

LITCHFIELD WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Litchfield Firehouse, 258 West Street, Litchfield, CT 06759

May 13, 2026, at 6:30 pm

1. CALL TO ORDER:

C. Levesque called the special meeting of the Litchfield WPCA to order at 6:43 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Members present were Chris Levesque (Chairman), Bill Buckley, Kate Honan, Keith Shortsleeve, Raz Alexe (PW Director), and Ted Donoghue, Plant Superintendent.

Absent: John Bongiorno (BOS Liaison).

3. SEATING ALTERNATES (IF NECESSARY):

K. Shortsleeve noted for the record that he has resigned as an alternate and was sworn in as a full regular member. No alternates were seated.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS ONLY ON THE AGENDA:

No members of the public were present. None presented.

5. APPROVAL OF REGULAR & SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES FROM 4/9/26.

C. Levesque called for approval of the regular meeting minutes and the capital special meeting minutes from April 9, 2026.

Prior to the vote, K. Honan requested that after approving minutes, the commission make a practice of reviewing follow-up items from the prior meeting to ensure action items are carried forward. She noted that one item from the special meeting minutes — circulation of final documents for member review prior to the next meeting — had not been fully completed. C. Levesque acknowledged the concern and confirmed that documents had been uploaded to a shared Google Drive the evening of the April 9 meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding member access to the Google Drive share. W. Buckley reported that he received a share notification but was unable to open it. C. Levesque indicated the share was sent under his personal Gmail account and offered to resend. K. Shortsleeve noted that his company recently changed its email system and requested that C. Levesque update his address on the share.

Motion: C. Levesque put forth a motion in favor of approving the regular meeting minutes and the capital special meeting minutes from April 9, 2026. K. Honan seconded, and there was no further discussion. All members voted “aye” and the motion carried.

6. REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN.

C. Levesque reported on several matters:

- Updated rules and regulations language and a revised RFP/scope document from the April 9 special meeting have been posted to the shared Google Drive. C. Levesque confirmed these will be sent to W. Buckley and K. Honan for review prior to the June 2 Board of Selectmen presentation.
- C. Levesque is tracking state legislative proposals that could affect the WPCA’s service area obligations, including a bill that would limit a local WPCA’s ability to restrict connection from areas currently designated as on-site disposal zones if Planning and Zoning approves a change in use — driven by state housing development pressure. W. Buckley noted from prior experience that the state DEP has issued direct orders to municipalities requiring infrastructure improvements notwithstanding current appropriations. C. Levesque agreed this is an ongoing risk and noted the WPCA’s rules and regulations provide some protection for rate payers.
- C. Levesque provided an update on the Woodridge Lake situation. DEP has transferred oversight of the Woodridge Lake subsurface system to its subsurface/groundwater division. C. Levesque noted the WPCA’s primary focus remains its own system, and any potential intermunicipal arrangement would be deferred until after the I&I/SSES study is complete. K. Honan and W. Buckley noted that intermunicipal agreements with non-municipal entities such as lake associations present credit and sustainability risks, and suggested any future agreements be structured directly with the municipality.

7. DISCUSSION OF FY 27 OPERATING BUDGET.

T. Donoghue presented the proposed FY27 operating budget. C. Levesque noted that the revised budget reflects revenues equal to expenses in zero-sum format. Key discussion points included:

Budget Overview

- The proposed FY27 budget totals \$1,249,328, representing a decrease of approximately 2.24% from the current fiscal year.
- No changes to the current EDU rate structure are proposed. Revenue projections may vary based on water consumption and new connection fees, which flow into Fund 66.
- Health insurance premium for the current year was approximately \$128,000–\$129,000. The same figure was used for FY27 planning per direction from the Finance office, subject to change.

Revenue

- Year-to-date revenue collection stands at just under \$1.1 million. R. Alexe calculated the collection rate at approximately 88% to date, against a budgeted rate of 97%.
- Approximately \$153,500 remains outstanding for the current fiscal year with six weeks remaining in FY26. Past-due balances continue to decline.
- The building department is actively enforcing the existing ordinance requiring resolution of outstanding WPCA balances prior to issuance of building permits, resulting in several recent payments.
- C. Levesque noted that the state marshal enforcement process, effective July 1, creates the potential to pursue collection on an estimated \$315,000–\$350,000 in historical AR, with marshal fees borne by the delinquent account holder.

Septage Receiving Rate

- C. Levesque and T. Donoghue recommended raising the septage receiving rate from nine cents to nine and one-half cents per gallon to align with Torrington’s anticipated rate increase, which T. Donoghue confirmed is forthcoming for their FY27.
- W. Buckley recommended matching Torrington’s rate rather than exceeding or undercutting it, to avoid overloading the plant or losing haulers to competing facilities. The commission agreed to match Torrington at nine and one-half cents per gallon.
- T. Donoghue noted that the Synagro biosolids disposal contract expires in August 2026. Disposal conditions have worsened — New Haven is offline and Veolia in Naugatuck has limited loads to ten per day — and disposal costs, currently approximately \$500 per dry ton exclusive of transportation, may increase further. Increased septage intake generates additional biosolids requiring disposal, and this cost factor was acknowledged by the commission.
- K. Shortsleeve noted that periodic rate increases are sound fiscal policy to keep pace with market rates and ensure revenues cover rising operational costs.
- T. Donoghue noted that at current projected volumes of approximately 715,000 gallons, a one-cent increase would generate approximately \$7,000 in additional annual revenue; a half-cent increases proportionally less.

