

**LITCHFIELD WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

Litchfield Firehouse, 258 West Street, Litchfield, CT 06759

April 9, 2026, at 7:00 pm

1. CALL TO ORDER: C. Levesque called the regular meeting of the Litchfield WPCA to order at 7:29 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Members present were Chris Levesque (Chairman), John Bongiorno (BOS Liaison), Bill Buckley, Kate Honan, Keith Shortsleeve (seated as alternate), and Ted Donoghue, Plant Superintendent.

Absent: Raz Alexe, PW Director.

3. SEATING ALTERNATES: K. Shortsleeve was seated as alternate in place of an vacant member.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS ONLY ON THE AGENDA: No members of the public were present. None presented.

5. APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF 3/12/26.

Motion: K. Honan put forth a motion to approve the 3/12/26 regular meeting minutes with amendments. J. Bongiorno seconded. K. Honan identified the following corrections: (1) references to the “2026 Annual Report” on the second-to-last and last pages should read “2025 Annual Report”; (2) the insurance carrier name was misspelled as “KERMA” and should read “CIRMA”; and (3) a notation referencing a “arrangement” in the plant report section should read “rain event.” T. Donoghue confirmed the correction to “rain event.” W. Buckley and K. Shortsleeve abstained as they were not present at the March meeting.

6. REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN.

C. Levesque reported no items at this time.

7. DISCUSSION OF FY 27 OPERATING BUDGET.

T. Donoghue presented a revised budget summary reformatted per C. Levesque's request into a single consolidated page combining permanent full-time and hourly staff. Key discussion points included:

Budget Overview

- Total proposed FY27 budget reflects a decrease of approximately 1.5% in personnel costs compared to the current year. Administration is down 1.87% and operations is down 5.44%.
- Professional services decreased by approximately \$3,000 from the current year.
- Electrical costs were discussed in the context of the solar array. The Eversource credit accumulated over approximately eight months (due to a billing error in which the authority was not credited as a generator) has now been consumed. The array generated approximately 30,000 kilowatts in March, and year-to-date electrical expenditures remain well within budget, with approximately \$11,700 in encumbrances unspent heading into May.
- The capital non-recurring line item, which originated as debt service beginning at \$216,000, has been reduced to \$155,000 for FY27. This reduction has been the primary mechanism for keeping the overall budget flat as other expenses remain stable.

Telecommunications Review

- J. Bongiorno identified that the authority had been paying approximately \$101 per month to Frontier for a phone number that was no longer in service (an old fax number that had been inadvertently left active and was routing to a former billing employee's residence). Frontier has been asked to credit the charges.
- The authority currently maintains: one Frontier landline for the plant alarm system (approximately \$130/month); one cell phone for the superintendent; and an Optimum internet connection. The WPCA also has a phone on the town's consolidated PBX system at minimal cost.
- C. Levesque requested that T. Donoghue reorganize telecommunications and utility line items to improve transparency, consolidating internet, cell phone, and alarm-related phone costs into a clearly labeled "telecom" category, with a side column showing year-to-date actuals. T. Donoghue confirmed the current year telephone line has been approximately \$2,900 spent to date.
- J. Bongiorno asked that T. Donoghue send an email to him and to the bookkeeper to consolidate the alarm-system landline onto the town's corporate phone system where feasible.

Revenue and Budget Format

- As of the meeting, approximately \$1,080,961 in current-year revenue has been collected. Outstanding balances include approximately \$156,000 for FY26, \$49,000 for FY25, and \$42,000 for FY24, with a combined historical AR balance (going back to FY2009) of approximately \$315,000–\$350,000.

- C. Levesque requested that a FY27 anticipated revenue column be added to the budget spreadsheet so that revenues and expenses are shown as equal (zero-sum format). T. Donoghue confirmed he will add this column and recirculate the revised budget promptly.
- The current revenue budget assumes a 97% collection rate on current-year charges. Prior-year delinquency collections have improved significantly under current bookkeeping management.

Septage Receiving – Revisiting Policy

- The commission discussed whether to resume accepting septage at the plant once the FST tank cover is repaired. K. Shortsleeve noted that Woodard & Curran had previously advised against accepting septage due to loading concerns and the potential cost of a plant upgrade.
- T. Donoghue noted that septage revenue has historically contributed nearly 10% of total revenues and has supported fund balance. The commission expressed interest in verifying the basis of Woodard & Curran’s recommendation, particularly the cost model used.
- C. Levesque requested that T. Donoghue ask Woodard & Curran to provide the underlying analysis and cost justification for their recommendation. The commission agreed that the septage program should be revisited once the tank is back in service and the financial model reviewed.

