

**LITCHFIELD WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**Litchfield Firehouse, 258 West Street, Litchfield, CT 06759**

**January 8, 2026, at 7:00 pm**

- **CALL TO ORDER:** C. Levesque called the regular meeting of the Litchfield WPCA to order at 7:19 pm.

- **ROLL CALL**

Present: Members present were Chris Levesque (Chairman), John Bongiorno (BOS Liaison), Ken Merz, Bill Buckley, Keith Shortsleeve, Raz Alexe PW Director, and Ted Donoghue, Plant Superintendent.

Absent: Kate Honan

**3) SEATING ALTERNATES:** None seated.

**4. MINUTES:**

**Motion:** J. Bongiorno put forth a motion to accept the 12/18/25 WPCA special meeting minutes. W. Buckley discussed that some of the numbering seemed wrong on the paragraphs. T. Donoghue reviewed and noted several paragraphs were mistakenly numbered as agenda items. J. Bongiorno amended his motion to include the corrections that will be needed to be made. K. Shortsleeve seconded and there was no further discussion. All members voted “aye” and the motion was carried. W. Buckley abstained.

**5. REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN. No update.**

**6. DISCUSSION RE: CAPITOL PLANNING WORKING GROUP: DEFINE OBJECTIVES AND MEETING SCHEDULE.** Discussion began on agenda item 9.

**7. DISCUSSION RE: LWPCA BOOKKEEP INTERGRATION INTO TOWN HALL.**

- Demonstrated streamlined search using a unique ID (e.g., 01-6-002); access requires the unique ID from mailed bills and is not a public record.

- Instructional materials available; process validated at six clicks to locate bills.
- Online meeting with QDS and Invoice Cloud addressed portal issues: excessive filters, hidden unique ID, lack of record linkage across accounts, and interest not calculating in Invoice Cloud.
- Debugging performed; unique ID highlighted; interest calculation addressed; “Pay your sewer” button added on town site with dropdown.
- Concern remains about reliability, with ~300 lien notices pending.
- Conclusion:
- Portal changes deployed; verification needed to confirm functionality end-to-end (unique ID lookup, account linkage, interest calculation) before lien notices are sent.

## **7. CONSIDERATION AND POTENTIAL ACTION**

### **a. REFERRAL TO BOARD OF SELECTMAN-SEWER USE RULES AND REGULATIONS REVISIONS.**

#### **i. ORDINANCE CONCERNING COLLECTION AND ENFORCEMENT OF WPCA SEWER USER CHARGES.**

- Delinquent Accounts, Liens, and Collections Policy Alignment
  - Plan to send approximately 300 liens for late payments; estimates of total delinquent accounts ranged from ~1,300 to ~1,500, with interest charges and bounced checks noted.
  - Internal collection policy shared; town ordinances reference state statutes for enforcement/collection.
  - Motion made, seconded, and passed to refer sewer use rules/regulation revisions and an ordinance concerning collection and enforcement to the Board of Selectmen, including authorization to use the state marshal.
  - Thresholds/ranges in internal policy may need adjustment for progressive steps.
  - Conclusion:
  - Move forward with drafting and referring an ordinance to the Board of Selectmen and revising internal policy thresholds; coordinate with town leadership. J. Bongiorno (BOS liaison) will bring this forth to the next BOS meeting for review and approval of changes submitted by the WPCA.
  - Review of Commercial/Industrial Sewer Billing Practices and AR Comparatives
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- Discussion of prior subjective methodology (bathrooms, business units, seats) vs. current usage-based billing using EDUs and Aquarion water data.

- Noted large disparities; example of a corrected bill at \$11,000 vs. prior \$816; concern residential customers may have subsidized underbilled businesses.
  - Acknowledged leak exceptions where water did not reach wastewater treatment; need policy for handling verified leaks.
  - Desire for A/R report comparing last year vs. this year by customer to assess impacts of metered use and EDU changes; some accounts shifted substantially (e.g., 2 EDUs to 7), while others decreased (e.g., Brandywine).
  - Technical access issues noted; a spreadsheet report of user-level billing for 2024 exists and will be shared.
  - Conclusion:
  - Current year billing corrected to actual usage; a report will be prepared to review historical commercial/industrial billing (FY2021–FY2026) and user-level comparisons to guide next steps and potential EDU price adjustments.
  - Back-billing Policy and Collection Practices
  - Common practice allows back-billing 2–3 years for billing errors; payment plans may be set up; example of large user potentially facing back-billing based on actual usage treated.
  - Conclusion:
  - Back-billing within 2–3 years is defensible and may be pursued where underbilling occurred, with payment plans as needed, but more discussion is needed before a decision like this will be considered.
- Motion:** J. Bongiorno put forth a motion to have the ordinance concerning collection and enforcement of WPCA sewer user charges, including the use of the Marshal, brought forth to the Board of Selectman for review and approval. W. Buckley seconded and there was no further discussion. All members voted “aye” and the motion carried.

