



**Stamford Water Pollution Control Authority Board Meeting**

**Monday, February 26, 2024**

**5:30 p.m.**

**Meeting held via teleconference**

**Full Meeting Minutes**

**Attendees**

Ed Kelly	Chairman, WPCA Board Member
Amiel Goldberg	Vice Chair, WPCA Board Member/Board of Reps
Benjamin Barnes	WPCA Board Member/ Director of Administration
Matthew Quinones (Absent)	WPCA Board Member/ Director of Operations
J.R. McMullen	WPCA Board Member/Board of Finance
Robert Barocas	WPCA Board Member/Finance Committee Chair
Steven Bagwin	WPCA Board Member/ Workforce Development Chair
Merritt Nesin	WPCA Board Member
Frank Salem	WPCA Board Member
William Brink	Executive Director, WPCA
Rhudean Bull	Administration Manager, WPCA
Ann Brown	Supervising Engineer, WPCA
Vernesa DeCausey	Financial Manager, WPCA
Crystal Blair	Administrative Account Assistant, WPCA
Abigail Logrono	Procurement Coordinator, WPCA
Maria LoDolce	Seasonal, WPCA
Robert Pudelka (Absent)	Plant Supervisor
Steve Pietrzyk	Collections System Supervisor
David Yanik	City Comptroller
Tom McKirdy	Collection Attorney (Pilicy Ryan & Ward, P.C.)
Lynda Roca	CompUtil

**Call to Order, Pledge and Roll Call**

E. Kelly, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm with roll call; there was no pledge of allegiance. A quorum was present eight (8 Board Members).

**Public Participation**

Brian Teitelbaum shared feedback from his neighbors about the Perna Lane project, communicating their satisfaction that the project is now progressing. On behalf of the community, he expressed appreciation to the WPCA Board and staff for their efforts in moving the project forward.

**Minutes Approval of the Full Board Meeting of January 22, 2024**

E. Kelly made a motion to approve the January 22, 2024, minutes; seconded by S. Bagwin. There was no further discussion. **Vote 7-0-1.** B. Barnes abstained.

**Update: Perna Lane Sewer Extension**

W. Brink reported that three (3) bids were received for the Perna Lane project, with Grasso Construction arising as the successful bidder with a bid of 8.2 million. He stated that the company expressed assurance in their ability to complete the project within the specified budget. He mentioned that the contractor is extensively involved in other City projects, making them a highly reputable company. He went on to say that he is very pleased to see that the project is moving forward. E. Kelly inquired about the anticipated start date for the work, and Bill replied, stating that

once the necessary approvals, paperwork, and insurance processes are finalized, they are ready to begin as early as May 2024.

A. Brown added that she contacted Grasso and she reiterated that they are very comfortable with the provided figures. Tighe & Bond also contacted the bidder to discuss a start date and they confirmed that once the contract is complete, they are eager to initiate the project as soon as April or May, so they're anxious to start.

### **Administrative/Budget Report**

R. Bull briefly reported the following:

- Staffing vacancies
- Staffing issues
- There were (4) minor injuries reported
- Two (2) vehicle accidents reported
- Quarterly Staff Meeting update
- Darien invoice complete
- Budget Breakdown

### **Sub-Committee Reports**

#### **Finance Committee**

R. Barocas stated that the Finance Committee was held before the Board meeting and the following occurred:

V. DeCausey did an overview of the January financials. R. Barocas stated that a colleague commented on the level of physical responsibility that she has demonstrated considering the conversion to the new system. He went on to say that the committee is very grateful for the good work she's doing.

- Preliminary review of the operating budget
- Old business carried to next month or address or will be addressed offline

#### **Technical Committee**

E. Kelly reported the committee meeting was held on Wednesday, February 21, 2024, and the following was discussed:

- S. Pietrzyk updated the committee on the collection system
- R. Pudelka gave an update on Plant operations. E. Kelly reported as a note that although the Plant is working extremely well, their experiencing extremely high flows, due to wet weather in January. These flows are pushing the Plant towards its limits. He went on to say that hopefully those numbers will now continue to subside.
- A. Brown gave an update on engineering studies and design, and construction projects
- Perna Lane project update

#### **Workforce Development Committee**

S. Bagwin stated that the Finance Committee was held before the Board meeting and the following occurred:

- R. Bull reported on all the topics discussed in her Administrative Report
- Open positions
- IUOE contract settlement retro payout
- No COVID19 cases reported

### **Financial Update**

#### **CompUtil Report**

L. Roca reported that they're preparing to lien tomorrow night. The collection rate is over 99%, with payments continuing to come in. She stated that currently there are 19,812 active accounts of which 790 or less than 4% of the total accounts will receive a lien. She went on to report that the October bill including today's cash is at 96.35%, and out of the \$11.452 million that was billed, \$417,451 remains to be collected. She stated that the money coming in from payment plans is allocated to the oldest arrears, therefore, the WPCA is in good shape. She concluded by saying that while closings have slowed down, there is an increase in payoffs and foreclosures and that the CompUtil staff is proactive in making reminder calls and staying on top of collections. She said that they are hoping to acquire new accounts and secure sewer connections for billing purposes.