Budget Timeline

- The FY27 budget is targeted for formal recommendation and resolution at the May meeting, followed by a public hearing prior to the June meeting for adoption effective July 1.
- J. Bongiorno noted that the May 15 Board of Selectmen public hearing is already scheduled. C. Levesque agreed to evaluate whether the WPCA budget hearing can be consolidated with or scheduled alongside that hearing. If not, the public hearing will be scheduled just prior to the June WPCA meeting.
- T. Donoghue will resend the detailed version of the budget with annotated cell notes alongside the simplified one-page summary.

8. DISCUSSION RE: LWPCA BOOKKEEPING INTEGRATION INTO TOWN HALL.

T. Donoghue reported no significant update. The Invoice Cloud online payment integration remains unresolved and is now targeted for implementation at the start of the next fiscal year. J. Bongiorno noted ongoing concern about the lack of technology oversight in the implementation process and stated he has twice requested inclusion of the town’s technology committee. Item remains on agenda.

9. DISCUSSION: 2025 ANNUAL REPORT.

T. Donoghue reported that the 2025 Annual Report was distributed to board members. K. Honan provided editorial feedback, reorganizing the document for improved logical flow: moving the technical performance data (TSS/BOD removal) to align with the plant operations section, and opening with an overview followed by growth, intermunicipal agreements, engineering studies, and ARPA fund activity.

- K. Honan noted that the ARPA-funded UV system should be referenced in the report; T. Donoghue confirmed installation occurred in January 2026 and startup was initiated recently, with the invoice submitted in November 2025 to meet ARPA grant deadlines.
- Discussion arose regarding whether to note the appointment of C. Levesque and Kenny Ortega at the start of the year and Kenny's subsequent resignation. The commission agreed that since the resignation occurred in 2026, it falls outside the 2025 annual report period and should be handled accordingly.
- J. Bongiorno reminded members that substantive responses to circulated documents should be sent individually to T. Donoghue to avoid constructing an illegal meeting via email reply-all chains.
- T. Donoghue proposed using a shared Google Drive (coordinated through the town bookkeeper) as a central repository for meeting documents, draft reports, and version tracking, allowing members to review and note changes without triggering meeting notice requirements. The commission expressed support. Members who do not have town-issued email addresses were encouraged to request one through the town hall.

Conclusion: T. Donoghue will incorporate K. Honan's suggestions, revise the annual report, and recirculate for final comment. Members should provide feedback individually. Item to remain on agenda.

10. DISCUSSION: INTERNAL POLICY – SEWER FEE BILLING, COLLECTION AND ENFORCEMENT THRESHOLDS.

C. Levesque presented a draft internal policy on billing, collection, and enforcement thresholds for commission review. The following revisions were discussed and agreed upon:

Enforcement Threshold Revisions

- The first tier (balances under \$5.00) was eliminated. The lowest active tier was revised to: balances under \$24.99 — billing and written notice only; interest will accrue (changed from “may” to “will”).
- The second tier was confirmed as: \$25.00 to \$499.99 — demand notice; eligible for lien filing or referral to tax collector. The phrase “at discretion” was removed to ensure consistent application.
- The third tier: \$500.00 or more (or balances more than two billing quarters past due) — full enforcement authorized, including liens, alias tax warrants, state marshal execution, and foreclosure as permitted by Connecticut state statute.
- The phrase “where appropriate” was stricken from the foreclosure provision. K. Shortsleeve and J. Bongiorno noted that discretionary language creates legal risk;

enforcement actions should be applied uniformly. The commission agreed language such as “as permitted by Connecticut state statute” is more appropriate, particularly for foreclosure thresholds which may be subject to legislative change.

- J. Bongiorno requested that the policy explicitly state that “state marshal fees, statutory costs, and all legal expenses shall be added to the delinquent account as permitted by law.”

Billing and Due Dates

- K. Shortsleeve suggested that Section 4 (Billing and Due Dates) reference the WPCA Rules and Regulations for the established billing schedule rather than leave it undefined. C. Levesque agreed; language will be updated to read: “Sewer charges shall be billed at intervals established by the WPCA Rules and Regulations. Charges shall be due and payable on the date specified on the bill.”

Collection Process and Coordination

- T. Donoghue noted that the bookkeeper has attended a tax collection class and has developed proposals for more proactive collection approaches, which will be reviewed by the Public Works Director before being presented to the commission.
- J. Bongiorno reiterated his interest in working with the Board of Selectmen to formalize a policy that outstanding WPCA balances should preclude issuance of building permits, as is currently a non-binding informal practice with the Building Official.
- The commission agreed the draft policy, once revised, will be posted to the shared Google Drive for final member review and comment, then forwarded to town counsel for legal review.

Conclusion: C. Levesque will incorporate the agreed revisions. Once finalized, the policy will be reviewed by legal counsel before adoption.