Motion 1 – FY27 Budget Referral: W. Buckley moved to approve the proposed FY27 operating budget of \$1,249,328, reflecting no rate change in EDU charges and a 2.24% decrease over the current year, and to authorize referral to the Board of Selectmen for the June 2 public presentation. K. Honan seconded. All members voted “aye” and the motion carried.

Motion 2 – Septage Rate Increase: W. Buckley moved to adjust the septage gallonage disposal rate from nine cents to nine and one-half cents per gallon, effective July 1, 2026, and to authorize C. Levesque to include this rate change in the Board of Selectmen presentation and proceed to a public hearing. K. Honan seconded. All members voted “aye” and the motion carried.

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

R. Alexe reported that the Invoice Cloud and MUNIS integration remains unresolved. He is in regular contact with the town bookkeeper twice weekly but convergence has not yet been achieved. R. Alexe noted that a recent inadvertent customer payment through the town’s real estate tax portal — rather than the WPCA portal — required two days of reconciliation. Progress is being made and a resolution is anticipated.

At R. Alexe’s request, the commission agreed to remove this item from the standing agenda until further notice. Item removed from agenda pending resolution.

9. DISCUSSION: 2025 ANNUAL REPORT.

T. Donoghue reported that the 2025 Annual Report has been revised to incorporate K. Honan's editorial suggestions from the April 9 meeting and recirculated to members prior to this meeting.

K. Honan indicated she is satisfied with the revisions. K. Shortsleeve noted the report is well-organized and the photographs are excellent. T. Donoghue identified the cover photograph as the river near the plant outfall. R. Alexe requested that the annual report be made available at the June 2 Board of Selectmen presentation. C. Levesque confirmed the report will be posted on both the town and WPCA websites.

Motion: K. Honan moved to approve the 2025 Annual Report as revised. C. Levesque seconded. All members voted "aye" and the motion carried.

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

C. Levesque reported that the billing, collection, and enforcement threshold policy has been updated to reflect revisions agreed upon at the April 9 meeting and is posted to the shared Google Drive. The policy will be presented to the Board of Selectmen on June 2 alongside the rules and regulations. Following Board of Selectmen review, the policy will be subject to a public hearing and brought back to the WPCA for final adoption. Once adopted, the commission may adjust enforcement thresholds internally without further Board of Selectmen approval.

C. Levesque also noted that the commission intends to memorialize connection charge changes on the land records via a standard form under review by town counsel, to ensure changes in use (e.g., single-family to multi-unit) are properly documented. One current example involves a property near Center School transitioning from single-family residential to a bed-and-breakfast use. W. Buckley concurred on the importance of this practice to protect rate payers and the WPCA's revenue base.

Item to remain on agenda pending Board of Selectmen presentation and public hearing.

11. STATUS RE: FST TANK COVER.

11a. Update on Removal of FST Cover:

T. Donoghue reported that Spectrum is scheduled to return on May 14 to remove the access door, pump out accumulated liquid from the cone, clean all debris out, install three replacement stainless steel haunches (one removed and replaced, two shaved and reset), and seal the cover using roof tar and foam backer rod. Following completion, CIRMA will send a specialist for final inspection before the tank is returned to service.

- K. Shortsleeve inquired about the sealing method; T. Donoghue explained that foam backer rod fills the gap between the cover and the sidewall, supplemented by roof tar.
- K. Shortsleeve suggested that a methane gas monitor and alarm be installed in the FST building given the prior history of anaerobic conditions and gas accumulation. T. Donoghue concurred, noting that improved sludge management practices using the frac tank have reduced risk, but agreed that gas monitoring is appropriate.
- C. Levesque requested that T. Donoghue prepare a brief scope for consultant review of venting and gas monitoring for the FST building, to be presented at the next meeting. T. Donoghue anticipates the repair will be complete and the tank ready to return to service within approximately one week. A specialist from CIRMA will need to perform a final inspection before the tank is put back into service.

11b. Insurance/Enforcement Update:

No update provided at this meeting. The frac tank remains on-site pending completion of FST repair. Outstanding frac tank rental and repair expenses will be submitted to CIRMA for reimbursement upon Spectrum's completion of work.

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

T. Donoghue reported on plant operations. Key items included:

Plant Performance

- Flows have decreased significantly from March's 940,000 GPD average; May flows are approximately 500,000 GPD or slightly below.
- Nitrogen performance has improved. T. Donoghue is running the laboratory daily since E. DeLaurenzio's departure. Year-to-date nitrogen (through April) is averaging approximately 28 lbs./day against a calendar-year permit limit of 24 lbs./day average. Seasonal flow reductions are expected to bring the annual average

below the permit threshold, as occurred in CY2025 (21 lbs./day annual average). No nitrogen credits have needed to be purchased in recent years.