### **Receivables & Arrears**

V. DeCausey reported for the month of January

- \$572,000 total Sewer Usage collection for the month of January

- \$350,000 sewer use & assessment fees collected
- \$13.725 million total Sewer Usage & Assessment & Connection collection for FY' 2023-2024
- 58% of the budget revenues collected YTD
- 95.74% October billing collection rate
- 97.79% of the April bill collected
- Average collection rate 99.36% vs.99.23% last month's

**Pilicy Ryan & Ward, P.C. Collections Report & Update**

T. McKirdy reported the following:

- 240 active files
- 22 accounts with balances above (\$5,000) Foreclosure Threshold
- 1 account with a payment plan that is not in foreclosure, but are over the threshold
- 0 stayed due to bankruptcy filing
- 21 active foreclosures
- 8 accounts foreclosure eligible
- 195 with no payment plan below Foreclosure Threshold
- 15 files referred for the month of January
- 16 Files closed since last meeting
- Collected \$8,167.26 for February
- Total collected for 2024 \$105,252.91

**Executive Director's Top Ten**

B. Brink briefly went over his monthly report; the report will be made a part of these minutes.

**Discussion and Vote: FY 2024-2025 Operating Expense and Revenue Budget**

B. Brink explained the substantial increases/decrease within FY 2024-2025 Operating Expense Summary Budget spreadsheet. He provided an explanation for the increases in the Contracted Services—particularly, the Sludge Processing and Administration Contracted Services line items, the contractual obligations for the Salary accounts and the benefits increases listed to date. After explaining that the Bonds Principal and Interest Expense budget for this fiscal year basically offset each other, he concluded stating that the FY'24-25 Operating and Expense budget would increase by 2.1 percent compared to the FY'23-24 budget. In comparison, the Revenue budget would increase by 1.9 percent due to the amount required for the debt ratio.

After a brief discussion, E. Kelly made a motion to approve the FY25 Operating Expense and Revenue budget of \$28,919,027, a variance of \$591,315, and an increase of 2.1% subject to revisions that will be imposed by OPM, as their numbers move from preliminary to final; seconded by R. Barocas. There was no further discussion. **Vote 7-0-1.** J.R. McMullen abstained.

**Discussion and Vote: First Amendment to Service Contract with Synagro for Operation and Maintenance of the Sludge Dryer to extend the term of the existing contract to September 3, 2024**

B. Brink explained that Synagro contract is set to expire on September 3<sup>rd</sup> and that during the interim, until a new contract is established with Synagro or the firm that submitted an RFP, the terms of the existing contract will remain in place. He said that the only adjustment made will be to the base operating charge, which would normally be made on July 1<sup>st</sup>. He said that this adjustment is based on the increase in the consumer price index averaged over the prior 2 years. He explained that a 3.5% increase has been negotiated that would take effect March 3<sup>rd</sup>, which Synagro has agreed to maintain through July 1<sup>st</sup> of next year. He stated that if they're awarded the contract and continue operations, they are essentially agreeing to retain the base operating charge at the specified rate until July 1<sup>st</sup>. To put that into perspective the increase in the base operating charge will go from \$2.112 million to \$2.186 million.

E. Kelly made a motion to approve the first amendment to the service contract with Synagro for operation and maintenance of the Sludge Dry to extend the term for the existing contract to September 3, 2024; seconded by J.R. McMullen. There was no further discussion. **Vote 8-0-0.**

**Old Business:**

No new business discussed.

**New Business:**

No new business discussed.

