

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

July 8, 2024

The Regular Meeting of the Lehigh County Authority Board of Directors was called to order at 12:00 p.m. on Monday, July 8, 2024, 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 public could also participate in the meeting in-person or via ACT, using the Zoom internet application, including telephone option. A Roll Call of Board members present was taken. Brian Nagle, Amir Famili, Ted Lyons, Jeff Morgan, Norma Cusick, Kevin Baker, Sean Ziller, and Marc Grammes were present for Roll Call and remained for the duration of the meeting.

Attorney Rich Campbell, the Authority’s Solicitor, was present along with Authority Staff, Liesel Gross, Ed Klein, Chris Moughan, Andrew Moore, AJ Capuzzi, Phil DePoe, Chuck Volk, Susan Sampson, and Lisa Miller.

Chairman Nagle announced that the Board received their electronic and hard copies of the Board packet in advance. A copy of the packet is also available online.

REVIEW OF AGENDA

Liesel Gross announced that there are no changes to the agenda and no Executive Session is planned. She asked for a brief moment to make a staff introduction.

Andrew Moore introduced Genesis Rivera to the Board, who is one of five students participating in the Authority’s internship program this year. Ms. Rivera introduced herself and provided information on her education and career goals. The Board welcomed Ms. Rivera to the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 24, 2024 Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Jeff Morgan, seconded by Sean Ziller, the Board approved the minutes from the June 24, 2024 meeting as written (8-0).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

Resolution No. 7-2024-1: Approval of Suburban Water Division & Suburban Wastewater Division Tapping Fees

David Busch from Keystone Alliance Consulting, who prepared the fee calculation documents, was present and reviewed the report that was submitted to the Board with the Resolution. Liesel Gross commented that the water tapping fees were reformatted two years ago and consolidated into a common tapping fee except for the Arcadia West system. Wastewater is handled differently because the systems are smaller and subject to intermunicipal agreements. Chairman Nagle asked if there were any challenges to the fees. Ms. Gross commented that there are no outstanding challenges to the fees. She explained that the biggest user of the tapping fee schedule is the Western Lehigh sewer signatory group because those municipalities pass the fees to their new users. The sewer signatories are aware of the proposed changes to the tapping fees, which would go into effect on August 1, 2024, if adopted.

On a motion by Amir Famili, seconded by Jeff Morgan, the Board approved Resolution No. 7-2024-1 that establishes the Suburban Water Division and Suburban Wastewater Division Tapping Fees (8-0).

A roll call vote was taken with the following votes cast:

Brian Nagle - yes
Amir Famili - yes
Ted Lyons - yes
Jeff Morgan - yes
Norma Cusick - yes
Kevin Baker - yes
Sean Ziller - yes
Marc Grammes - yes

LCA Operations Center Expansion

Liesel Gross introduced the project noting that it has been in the Authority's Capital Plan for a number of years. This project will help create office space, collaborative workspaces for teams, and some consolidated storage space. She reviewed a variety of challenges the staff is facing in terms of having adequate work spaces for new hires, and maintaining appropriate accessible storage space for engineering plan files and other documents that the Authority is required to retain. Chuck Volk noted that D'Huy Engineering completed and Operations Center Expansion Feasibility Study to determine the size, layout, and budgetary numbers for an expansion of the Main Office complex.

Matt Dorner provided an overview and presentation of the two conceptual designs and options. Authority staff chose the exterior design of Option 1 and the interior design of Option 2. This provides for a contemporary design and extra office space. The design phase of the project will include geotechnical work, survey, permitting, land development, mechanical-electrical-plumbing, structural, and architectural elements. D'Huy has estimated a total cost for this project at approximately \$3.6 million.

Sean Ziller asked how the staff decided on the options and design elements. Liesel Gross explained that a team had reviewed the options and felt that the contemporary design was styled more to match the front of the building and the pricing was comparable. Amir Famili commented on the high cost and asked if staff have brought anyone in to look at utilizing the existing space and increasing efficiency rather than doing a costly addition. Ms. Gross said that staff have looked at several different options including interior renovations, expanded work-from-home arrangements, and renting space for file storage or for discrete departments. A prior review of rental space for a new customer service center found rental fees of approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000 per month. Chris Moughan commented that they looked at a centralized offsite Field Services 75,000 sq. ft. building and the cost was between \$50,000 and \$60,000 per month.

