



Onondaga County Legislature

JAMIE McNAMARA
Clerk

JAMES J. ROWLEY
Chairman

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE – MARCH 15, 2022 JULIE ABBOTT, CHAIRPERSON

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Chase, Ms. Kuhn, Dr. Kelly

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. McBride

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Spillane, Mr. Mulvihill, Mr. Barrigar, Mr. Snyder, Mr. Hennessey, Ms. Murphy, Ms. Harty

Chairperson Abbott called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. *A motion was made by Ms. Kuhn and seconded by Dr. Chase to waive the reading of the minutes of the previous committee. MOTION CARRIED. A motion was made by Dr. Chase and seconded by Dr. Kelly to approve the minutes of the previous committee. MOTION CARRIED.*

1. SOIL & WATER:

a. Confirming Appointment to the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District Board (James Pollard)

Ms. Abbott:

- I will be sponsoring this resolution – Marcellus Grange has put up James Pollard – any discussion

A motion was made by Dr. Chase, seconded by Dr. Kelly to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED

2. WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION: Shannon Harty, P.E., Commissioner

a. Personnel Resolution

Ms. Harty:

- Would like to take the informational portion first – see below for informational
- Oversees four major functions – boots on the ground is managed by David Snyder, regulatory compliance programs with DEC and EPA – position vacant – have a candidate that has a tremendous amount of expertise – seeking authorization to hire at an advance step
- Second position is under David Snyder – oversees the six wastewater treatment facilities – we have a head operator helping – seeking to advance step him to put him into this position – will allow us to decrease overtime – leads to diminished oversight of water treatment plants
- Answered Dr. Chase's question about a presentation on salary restructuring a few months ago - these positions are fully funded vacant positions – have the authorization to hire up to a step 3 – in order to go beyond that need legislature approval – no budget impact

A motion was made by Ms. Kuhn, seconded by Dr. Kelly to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED

b. INFORMATIONAL: 2022 OCDWEP Strategic Initiatives

Ms. Harty:

- David Snyder and Marty Hennessey joined her today – may ask for their help during Q&A
- A lot of discussions and concerns with residents with wet weather – basement backups – many conversations to see

what could be done to eliminate those – rather than launch into a powerpoint presentation – will tell you a story

- Picture a condo in a large building built several decades ago – all interconnected with electrical and plumbing – all separate owners – handyman works there – knows the building inside and out – jots down things in notebooks but mostly in his head – knows when it rains it pours into the basement – an addition was added a few years ago made it worse – no time to put all his notes together – pipes don't work – could be grease, wipes, rainwater – maybe pipes are too small – could be big trees with roots in pipes – could hire workers but where would they start and how much money would they need
- That building is the countywide sewer system – those units are municipalities – those pipes are Onondaga County (“OC”) – went out and tried to solve the problems – over time as system has grown – they know the hot spots – when it rains we have to go check those hotspots – hotspots have grown – those with knowledge have retired – challenging the reliability of the system – have to change the way we do business – have an opportunity as our workforce is turning over – have to prioritize – what type of equipment is needed – where should we be targeting – public outreach and communication – how they could help solve the problem
- Workforce are younger – doing all the jobs they need to do – have a plan – didn't get into the situation overnight – a utility issue that is playing out across the country – all new pipes are aging at the same time- focus has been on the end of the pipe – that's where compliance is – have to now look at the system – how it's functioning and how it works – won't be easy and will take time with right talent – no finish line – have to change the mindset – focusing on making ourselves a little bit better than we were yesterday
- Have the data for house calls – each dot represents a home that has sewer backup that WEP responded to
- Shows over 8,000 house calls over two years – data shows where we need to go
- 75% of OC population serviced by WEP – not going to see any in city because we don't do house calls – Village of Baldwinsville will not be shown as WEP doesn't serve them
- This shows you this is the way to look at things going forward – shows the magnitude of the problem – data allows us to drill down – vision of WEP for 2022

Dr. Kelly:

- The clusters make sense – why the isolated incidents
- How does one person be fine and remainder of neighbors are fine

Ms. Harty:

- Centered around Solvay, Geddes and Camillus
- Subdivisions built in 1950 – clay tile pipes were used – old dry brittle pipe installed in 2' section so every section has potential for infiltration
- Might be footer drains and sump pumps that were connected
- Answered Dr. Kelly's question – pipe collapsed, blockage, tree roots – many different scenerios

Mr. Snyder:

- Could be a lateral issue – the pipes going to that house

Ms. Kuhn:

- At some point the county and city intersect – who is responsible for that
- Ms. Harty answered OC has expanded so pipes may not be large enough — hard to say it is just the pipe – bigger isn't always better with pipes – could be tree roots and infiltration

Ms. Harty:

- County does own trunk sewers that go through the city – there would be an investigation to see whose pipe is blocked – challenge of the ownership issue – at what point is the restriction
- If the pipe is big enough it may need to be cleaned or lined to eliminate roots – have to start with engineering calculations