- Phosphorus compliance remains in good standing.
- The UV disinfection system (installed January 2026 via ARPA funding) has been commissioned and is operating for disinfection season. UV dose data is being recorded via NIC/Excel Reporter integration for monthly operating report compliance.
- A potentially rabid raccoon entered the plant yard. Connecticut State Police Trooper Holmes was called and dispatched the animal. The animal was double-bagged and disposed of per Connecticut state protocol. The incident is documented.

12a. Update on Plant Operator Position:

- Interviews for the assistant operator (OIT) position are scheduled for the following Monday and Tuesday, with five candidates identified.
- Senior operator Jay Zucco (approximately three years at the plant) is preparing to sit for his Grade 1 examination. Operator Jose Cotto (hired approximately March 1) is studying for his Grade 1 and is expected to sit for the exam in summer 2026. Per licensing requirements, one year of documented experience is required before the license is issued, providing retention runway.
- C. Levesque requested a wage rate analysis for licensed wastewater operators (OIT through Grade 3) for the next meeting, drawing on the current union contract labor grades and regional benchmarks, so the commission can evaluate whether compensation is competitive.
- R. Alexe noted that the CDL requirement in the operator job specification is limiting the candidate pool. The strongest candidate does not hold a CDL. R. Alexe indicated willingness to fund CDL training for a qualified hire.
- W. Buckley expressed concern that the CDL requirement was originally tied to shared services obligations (snow plowing) rather than core plant operations, and that requiring CDLs for all operators results in a wage premium paid year-round for approximately two weeks of CDL-dependent work (sewer jetter operations). The commission discussed options including making CDL a preferred rather than required qualification, obtaining CDL-qualified labor from the highway department for jetter operations as needed, or addressing the specification in the next collective bargaining cycle. No formal action taken; item to be continued.

12b. New Vehicle:

No update provided at this meeting.

13. REPORT RE: FINANCIAL REPORT SUMMARY.

T. Donoghue presented the financial summary prepared with bookkeeper M. Zain. Key items:

- Year-to-date revenue is just under \$1.1 million. Approximately \$153,500 in current-year charges remains outstanding with six weeks to fiscal year end. R. Alexe calculated the current collection rate at approximately 88% against a 97% budget target.
- Year-to-date expenses are tracking below revenue, with a current surplus of approximately \$75,000. The largest single-month expense was the health insurance premium of approximately \$128,000–\$129,000 charged in the current period.
- Notable expenses included: Synagro biosolids disposal at approximately \$11,000 for April; frac tank rental (to be reimbursed by CIRMA upon completion of FST repair); a \$1,300 enhanced sludge analysis required by Synagro under revised contract requirements; and an \$1,100 Excel Reporter SCADA subscription renewal (two-year term).
- The solar array generated over 40,000 kWh in April and is back online.
- Fund 66 balance is approximately \$661,300, after deducting year-to-date capital expenditures of approximately \$274,000 (including the UV system and Woodard & Curran work) and an encumbrance of approximately \$154,000, from a starting FY26 balance of approximately \$911,000.
- T. Donoghue noted that blower replacement for the aeration tanks is the most urgent capital priority; quotes range from approximately \$22,000 to \$60,000 per unit. T. Donoghue and R. Alexe are to confer on the procurement path.

- The commission discussed the SSES/I&I study scope and capital planning. The estimated study cost is approximately \$750,000, eligible for a 55% DEEP grant (net approximately \$337,500). A capital appropriation request to the Board of Selectmen is targeted for August. K. Shortsleeve raised whether certain plant improvements (headworks, grit removal, screening) could proceed concurrently with the I&I study rather than waiting for its completion; C. Levesque agreed that some improvements may be appropriate to advance independently. W. Buckley suggested a future agenda item to systematically prioritize capital improvements fundable from Fund 66 before the study is complete.

14. COMMISSIONER REQUESTS FOR CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS.

- Operator wage rate analysis — T. Donoghue to provide union contract labor grades and steps; R. Alexe to consult Human Resources; regional salary benchmarks for OIT through Grade 3.
- CDL requirement in operator job specification — further discussion with Public Works Director and town counsel, pending interview results.
- FST venting and gas monitoring scope — T. Donoghue to prepare brief consultant scope for next meeting.
- SSES/I&I study — capital appropriation request to Board of Selectmen targeting August; finalize RFQ and rules and regulations on capital procedures; estimated cost \$750,000 (55% DEEP grant eligible).
- Capital improvement prioritization — review Woodard & Curran recommendations and identify projects suitable for Fund 66 funding in advance of I&I study completion, including aeration blower replacement.
- Board of Selectmen presentation — June 2; C. Levesque to present FY27 budget, septage rate adjustment, rules and regulations, billing/enforcement policy, and SSES/I&I capital plan. Annual report to be made available.
- Septage receiving policy — FST tank repair anticipated complete within approximately one week; policy to be revisited once tank is back in service.

15. ADJOURNMENT.

Motion: W. Buckley moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:11pm. K. Shortsleeve seconded. All members voted “aye.” The meeting was adjourned.

Terrence Donoghue, Interim Recording Secretary