Onondaga County Legislature

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Clerk

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Chairman

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Deputy Clerk

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE MINUTES – JANUARY 17, 2023
JULIE ABBOTT, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Cody, Ms. Kuhn, Mr. McBride, Mr. Garland
ALSO ATTENDING: **Mr. Ryan;** also see attached

Chair Abbott called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. ***The minutes of the previous meeting had been distributed, and there were no objections to waiving the reading. There were no corrections to the minutes, and the minutes were approved.***

1. **SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT:**
   a. **Confirming Reappointment to the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District Board (Carlton Conklin)**

A motion was made by Mr. McBride, seconded by Ms. Cody to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED

2. **WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION:** Shannon Harty, Commissioner
   a. **BOND: A resolution Approving Improvements for the Onondaga County Sanitary District in and for the County of Onondaga, New York**
   b. **BOND: A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of $53,204,000 Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to Pay Costs of Certain Improvements for the Onondaga County Sanitary District in and for Said County ($53,204,000)**

- New Deputy Commissioner of Capital Programs, Eric Schuler
  - Licensed engineer in the private and public sector; came to WEP from the Mohawk Valley Water Authority
  - Will manage Capital Programs
- Capital projects done in 2 parts:
  - Ask for funds/authorization to do engineering (scope out project and have better idea of construction estimates)
  - Come back for construction funding authorization
- All projects funded out of special districts
  - Main one is Sanitary District: sewer infrastructure, sewer mains, wastewater treatment plants, CSO facilities, pump stations, etc.
  - Also administer 4 special districts related to drainage:
    - Meadowbrook, Bear Trap-Ley Creek, Harbor Brook, Bloody Brook
  - Two part authorization:
    - 1) Project resolution authorizing to take on project
    - 2) Bond resolution that gets adopted to authorize the funds associated with it
    - 2a and 2c are not bonds, but project authorization
- Capital Improvement Program from 2023-2028 presented to the Legislature in the fall of 2022
- $53.2M in capital investments that WEP is looking to take on in 2023 – carrying on in subsequent years for consolidated Sanitary District
- High level major construction starting this year:
  - Baldwinsville-Seneca Knolls WWTP - $16M for new clarifier
    - Part 3 of 4 of asset renewal investments happening at Baldwinsville Wastewater Treatment Plant (disinfection, starting up new sludge digesters; belt filter press improvements and clarifiers)

        - Engineering and design for aeration upgrades at Baldwinsville
    - Brewerton Wastewater Plant - Designing upgrades for clarifiers
    - Metro - $700,000 miscellaneous work; other large projects happening that have been authorized
    - Oak Orchard
        - Not looking for a lot of additional funding this year
        - Micron - developing what scope of services and upgrades are needed
    - Wetzel Road Wastewater Treatment Plant
        - Almost 15 years old; looking at developing engineering plans for what the next 5, 15, 20 years of capital investments to renew this facility will be
    - Davis Road Pump Station - $8.9M
        - Originally had $10.2M authorized funding; bid last year, but with construction inflation, materials and supply costs, bids came in over budget
        - Seeking additional funding to cover increased costs and address additional issues
    - Last two projects under the Consolidated Sanitary District:
        - Department wide; general miscellaneous (electrical, HAVC, upgrades that happen throughout the facilities); looking for $8.6M in improvements
        - Conveyance investments included in CIP; $11.86M: $5M for engineering, $6.6M for constructing investment in trunk sewers, pump stations, and investments to CSO and RTF facilities
    - Including in all department lines, $2M placeholder for potential emergency repairs
        - $1M for conveyance emergencies, $1M for Wastewater Treatment Plant

Questions and Comments:

- Does WEP have to come back to Legislature to spend the $1M?
    - Think of it as an emergency line of credit
    - If major emergency repair that they need to hire a contractor to (i.e.) dig out a forcemain, WEP has up to $1M to spend
    - Historically WEP had cash sitting in an account; taking different approach to cash management
    - 2023 budget took big hit in cash for capital to cover (zeroed out cash for capital in operating budget)
    - Without being able to use the cash, WEP is now making it up in bond proceeds