At 6:26pm, E. Kelly made a motion to adjourn the February meeting; seconded by R. Barocas. There was no further discussion. **Vote: 8-0-0.**

### Stamford WPCA Top Issues (2/23/24)

No.	Issue	Action Description	Impact	Status	Schedule
1	Service Contract with Synagro to Operate and Maintain Sludge Dryer and Dispose of Sludge Solids expires on March 3, 2024	Evaluate options for operating the sludge dryer and sludge disposal.	Operations and Financial	Sent RFP to two firms deemed qualified after response to RFQ. Had pre-proposal meeting with both firms on 2/8/24.	Proposals are due 3/28/24. Contract amendment to extend the existing contract with Synagro to 9/3/24 is on the Board meeting agenda.
2	Primary sludge pumping and degritting equipment are aged and in need of replacement. Equipment in primary clarifier No. 1 is severely corroded and needs to be replaced.	Upgrade the primary sludge pumping and degritting system with new equipment to improve primary sludge pumping and grit removal. Replace the equipment in Primary Clarifier No. 1	Increase system reliability and improve grit removal to protect downstream equipment.	C H Nickerson completed the installation of the new primary sludge piping and scum line from primary clarifier (PC) No. 1 to the primary sludge pump building and jacked and bored casing for sludge piping from PC No. 2.	Complete installation of primary sludge piping and scum piping from PC No. 2 by end of March. Construction is on schedule for the project to be substantially completed by January 2025.
3	Providing sanitary sewers to Perna Lane Area	Evaluate cost effective options for providing sanitary sewers to the Perna Lane Area.	Operations	Bids were opened on 2/22/24. Grasso Construction is the apparent low bidder with a bid of \$8,263,194.	Review bid documents and if found acceptable award contract by mid-March, execute contract and begin construction beginning of summer.
4	Extreme wet weather - high flow discharge and permit exceedance on 5/1/14. Record rainfall on 7/9/21 and 9/1/21 caused plant flows that approached or exceeded plant capacity.	Perform an Infiltration and Inflow (I/I) Study to identify and remove extraneous flows caused by rainfall and high groundwater	Regulatory and Operations	National Water Main performing sewer rehabilitation in Phase II subareas next on priority list for I/I removal. Have completed sewer lining portion of contract	Will continue with manhole lining and sealing as weather permits.
5	Hurricane barrier gate on East Branch of Stamford Harbor needs repair. Gate may need to be removed for at least 4 to 6 months to do the repair.	Need to evaluate impact of an extreme weather event and storm surge occurring during the gate repair on the treatment plant and three (3) storm water pump stations.	Operations	Army Corps of Engineers currently evaluating the extent of the repair and duration it will be out of service.	Hurricane barrier gate is expected to be inoperable starting January 2025 for 3 to 6 months. SWPCA needs to evaluate impact of storm event on treatment plant without protection of the gate.
6	Personnel Safety	Comply with requirements for arc flash protection.	Operations	Siemens has been retained to perform the arc flash hazard analysis and label electrical switchgear for proper PPE.	Arc flash hazard analysis will take 20 days to model. Estimate up to 2 weeks to check the field data previously collected beginning 3/4/24..

7	Sludge dryer is operating close to its capacity and there are limited options for disposal of sludge cake due to incinerators operating at their capacity and landfills that are closing, or won't accept sludge cake.	SWPCA needs to evaluate its future options for sludge processing and disposal and develop a long term Sludge Management Plan.	Operations	Hazen has finalized the study report and the "road map" to guide our future course of action.	Will continue to monitor the development of sludge treatment technologies, especially pyrolysis and gasification.
8	WPCF evaluations and improvements	Study, design, and construct new plant water and return activated sludge (RAS) and waste activated sludge (WAS) pumps to replace aged equipment and increase operations and energy efficiency.	Regulatory and Operations	Gannett Fleming has completed the basis of design report and started final design. They are sizing the plant water pumps and we will likely add replacement of the booster water pumps for sludge processing due to age of equipment and to achieve energy savings.	Gannett Fleming to complete final design by summer of 2024.
9	Facilities Building 6A which houses SWPCA Collection System, Electricians and Regulatory Compliance staff is deteriorated and has a leaking roof.	Evaluate options for relocating SWPCA staff that currently work in Building 6A	Operations	Collection System Staff have moved into their trailers. WPCA's on call contractor has provided a cost estimate to install a potable water line to trailers and connect trailers to nearby building sewer lateral to eliminate need for bottled water and pumping of trailer belly tank.	City has issued a contract to begin replacing the roofs on the Facilities Buildings, including Building 6A, in December and remediate the building interior.
10	Upgrade Alvord Lane, Commerce Drive and Saddle Rock Pump Stations	Pump Stations are aged and in need of upgrade or replacement	Operations	Tighe & Bond has submitted their draft report and presented their recommendations for the upgrades to the three (3) pump stations to the Technical Committee.	Tighe & Bond to submit a proposal for design of the upgrade of the Saddle Rock Pump Station to be done in FY24 with construction in FY25. Design of Alvord Lane and Commerce Drive PS's to be done in FY25.