

MINUTES
NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL SEWER DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
AUGUST 1, 2024

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS) was called to order at 12:30 p.m. by Darnell Brown.

I. Roll Call

Present: Darnell Brown
Ronald Sulik
Timothy DeGeeter
Samuel Alai
Jack Bacci
Sharon Dumas
Marjorie Chambers

The Secretary informed the President that a quorum was in attendance.

II. Approval of Minutes

MOTION – Mayor Bacci moved, and Ms. Dumas seconded to approve the Minutes of the July 18, 2024, Board Meeting. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

III. Installation of Officer

President Brown invited Eric Luckage, Chief Legal Officer, to administer the Oath of Office to the Board secretary elected at the last meeting. Mr. Luckage administered the Oath of Office to Mayor DeGeeter.

IV. Public Session

Anita Gooch provided the following statement to the Board:

“Hello. My name is Anita Gooch. I’m here asking mercy. I have a son who is unfortunately not able to take care of his property because he isn’t present right now. I have been paying the taxes on the property. Due to a traumatic experience, I have not been able to go back to that property, but I have been paying the taxes.

When I went to pay the taxes this quarter, I was met with a \$5,000 --well, almost \$6,000 lien on the property. And I was told that that lien was because of the water department had put the lien on the property due to the bill. This puts me in a very hard place. I had to retire in 2018, partially due

to these circumstances. So, I'm getting a pension and a social security check and I'm trying to take care of my own household. I left my house to take care of my sister who passed away this June. And it's very strenuous. It's difficult. I'm trying to do my best and do the best that I can, but this bill, it puts me in a vice. And all I can do is ask for mercy on this bill.”

President Brown thanked Ms. Gooch for sharing the information with the Board and asked that Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, Chief Executive Officer, and Constance Haqq, Chief Administrative Officer, perform an assessment of Ms. Gooch's account to determine what potential remedy exists and to report back to the Board. President Brown noted that Ms. Gooch also referenced the City of Cleveland Division of Water and presumably both bills are an issue.

President Brown noted that depending on Ms. Gooch's circumstances and what assistance she qualifies for, she may be eligible for a reduction of up to 40% on her bills, or payment arrangements.

Ms. Haqq introduced Pauletta Hubbard, Manager of Customer Service, to Ms. Gooch and asked that they meet to evaluate Ms. Gooch's potential options. Ms. Haqq explained that because City of Cleveland Division of Water is NEORSD's billing agent, NEORSD staff will reach out to them to see what can be done to assist Ms. Gooch.

Ms. Gooch thanked the Board.

V. Chief Executive Officer's Report

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells advised the Board that on June 10th NEORSD hosted a walkthrough of the Chippewa Creek Flood Reduction Near Echo Lane project in Broadview Heights with Mayor Alai, current and past members of Broadview Heights City Council, and City staff. The project is nearly complete and restores 2,000 linear feet of Chippewa Creek at the North Royalton and Broadview Heights border near Wallings Road. The project includes an increase in floodplain capacity to address chronic overland flooding, which this neighborhood has experienced for many years, as well as upsizing of a culverted portion of the stream in the right of way and the creation of a local stormwater control measure in partnership with the City of Broadview Heights.

The project began in 2019 and included a total of 27 property transactions necessary to gain floodplain and stormwater storage along Chippewa Creek. NEORSD is grateful to the community for their patience throughout the project. Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells thanked Derek Vogel, Project Manager, and Anne Schilling, Watershed Team Leader, who organized the tour, as well as NEORSD and Broadview Heights staff who supported the event.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells congratulated Tracey Phelps, Deputy Director of Operation and Maintenance, for his recognition in Who's Who in Black Cleveland. On July 22nd, NEORSD participated in a celebration where Mr. Phelps was recognized as a 2024 Game Changer for his commitment to helping others succeed.

In addition to overseeing daily operation of the Southerly Wastewater Treatment Center (WWTC) and its 170 employees, Mr. Phelps has served as a mentor to many while serving on Ohio EPA's Operator Certification Advisory Council for 10 years from 2011 to 2020, as well as supporting high school and college students that come through NEORSD, including the two Louis Stokes scholars who discussed the positive impact that Mr. Phelps had on them during their time at NEORSD in their final presentation.