- **FOLLOW UP: RE: TECHNICAL MEMORANDA 3 & 4 - WOODARD & CURRAN**

- Decision to conduct capital planning as a full group outside regular meetings to review Woodward & Curran and DPC reports.
- Objectives: define collection system condition, quantify infiltration/inflow, prioritize projects, align with funding and delinquent/mis-billing recovery.

- Scheduling options: monthly dedicated session; pre-meeting session starting at 6:15–6:30 pm with regular meeting at 7:00 pm, but we can start late as 7:30 pm if needed; public meeting requirements noted for sessions with more than three members.
- “Task six” previously removed; concern about commitments to DEP; contacts (Graham Stevens, Brian Mitchell) to be engaged; position that state funding should align with state-requested scope; DEP cost-share potential discussed (e.g., 55%).
- Conclusion:
- Tentative agreement to start a subcommittee/public working session at 6:15 prior to regular meetings; administrative follow-up to post/notice properly. First session to focus on collection system facts, sizes, condition, I/I metrics, and project prioritization, with lining preferred where feasible; outreach to DEP to clarify scope and funding expectations.
- **STATUS: RE: FST TANK COVER.**
  1. **UPDATE ON APPROACH TO LIFT FST COVER.** T. Donoghue shared that Spectrum Environmental was successful in dislodging the cover and re-setting it.
    - Detailed account of lifting and re-seating a wedged tank cover using six I-beams, hydraulic jacks, and staged adjustments; preparation ~2 weeks; lift/alignment ~3 hours; tank and lid salvaged with additional fabrication for damaged sections. Updated proposal for additional work ~\$18,000; extra \$11,000 in beam rehab charges waived; engineer and experienced personnel engaged.
    - T. Donoghue shared that Spectrum Environmental will produce a proposal to remove the door in the basement to the tank, so that debris can be cleaned out. We also expect that CIRMA may want to inspect and sign off on the work and to ensure the tank is engineeringly sound.
  2. **INSURANCE/ENFORCEMENT UPDATE.** T. Donoghue shared D. Toth and CIRMA adjuster were on site the day before the lift to review the work. They were not available for the next day, so they requested that T. Donoghue take photographs and videos of the lift that could be emailed to them, which T. Donoghue did.
- Received \$103,000 for Fiscal 205 expenses out of ~\$105,000 submitted (~99% reimbursed).
- Insurance approved \$100,000 for the current job.

- Ongoing expense mainly frack tank rental is \$42.50 or \$1,300 per month. As soon as FST is ready to be put into service we will clean out frac tank and have it removed H.I. Stone
- Total estimated expenses are \$120,000 for FY 26, and \$103,000 for FY 25 for a total of \$223,000.
  - Conclusion:
    - Proceed with fabrication/cleanup and selective upgrades; continue documentation and coordination with insurer/reinsurer.

- **REPORT: RE: PUBLIC WORKS / TREATMENT PLANT SUMMARY.**

Ted Donoghue, Superintendent, had emailed out the plant report, and noted that there were no issues to report, but did add the following points.

- First six months: down 18 sludge hauling trucks vs. last year (per truck 1,800); reduced polymer and electricity consumption, due to improved thickening strategy.
- Nitrate performance decreased to ~8 mg/L after solids reduction; ammonia and BOD removal are still very good; phosphorus acceptable with prior summer impacts.
- We had a high flow event peaked at ~1,200 gpm with two secondaries online without any issues.
- Frac tank rental 50/day (~\$1,300/month); freezing issues; plan to thaw, drain, vacuum, and return when weather warms; operations reset allowed lower carried volumes.
- Conclusion:
  - Maintain optimized sludge handling and chemical use; decommission frac tank per plan when conditions allow.

#### UV System Installation and Vendor Performance

- Kovacs installing a new UV system, partially funded by ARPA; vendor missed components (compressor, baffles), deliveries pending; first Connecticut installation for this vendor; equipment quality appears good; vendor urged to improve execution; representative visit planned.