- Are other projects included in the $62M, and explain why some talk about cash when the whole thing is a bond
    - Yes, other is included
    - If there is cash, it was either moved in 2022, or cash anticipating - when they can recover 960's funds in operating budget for 2024; hoping to get back to using cash
    - Everything in '23 capital improvement plan will be bonded

- Have there been any energy efficiency studies done prior to this, and is it included?
    - WEP did the NYSERDA FlexTech Study – looked at energy conservation measures (ECM)
    - Most recent investments:
        - Upgrade and replace mixers at Oak Orchard
        - Upgrading large sludge pumps at Metro – putting on variable frequency drives, instead of running on constant speed; can ramp up and down
        - Replacing blowers at Metro for aeration system (high efficiency turbo blowers)
        - One of the biggest conservation measures in construction now are the sludge driers; biggest returns

- Were energy studies needed or required for the $52M?
    - Not aware of any
    - Will be taking a look at way WEP is scoping and developing projects; make sure there is good return on investment

- If there is a component to energy efficiency, is that included in the cost, or would the county be looking at more?
    - When WEP comes back to Legislature with CIP later this year, there will be different analysis
    - With time, they will get to a place where they will look at things not just from asset renewal, but look at chemical costs, water usage
    - Will make sure capital program is helping to control operating side of budget

- Is the cash from fund balance, and what is the WEP fund balance?
  - Two separate accounts: operating and capital fund
  - If cash in capital account, it was moved in a prior year out of operating budget as a 960's allocation
  - Looking at old operating budgets, 960 account is cash moved at beginning of fiscal year

- Does WEP have a standing balance?
  - Yes; do not have the exact numbers on either account, but can get it

- When something goes wrong, how much does it cost, what are the challenges of not having money on hand, and how critical is it to have that money? Why is this vital?
  - Funding line covers WEP, not really cash sitting aside
  - (i.e.) home equity line of credit on a house – people have budget and routine maintenance like furnace or driveway needing replacement; then septic tank collapses; where do they get that money? "Rainy day fund"
  - If there is not a "rainy day fund", then (i.e.) roof does not get replaced; roof has to last to get the money back up
  - Insurance policy to make sure they have ability to be responsive and have funding available to deal with true emergencies

- Clarify the difference between the $1M and fund balance
  - 2 very different things
  - WEP does not have access to fund balance in operating – have to go to Legislature for budget amendment; 2-3 month process, not timely for emergency
  - Have to have line of credit; need to be able to move it in an emergency

A motion was made by Mr. Garland, seconded by Ms. Kuhn to approve items 2a and 2b. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED

c. BOND: A. Resolution Approving Proposed Improvements for the Harbor Brook Drainage District in and for the County of Onondaga, New York

d. BOND: A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of $290,000 Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to Pay Costs of Improvements for the Harbor Brook Drainage District ($290,000)

- One of four drainage districts in the Valley along Grant Ave.
- WEP owns detention basin and dam associated with Harbor Brook flood management
- $290,000 for engineering and repairs to work on dam to keep up to code

Question:

- Is it the dam before channel starts where Harbor Brook basin was?
  - Yes, Velasko Road
  - It is for engineering and repairs to fortify dam itself; banks are starting to slop; spillway needs to be established
  - Anytime it discharges, force of water going over the top of it erodes it
  - Will be re-establishing all the proper grade line

- The biggest complaint is debris getting in there backing it up before it gets there, where Wilbur Ave comes underneath
  - Separate issue to this; some work happening under FEMA project will be looking at hydrology of each creek with water and volumes of what is coming through
  - This project is strictly for the dam at the detention basin

A motion was made by Mr. McBride, seconded by Ms. Cody to approve items 2c and 2d. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 1:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Kaminski

DEBBIE KAMINSKI, Assistant Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE**
DATE: **JANUARY 17, 2023**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Shannon Harvey	WEP
Eric Schuler	WEP
Darcie Lesniak	Leg
Jim Beebe	Leg
John DeSantis	Leg
Chris Ryan	Leg.
Ben Yaus	Law