Ms. Abbott:

- Not sexy to sell to homeowners however very important – where do you begin and what is timeframe
- You mentioned FEMA – any monies available – Ms. Harty answered several hundred homes were flooded – sent a storm surge all the way to Metro – there is mitigation that can be done but where, what and how

Ms. Harty:

- Would start by building a management team – we have piles of data and information but need people to go through the data – how do you group it, how do you sort it – need to figure out how to analyze the data – need the right people to look at this data – hope by the end of 2022 we have the right team
- We could work with plumbing control to mitigate risks – been talking to FEMA – could put in a basement pump
- Giant elephant – up to the challenge – have the electronic tool to collect the data – looking to get it mobile on smartphones so we can get it faster and more accurate
- Good vision for the next 20 years

Dr. Kelly:

- What sort of benchmarks do we use for risk mitigation – where is the breakeven point

Ms. Harty:

- Good question – as FEMA comes in they will guide us with the best practices

Ms. Abbott:

- One of the things that is difficult – no pipes, drains, etc. are able to handle that kind of rainfall

Ms. Harty:

- Forces you to look at a higher level – what are we allowing for building homes – finished basements for example – take proactive measures is a start – not expect utility to handle it all

Mr. Ryan:

- We did FEMA maps a few years ago – skunk city was put into the updated flood maps – Ms. Harty answered can't speak to that ask Dan Kwasnowski
- Homes that weren't in flood zone were put into the flood zone and homes could not afford insurance – had to move or live without insurance –
- Some was mitigated by Harbor Brook

Ms. Harty:

- Until we dive into data it's hard to understand

Mr. Ryan:

- A lot of moving parts on why the red dots are there – we need to work collaboratively to fix these issues – no fewer than 6 factors – we can't mandate towns to participate in a consolidation but they should

Mr. Rowley:

- You mentioned consolidation and it seems to have been stalled – what is the next step –

Mr. Harty:

- Don't have a timeline on the next phase – only been 9 months as commissioner – had two major storms and a lot of retirements – focusing on rebuilding – have an incredible personnel budget – we need to build out our management team so work could be pushed down – all wearing a lot of hats – as we fill in senior positions we should know better – starting to look at the solutions – if not a lease agreement how do we transition – there will be more to come

Mr. Rowley:

- How it works today WEP approves development – do you know how many municipalities
- Ms. Harty answered have talked to town officials and they are having problems with drainage – role or desire to regulate surface drainage plan – not enough water retention basins built

Ms. Harty:

- It is a problem – north area doesn't stay separate – have sump pumps connected – it's a lot to get into the drainage – it's a huge problem

Mr. Rowley:

- Any more discussions with the city and MBLs – Ms. Harty answered no

Ms. Kuhn:

- What about FEMA grants – Ms. Harty answered there isn't an individual grant application – it's a public assistant program that OC has been deemed eligible

Ms. Harty:

- Now I would like to go back and present the personnel resolution

Ms. Abbott:

- City put in a pesticide application to the DEC and was kicked back because sup to have a draft environmental study – part has to do that it is an unfiltered drinking source – puts us in a different grant category from NYS – city has gone forward with the request – didn't put out a 30 day notification to lakehome owners – Skaneateles Country Club was named – copper kills things – would not be able to swim or fish – no one has been notified

Dr. Chase:

- Not true – the lake assoc did a lot of educational things about the copper situation

Ms. Abbott:

- That was after the fact – judge required it goes to DEC – don't know if they are going to pull the application – feel like we need to be partners and communicate with them

Ms. Kuhn:

- DEIS has been done – Ms. Abbott answered it has been done but it's an ongoing thing that communication is the biggest part going forward – a lot of tourism, quality of life

Mr. Ryan:

- Need more communication between the city and the town – Ms. Abbott answered – if your backyard is sprayed with something that kills everything you should be informed

Mr. Ryan:

- City of Syracuse has applied for it but didn't notify homeowners – answer – didn't do the due diligence – city wants to keep the unfiltered but want to have the tool in their toolbox

Ms. Abbott:

- Whole point is you have to have communication and violated 30 day requirement – up to DEC to decide

Ms. Kuhn:

- City notified by legal notice in paper – Ms. Abbott answered homeowners weren't aware – town didn't notify

Dr. Chase:

- Lake George talked about how unarmful it is

Abbott

- Others will tell you copper kills everything – could have been avoided if it was communicated - copper doesn't dissolve it stays as a sediment – just trying to properly inform everyone – competing interests but communication is key

A motion was made by Ms. Kuhn, seconded by Mr. McBride to adjourn the meeting. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 2:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

MELANIE VILARDI, Deputy Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE

DATE: MARCH 15, 2022

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Kevin Spillane	OCRRA
Dan Mulvihill	Financial Operations
Michael Barrigou	Comptrollers
DAVE Snyder	OCDEP
MARTIN HENNESSEY	OCDEP
TENESHA Murphy	CE