Last week, the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) held its annual Utility Leadership Conference in Buffalo, New York. In addition to the usual discussions regarding PFAS, nutrients, and affordability, the annual Peak Performance Awards recognized utilities for achievements in NPDES compliance. NEORSD was honored this year as the Southerly WWTC received the Silver Peak Performance Award for 2023; the Westerly WWTC received the Gold Peak Performance Award; and the Easterly Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) received the Platinum Peak Performance Award, which recognizes five years of continuous permit compliance. The Easterly WWTP has 1,436 annual compliance points and has not missed a single one in five years.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells advised that leadership from each WWTP was in attendance: Terry Robinson, Superintendent of the Southerly WWTC; Travis Pitts, Superintendent of the Westerly WWTC; and Bob Bonnett, Superintendent of the Easterly WWTP. The Board offered congratulations and took photos with the Superintendents and their awards.

VI. Action Items

Authorization to Advertise

Resolution No. 187-24 Authorization to publish notice calling for bids, in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section 6119.10, for a public improvement contract for the REF Steam Sample Panel Installation project with estimated probable construction costs of \$310,000.00.

MOTION – Mayor Bacci moved, and Mr. Sulik seconded to adopt Resolution No. 187-24. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Issue Request for Proposals (RFP)

Resolution No. 188-24 Authorization to issue an RFP, in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Chapter 6119, for one or more professional services agreements for General Right of Way Services, in a total amount not-to-exceed \$2,000,000.00 for all agreements combined.

MOTION –Mr. Sulik moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded to adopt Resolution No. 188-24. After the following discussion, without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

President Brown noted that it appears that NEORSD has previously awarded a similar contract and requested additional information as to what the services might entail.

Eric Luckage, Chief Legal Officer, explained that this RFP is for the same right-of-way property acquisition services that NEORSD currently receives in the two agreements from 2017, which are nearing exhaustion of the \$2 million total that was authorized at that time. The services include initial appraisal services, negotiations, relocation services, closing and title work, as well as limited management of certain properties after acquisition, but before project commencement. There is a separate contract for secondary appraisal review. There are a limited number of firms in this space and NEORSD anticipates returning to the Board for approval to award up to three contracts following the RFP process, for a combined total of \$2 million, which is expected to last six to seven years before exhaustion, similar to the 2017 agreements. President Brown indicated that it is helpful to understand the expected duration of this amount of funding.

Authorization to Purchase

Resolution No. 189-24 Authorization to purchase a Flygt Model 3301.185 submersible sump pump from sole source supplier Buckeye Pumps, Inc., necessary to maintain operation of the Westerly Wastewater Treatment Center’s centrate sump system, in an amount not-to-exceed \$79,674.27.

Resolution No. 190-24 Authorization to renew annual software licenses, maintenance, and support services from sole source vendor Carahsoft Technology Corp for the District’s Salesforce cloud software for the period August 23, 2024 through August 22, 2025, in an amount not-to-exceed \$191,356.16.

MOTION – Mayor Alai moved, and Mayor Bacci seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 189-24 through 190-24. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Enter Into Agreement

Resolution No. 191-24 Authorization to enter into agreements with twenty (20) public entities to fund twenty-seven (27) Member Community Infrastructure Program projects for the 2025 round of funding, as presented, in the total amount not-to-exceed \$24,945,396.94.

Resolution No. 192-24 Authorization to enter into a professional services agreement with Richard L. Bowen & Associates, Inc. for design and construction

administration/resident project representation services on the District Wide Space Improvements project in an amount not-to-exceed \$1,829,705.38.

Resolution No. 193-24 Authorization to enter into a professional services agreement with Wade Trim, Inc. for the Chagrin River, Lake Erie Direct Tributaries, Rocky River, and Black River Spherical Imagery project in an amount not-to-exceed \$579,117.00.

Resolution No. 194-24 Authorization to enter into a project agreement with West Creek Conservancy (WCC) to provide funding toward the acquisition of PPN 446-24-012, located within the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) 100-year floodplain along West Creek in the City of Parma, and the demolition of an existing structure and restoration on the parcel, for permanent protection of the floodplain area, all as necessary for the operation and maintenance of the Regional Stormwater System, with a District contribution toward project costs in an amount not-to-exceed \$180,000.00, combined with \$100,000.00 from the Cleveland Metroparks, and \$50,000.00 from the District's Annual District Contribution budget with the Watershed Stewardship Center, for a total project cost not-to-exceed \$330,000.00.

MOTION – Mr. Sulik moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded to adopt Resolution No. 191-24. After the following discussion, without objection, by roll-call vote, with all present members voting yes, and recusal from discussion and abstention from voting by Mayor Bacci and Mayor DeGeeter, the motion carried.