- Plan to install transformer to step up power from 208V and add conduits; high-output UV arrays (8 bulbs per array, 4 arrays total); system will record UV dose to meet NPDES requirements.
- Old UV system installed circa 2000–2001; high-output tech expected to perform as well or better.
- Conclusion:
- UV installation progressing with delays; coordinate vendor visits next week, and ensure missing components arrive and are installed properly.

#### WEMC Pump Check Valves and Controls

- New check valves planned for 50-year-old Wemco pumps to address leak traced to failed check valve (after plug valve installation).
- Controllers for DO/blowers are obsolete; discussion deferred to next meeting; future migration: sludge pumps and other equipment can be reused since primary solids handling isn't changing.
- Conclusion:
- Replace failed check valves next week; bring DO controller/blower obsolescence plan to next meeting.

#### Internet Service Costs and Consolidation

- Current monthly bill ~ \$340; Optimum reportedly reduces costs only upon cancellation attempts.
- Proposal to move to CEN (state education network) due to security site status; coordination with Frontier/Xfinity considered; goal of town-wide fiber, two links for fire departments, unified cloud-managed gear; some sites pending (e.g., Bantam Ambulance), with Public Works and PCA planned. J. Bongiorno will be running point on this and also would like T. Donoghue to update his laptop, so that they can utilize the HDMI connector to use new large screen TV at the firehouse.
- Static IP bundle of five in use, but only one needed; legacy landline retained for dial-on alarms (SCADA).
- Conclusion:
- Contact CEN and providers to reduce internet costs and align with town-wide network; review static IP and landline necessity.

## **1. POSTING OF ASSISTANT PLANT OPERATOR POSITION.**

- Chief plant operator left; new assistant operator needed; market pay noted (Aquarion \$35/hr. Grade 1–2; MDC 45/hr. Grade 3), Our starting pay will be ~ \$29/hr., competitiveness is a challenge; environmental degree helpful but not required; CDL requirement complicates hiring.
- CDL needed to tow trailer jetter outside plant due to weight limits; trailer ~600 gallons, dual axle; tanker endorsement needed if over 10,000; historical CDL tied to prior flusher/vac truck; shared services rationale debated; current tow vehicle F-250; only CDL holders can tow offsite.
- Conclusion:
- No hiring decision; acknowledge pay gap and CDL hurdle; update on CDL policy impacts expected next meeting; initiate operator recruitment with defined qualifications and pay constraints.

## **3. NEW VEHICLE**

- Current truck (F-250 acquired 2017) ~80,000 miles; significant rust; \$6,000 recent front-end repair; new F-250 ~ \$80,000; leasing options discussed (through WPCA); budget constraints noted; run cost report on 5-year maintenance/mileage; used market remains expensive; state contract options mentioned; EV trucks unsuitable for plowing.
  - Conclusion:
  - Decision deferred pending maintenance/mileage cost report; explore leasing and state contract pricing.
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- **REPORT: RE: FINANCIAL REPORT SUMMARY, INCLUDING UPDATED FY 25 NUMBER.**
  - Billed YTD ~ 1.277–\$1.3 million; other income includes connection fees, dumping fees, interest, liens; septage revenue paused due to tank issue.
  - As of Dec 31: ~247,000 outstanding for current fiscal year; prior-year receivables total ~\$133,000.
  - Conclusion:
  - Collections ahead of last year but gap vs. budget, partly due to paused septage revenue and outstanding receivables. We also need to mail out Arethusa surcharge invoice, which is \$21,000.

## Accounting Treatment and Receivable Accounts

- Ensure billed items post to appropriate receivable accounts; rules indicate connection charges go to construction fund; staff support provided to align reporting and accounts.
- Conclusion:
- Review receivable postings to ensure compliance with rules and correct fund allocations.
- Budget Process and Format Changes
- Budget work to start next month; draft will be prepared and emailed; request to change budget format for easier review; capital planning will reference current financials to avoid moving goalposts.
- Conclusion:
- Prepare and share FY 27 budget draft with updated format before next meeting.
- **PUBLIC COMMENTS FIR ITEMS ONLY ON THE AGENDA.** None presented.
- **COMMISSIONER REQUESTS FOR CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS.**

None presented.

- **ADJOURNMENT.**

**Motion:** W. Buckley moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm. C. Levesque seconded and there was no further discussion. All members voted “aye,” and the motion was carried.

Terrence Donoghue, Interim Recording Secretary