11. STATUS RE: FST TANK COVER.

11a. Update on Removal of FST Cover:

The insurance company has approved the final phase of repairs, consisting of replacing three stainless steel haunches (one fully removed, two shaved). The tank cone remains partially frozen due to seasonal cold temperatures; T. Donoghue anticipates the tank will be ready to pump out and complete the repair within approximately two weeks pending warmer weather. The cover itself has already been reset; remaining work consists of haunch installation and sealing. Electrical components remain de-energized. The mixer will not be reinstalled, as process changes have reduced the need to store high volumes of sludge in the tank.

11b. Insurance/Enforcement Update: No update provided at this meeting.

12. REPORT RE: PUBLIC WORKS / TREATMENT PLANT SUMMARY.

T. Donoghue reported on plant operations for the period. Key items included:

Plant Performance

- The plant experienced high flows in March, averaging 940,000 gallons per day. A near-miss non-compliance event occurred; however, composite samples showed TSS at 27 mg/L and BOD at 10 mg/L, well within the 50 mg/L permit limit. No non-compliance was recorded.
- SVIs have been running approximately 150–160, which is considered exceptional for this time of year. A RAS chlorination program (15% sodium hypochlorite) was conducted over three applications across ten days, with positive results. Additional liquid hypochlorite has been purchased and stored in a new UV-protected, spill-contained outdoor chemical storage unit.
- Total nitrogen for the month averaged 5.3 mg/L (41 lbs./day), above the daily permit limit of 24 lbs./day; however, this is measured against a year-to-date average under the nitrogen trading program, which is currently at 29 lbs./day. T. Donoghue noted the plant has not needed to purchase nitrogen credits since his first year. Credits are calculated on an annual basis and do not carry forward.
- Morris exceeded the IMA penalty flow threshold in March (over 500,000 gallons above the 75,000 gallons/day for seven consecutive days limit), averaging approximately 83,000 gallons/day and representing about 8% of total plant flow. Morris will be billed at the penalty rate for the overage. The Morris IMA currently has no sunset provision.

12a. Assistant Plant Operator Position:

- T. Donoghue reported that Grade 2 operator Eric DeLaurenzio recently resigned after being recruited by a neighboring plant superintendent. The authority has posted for Grade 2/3 and assistant operator positions with no applicants to date.
- T. Donoghue and Public Works Director R. Alexe are exploring a coverage arrangement with the City of Torrington's plant superintendent to provide licensed operator presence in the event of an emergency or planned absence, pending the Director's return from vacation.
- C. Levesque noted that operator compensation is increasingly competitive regionally, with Grade 3 operators earning up to \$45/hour at some facilities. He requested that R. Alexe consult with the Human Resources/Finance office regarding labor grade structures and regional salary benchmarks for licensed wastewater operators (OIT through Grade 3). T. Donoghue will provide the current union contract labor grades and steps for commission review.
- The commission discussed but did not endorse training repayment clauses as a retention mechanism, with members preferring to address retention through competitive compensation. A regional salary survey will be placed on the next agenda.

- K. Shortsleeve noted that the State Department of Consumer Protection maintains a public database of licensed operators, which could be used to identify potential candidates for direct outreach.

12b. New Vehicle: No formal update at this meeting.

13. REPORT RE: FINANCIAL REPORT SUMMARY.

T. Donoghue reported that year-to-date expenses are trending lower than the same period last year. Marisa's AR report reflects active lien and release activity. Detailed AR covered under Item 7 above.

14. OPPORTUNITY FOR GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS.

No members of the public were present. None presented.

K. Honan asked whether the commission had acted on recommendations from AquaFix's recent review. T. Donoghue reported that the proprietary enzyme-type product AquaFix recommended was not purchased due to cost, particularly given higher volumes required during high-flow periods. The chlorination of RAS, which was among Woodard & Curran's recommendations, has been implemented and has shown positive results. Wasting duration has also been extended to approximately 400–450 minutes daily at 17 gallons per minute (approx. 6,500 gallons/day), consistent with another engineer consultant recommendation.

15. COMMISSIONER REQUESTS FOR CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS.

- Operator salary survey and labor grade review — R. Alexe to consult with Human Resources; T. Donoghue to provide contract labor grade information.
- FY27 Budget — revised zero-sum format with anticipated revenue column for recommendation and resolution (May meeting).
- Public hearing scheduling for FY27 budget adoption and State Marshal enforcement ordinance (prior to June meeting or consolidated with Board of Selectmen hearing if possible).
- 2025 Annual Report — T. Donoghue to revise and recirculate for final member comment.
- Sewer fee billing, collection, and enforcement policy — revised draft to be posted to shared Google Drive for review, then forwarded to town counsel.
- Septage receiving policy — revisit once FST tank is back in service; T. Donoghue to request cost model analysis from Woodard & Curran.

16. ADJOURNMENT.

Motion: K. Honan moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 pm. W. Buckley seconded and there was no further discussion. All members voted "aye," and the motion was carried.

Terrence Donoghue, Interim Recording Secretary