President Brown noted that NEORSD received several requests to participate in the Member Community Infrastructure Program (MCIP) this year and is able to accommodate most of the requests. President Brown requested an explanation specifically regarding the Cleveland Metroparks.

Matt Scharver, Director of Watershed Programs, explained that, as it relates to Cleveland Metroparks, every funding round brings new opportunities and challenges. The review committee reconvenes after each round to revisit any challenges or opportunities found in the current round, then the review committee updates the policy process and procedures.

The total award request for this year is \$24.9 million and the Board authorized \$25 million. There are 27 recommended projects across 20 different public entities, with 15 of those projects in the equity investment focus area for an investment of \$14.8 million and 12 standard projects with an investment of \$10 million. Mr. Scharver provided a map demonstrating the project areas.

Including this current round of funding, in the nine years since the program's inception, NEORS has contributed a total of \$102 million worth of investments combined with \$104 million in contributions from member communities and partners, for a grand total of \$206 million in funding for local infrastructure improvements. This has resulted in the remediation of over 4,000 basement backups, the elimination or control of nearly 60 sanitary sewer overflows, removal of over 2,000 home sewage treatment systems, and installation of 63 miles of new or replaced local collection system in the service area.

President Brown stated that the MCIP provides an opportunity to work with member communities on projects arising from their review of the condition of their systems and asked how many applications were received this year. Mr. Scharver explained that NEORS received 28 applications and awarded 27 of those projects. President Brown clarified that the one project that was not awarded belonged to a community that did receive other awards and the one project that was not awarded was due to a capacity issue.

MOTION – Ms. Dumas moved, and Mayor Bacci seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 192-24 through 194-24. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Assign

Resolution No. 195-24 Authorization to assign professional services Agreement No. 22002305 with United Training Commercial, LLC dba New Horizons to New Horizons Learning, LLC dba New Horizons, for educational opportunities in a variety of developmental topics for District staff as part of the Suite of Facilitators, with all current terms and conditions of the agreement to remain unchanged under the assignment.

MOTION – Mayor Bacci moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded to adopt Resolution No. 195-24. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

VII. Information Items

President Brown advised the Board that the Financial Report and Investment Advisor Performance Report for the six-month period ending June 30, 2024, was contained in the meeting materials and any questions or concerns should be directed to Ken Duplay, Chief Financial Officer, separately.

Frank Foley, Director of Operation and Maintenance, provided the O&M report for the second quarter of 2024, beginning with safety. There were no lost or restricted workdays due to workplace incidents in the second quarter. The DART rate was essentially cut in half through the second quarter as there was one event in the first quarter and none in the second quarter.

Regarding effluent quality, there were no exceedances of limits in the second quarter. Total suspended solids and carbonaceous biochemical oxygen demand (CBOD) were well below accepted limits. Staff continue to work at the Westerly WWTC to optimize the ferric chloride feed to reduce phosphorus, though it is also within acceptable limits. *E. coli* monitoring began on May 1, and there have been no issues at any of the three WWTPs.

Mr. Foley provided a chart demonstrating the cost of maintenance of all assets with an Asset Impact Index of 0-10 and explained that the cost of maintenance at the Southerly WWTC is \$2.6 million through the second quarter, which is more than the rest of the facilities combined. In terms of preventative maintenance versus corrective maintenance, the collection system has higher proportion of preventative maintenance costs and the WWTPs where there is more machinery, have a higher proportion of corrective maintenance costs.

The collection system did not have any dry weather overflows in the second quarter. There was one in the first quarter due to debris in the system. During wet weather, automated equipment was available 100% of the time.

There are 11 budget centers in O&M with a combined operating budget of \$71.25 million for 2024. Through the first two quarters of the year, approximately \$32.5 million was spent, which is a variance of \$3.2 million, if spending was evenly distributed. Four accounts primarily contribute to the variance: electricity, chemicals, maintenance hourly wages, and sludge hauling and disposal. Through the first two quarters O&M spent approximately \$900,000 more than last year.

There have been 9 promotions or transfers within O&M during the second quarter including Brian Flanagan being promoted to Superintendent of Renewable Energy Facility, Brandy Reischman, a longtime NEORS employee was promoted to Assistant Superintendent of Plants at the Southerly WWTC, and two new employees joined O&M from outside of NEORS.

