

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

November 10, 2021

The Special Meeting of the Lehigh County Authority was called to order at 12:34 p.m. on Wednesday, November 10, 2021, Chairman Brian Nagle presiding. The meeting was hybrid via in-person and video and audio advanced communication technology (“ACT”), using the Zoom internet application, including telephone option. Each Board member and other attendees of the meeting were able to hear each other attendee and be heard by each other attendee. The in-person location was the Authority’s Pretreatment Plant located at 7676 Industrial Drive, Allentown, PA. A Roll Call of Board members present was taken. Chairman Brian Nagle, Richard Bohner, Norma Cusick, Ted Lyons, Linda Rosenfeld, Jeff Morgan, and Amir Famili were present for the duration of the meeting. Authority Staff member Liesel Gross was also in attendance.

REVIEW OF AGENDA

There are no changes to the agenda. An Executive Session is planned to discuss matters related to personnel.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

LCA Strategic Plan Workshop

Liesel Gross provided an overview of the topics for discussion in this special session of the Authority’s Board of Directors. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the Authority’s future strategic plan, that has been under development for the past several months. To provide the background for the discussion, Ms. Gross will provide an organizational overview, review key organizational documents, and lead a discussion on Board member roles and responsibilities. This discussion will be followed by a review of key strategies being developed for the Authority’s new strategic plan, with Board feedback requested regarding the priorities that have been selected.

Ms. Gross reviewed a presentation of Authority background information including the structure under the Pa. Municipality Authorities Act (“the Act”) and the history of the organization’s Articles of Incorporation. She reviewed the allowable purposes of a municipal authority under the Act, which includes water and sewer system operations along with many other allowable purposes. Linda Rosenfeld asked if the Authority would be allowed to conduct work in any of the areas allowed under the Act such as transportation or parking services. Richard Bohner noted that in the late 1960s and 1970s, the Authority has some responsibility for managing solid waste, which was discontinued after some time. Liesel Gross noted that the Authority’s official documents do not specify that the organization will focus on the water and sewer services it currently provides. However, if the Board determined it would be beneficial to pursue other opportunities allowable under the Act, it would be advisable to discuss such a change with the County of Lehigh to ensure alignment with the County’s goals. The County of Lehigh formed the Authority in 1966 and the County continues to hold responsibility for appointing the Authority’s Board members and for any changes in the Authority’s Articles of Incorporation.

Ms. Gross continued the presentation with a summary review of the Board Norms and By-Laws documents, followed by a review of selected responsibilities that have been delegated to the staff by Board resolution. Ted Lyons asked for more information on the duties of each Board officer, and

which of those duties have been delegated to staff. Ms. Gross noted that a detailed analysis was not prepared for this meeting, but could be completed. Chairman Nagle recommended working on the analysis and requested that the staff and solicitor present this information at a future Board meeting. Ms. Gross noted she would work with the Chairman on the schedule and format of these future discussions.

Ms. Gross asked the Board for input on the Authority's overall responsibility to the community, customers, the County of Lehigh, and other stakeholders. The organizational documents reviewed earlier in the meeting outline some transactional requirements, but the Board should discuss other responsibilities and its mission as part of the strategic planning process.

Board discussion followed.

Chairman Nagle noted that the Board has a responsibility to protect the organization financially and from a community relations standpoint. Board members have a responsibility to represent the organization properly. Amir Famili stated that the Board is responsible for setting the direction of the organization, and asked how that is captured in the By-Laws or other documents. Chairman Nagle noted that setting direction for the organization is accomplished by how the Board meetings are conducted, directing staff through Board actions or requests, approving the annual budget and specific project authorizations. The strategic planning process is a key activity that the Board has been involved in this year. He said he anticipates the strategic plan will include goals and priorities related to how the staff will increase its involvement with the community and report on progress to the Board.

Ted Lyons asked if the Board has any specific obligations to the County of Lehigh due to the structure of the organization. Liesel Gross reviewed the Authority Board member appointment process conducted by the County Executive and the annual report provided to the County Board of Commissioners. Through these mechanisms, some feedback is provided to the organization about the County's concerns and goals for the Authority. However, the Board is appointed to make decisions for the Authority. There was some additional discussion about the Authority's involvement with the Board appointment process and how feedback is provided to the County regarding the Authority's needs. Ms. Gross explained that most communication is handled between County staff and Authority staff, and the Authority staff is expected to be the primary spokesperson representing the Authority when information is shared with the County.

Liesel Gross then reviewed the status of the strategic planning process that has been under way for several months. She provided a brief presentation of the proposed new Mission and Vision statements and reviewed the six priority areas that have been selected for the next five years. These priority areas include: Operational Excellence, Financial Stewardship, Regional Collaboration and Leadership, System Capacity and Reliability, Employee Engagement and Safety, and Customer Engagement and Support. She explained that from these six priorities, 21 specific strategies have been developed, which break down further into more than 200 activities that will be scheduled into an implementation plan over the next several years. She noted this is a very detailed plan that is designed to increase employee engagement in the Authority's strategic plan because there are clear ties to work that is completed within every department and every level of the organization.

Ms. Gross explained that because the plan is very detailed and will require significant investment of time and effort to complete, it is important for the Board to provide input on what the most important goals are for the organization. Board discussion followed regarding the top priorities. Board members agreed that the four most important areas for the Authority in the next five years are:

1. Standardizing the Authority's asset management approach
2. Leveraging technology to simplify and improve processes

3. Increase system capacity to meet future community needs
4. Ensure a safe working environment

Chairman Nagle also expressed interest in ensuring the organization's staffing structure is in place to properly support the Authority and its leadership. Ted Lyons agreed and noted that it is important to have the right people in the right seats within the organization to help move these key priorities forward.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

An Executive Session was held at 1:28 p.m. to discuss matters of personnel. The Executive Session ended at 2:48 p.m.

Following the close of the Executive Session, Liesel Gross reviewed concluding questions for the Board regarding the next steps in the Authority's strategic planning process. Board members agreed to move forward with full presentation of the plan at the next Board meeting in December, and requested quarterly reporting to the Board on the key topics included in the plan. Ms. Gross will discuss the schedule and process for reporting these items to the Board with the Chairman.

PUBLIC COMMENTS / OTHER COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 2:53 p.m.

Richard H. Bohner
Secretary