for the Board's initial review. The document, which has not been substantively updated since approximately 2004, was reviewed internally by staff over the past two to three years to identify outdated language, obsolete procedures, and fees requiring revision. Each staff contributor's changes are color-coded in the document. Legal Counsel Michael Hoffman noted that once the Board finalizes a draft, it must be posted for public comment before adoption.

The Board requested that staff prepare supplemental notes explaining the rationale behind each proposed change to accompany the document for the next review session. Action Item Assigned to Assistant General Manager Sharon Sexton. The Board expressed a goal of completing the process before year-end. A workshop may be considered depending on the depth of discussion needed.

15. Board or Staff Requests For Agenda Item(s).

Board Member Bob Heffernan requested two future agenda items: (1) a substantive discussion on AMI — including cost-benefit analysis, demand response strategy, customer communication, and potential tariff implications; and (2) a periodic (quarterly) status update on the County cooperative project. President Tom Panetta noted that an update on the County project can be provided following the design review on July 31st, and that no significant progress is expected before 2027 pending completion of the canal study.

16. Call To The Public

No members of the public requested to address the Board.

17. Call To The Press

No press comments were offered.

18. Executive Session

The Board determined that an Executive Session was not needed.

19. Return To Open Session

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

21. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made at 5:41 pm by Richard Nichols and seconded by Preston Lee. Motion Passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted
Kristina Keller

D. Preston Lee, P.E., Secretary

8/26/26
Date