Mr. Foley explained that the Utility Maintenance Technician Pilot Program has been in development for approximately one year as a collaborative effort between HR and O&M staff including Sharon Smith, HR Manager of Training; Travis Pitts, Superintendent of Plants; and Joe Yance, Superintendent of Plant Maintenance. While open to all Local 2798 union employees that are not already in a skilled craft, the program is focused on union employees that are in custodial and maintenance worker positions to provide an opportunity for advancement. It was discovered that some staff struggle with the assessment required for entry into the maintenance training program and this program is intended to provide an opportunity for staff to move up into the Utility Maintenance Technician position and qualify for entry into the Maintenance Training Program.

Custodial Worker is an entry level position, Maintenance Worker is the next step up and under this program, Utility Maintenance Technician will be the next step after completion of the training. This is the last step before entry into the Maintenance Training Program for skilled crafts.

The pilot program will have ten Local 2798 staff participants, based on seniority. The program will span from August 2024 through Spring 2026. There will be seven to eight classes depending on each candidate's score on a math assessment, that are common to each of the skilled crafts. Graduates of the program will be promoted into the Utility Maintenance Technician Program and will be qualified for the next maintenance training class.

The anticipated benefits of the program are to improve the knowledge base of maintenance staff across O&M; to provide an opportunity for advancement for staff; and to shorten the duration of the maintenance training program, as those staff will have already completed some of the necessary classes.

Mr. Foley introduced John Boyd and Lamont Murph, both Plant Maintenance Managers at the Easterly WWTP who have been performing boiler systems improvements over the past couple of years. Mr. Murph joined NEORS D in 2007 and Mr. Boyd joined in 2011. They both began their full-time employment as Custodial Workers and have worked their way up through the Maintenance Training Program. Mr. Boyd also holds a Class 2 Ohio EPA Wastewater Operator Certification.

Mr. Boyd explained that there are two boiler stations and provided photographs of the boilers and graphics demonstrating the areas heated by the boilers, the Headworks Building, and related systems. Since 2022, NEORS D has spent approximately \$300,000 for repairs in the boiler systems. Last year, staff conducted a steam trap survey to determine necessary repairs and reduce costs. Staff also performed repairs on the condensate return stations, and the chemical feed system. Lastly, there is a Headworks Deaeration Tank project underway. The tank was purchased for the Headworks Building last year at a cost of \$163,000 and since it was received in May, approximately \$80,000 additionally has been spent on materials and supplies for its installation.

Mr. Murph explained that the steam traps in the Easterly WWTP are approximately 20 years old. The steam trap survey identified 348 traps throughout the WWTP, 109 of which required repair or replacement. Mr. Murph provided photographs of steam traps and condensate return stations and explained that repairs were made to most of the 21 condensate return stations, including to the flow switches and seized up pump motors.

Staff also improved water chemistry through daily monitoring of the water via NexGen and E-Logger, as well as developing a dashboard to monitor trends at each boiler station.

Mr. Murph provided a photo of the headworks deaeration tank, which removes dissolved gases such as oxygen and carbon dioxide which cause corrosion by forming oxides and rust. Elimination of the gases helps to protect the boiler components and extend their lifespan. The deaeration tank also stores treated condensate water.

Mr. Murph provided photos of the old rusted deaeration tank, the new tank and associated water softening system and explained that installation of the new system is underway and anticipated to

be completed by November 2024. The updates should result in better boiler performance with less corrective work, increased condensate recovery, and improved asset management.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells added that Mr. Boyd and Mr. Murph's presentations are very helpful to senior staff to understand the complexity and significance of these systems.

VIII. Open Session

Mayor Alai offered his appreciation to everyone involved in the Chippewa Creek Flood Reduction Near Echo Lane project in Broadview Heights, stating that the results were better than expected. He was approached by a resident who stated that their yards look beautiful after the completion of the project.

Mayor Alai offered his appreciation to retired mayor and former NEORS Board member Robert Stefanik who had helped initiate the project several years ago. The project created drainage area for stormwater water come from the southern end of Parma, North Royalton, and Broadview Heights.

IX. Public Session (any subject matter)

There were no items.

X. Executive Session

There were no items.

XI. Approval of Items from Executive Session

There were no items.

XII. Adjournment

MOTION – President Brown stated business having been concluded, he would entertain a motion to adjourn. Mayor Bacci moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded the motion to adjourn at 1:13 p.m. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.



Timothy J. DeGeeter, Secretary
Board of Trustees
Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District



Darnell Brown, President
Board of Trustees
Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District