Mr. Famili asked how many more people can be accommodated with the addition. Ms. Gross estimated 10 new workspaces would be created with the proposed project, with additional storage space potential to be converted to additional offices in the future. Mr. Famili commented that if \$4 million dollars is a high price to pay, the Authority should be looking at all future needs with this project. Staff have been discussing the expanded project workload and the need to add staff, and it appears this proposed project will not provide adequate space for the future, but comes at a high cost. Norma Cusick asked if the Authority was working with a realtor. Ms. Gross explained that they had used a realtor when investigating renting the office space.

There was additional discussion regarding the expansion and additional questions that the Board would like to have answered. Chairman Nagle asked for the project to be tabled until the Board has further clarity. Ms. Gross stated that the staff would regroup internally and put this item back on the Board agenda when more information has been compiled for discussion.

Central Lehigh and North Whitehall Systems – Water Supply Study

Mike Brown and Erin Laux from Gannett Fleming were in attendance to present the Source Water Study for the Central Lehigh and North Whitehall Divisions. The purpose of the assessment is to look at current source capacity versus current and future demands. Phil DePoe commented that the projections in the study correlate with the growth projections being used to develop the Act 537 Plan on the sewer system. The study revealed that the Central Lehigh Division currently has sufficient water for daily use, but the system is vulnerable to emergencies and needs additional emergency supply to maintain system reliability. The high priority alternatives to address the emergency supply need are to re-establish the Bortz interconnection with South Whitehall Township, re-establish the Interim Schantz Spring Booster station, and establish the Schantz Spring Transmission Main Emergency Interconnection with South Whitehall Township.

There was some discussion regarding current demand and emergency demands, as well as the unpredictable nature of inquiries from new large industrial users.

Medium-priority alternatives to address long term needs were discussed and reviewed. Those alternatives are modifying the agreement with Allentown to increase supply capacity at the Schantz Spring Interconnection, re-establish the Hamilton Boulevard Interconnection with South Whitehall Township, rehabilitation and upgrades to various well stations, and piping enhancements at the Applewood Interconnection. The low-priority alternatives are focused on upgrades to existing well sources. However, these alternatives have high capital costs and lower gains in terms of providing additional water supply.

The North Whitehall Division relies exclusively on an interconnection with the Northampton Borough Municipal Authority (NBMA) and will require an additional interconnection to NBMA to meet emergency demands for future needs. The next steps are to implement high priority alternatives to enhance reliable supply capacity, continuation of the master plan, and a continuous review of supply needs.

There was additional discussion about system vulnerabilities, as well as the interdependencies between the Allentown, South Whitehall Township, and Central Lehigh Division systems. Mike Brown reviewed the methodologies to review these vulnerabilities to ensure the high-priority recommendations would be successful.

Phil DePoe explained that staff will begin pursuing the high-priority recommendations provided in the report, and projects incorporated into the Capital Plan. Other next steps include review of master planning and asset management requirements of the various water system facilities.

Water Filtration Plant: HVAC Upgrades – Phase 1

Amy Rohrbach described the replacement of the HVAC system at the Water Filtration Plant to improve the heating and cooling of the occupied spaces and improve temperature control. The current system is aging and problematic. It also contains glycol which poses a risk factor to the plant in the event of a leak. The project will be done in two phases. Phase 1 will include the first-floor offices, customer service area and lobby. Phase 2 will include the first-floor lab and operations areas as well as second-floor spaces. Work will be staged to limit impact on existing operations.

There was some Board discussion regarding the use of a general contractor, and Ms. Rohrbach explained that the primary work is in the HVAC arena and the low bid contractor has skills and capabilities needed to complete any site work or construction tasks associated with the installation.

On a motion by Sean Ziller, seconded by Norma Cusick, the Board approved the Capital Project Authorization – Construction Phase in the amount of \$796,089.00 which includes the Professional Services Authorization – Construction Administration to CHA Consulting, Inc. (formerly D’Huy Engineering) in the amount of \$74,600.00, the General Construction Contract Award to ASL Refrigeration, Inc. in the amount of \$633,631.00, and the Electrical Construction Contract Award to Orlando Diefenderfer Electrical Contractors in the amount of \$47,858.00 (8-0).

Water Filtration Plant: Emergency Power Design

Chuck Volk stated the main driver for this project is resiliency and redundancy for a separate power feed for the Water Filtration Plant. The current dual electrical power feeds from PPL Electric Utilities originate from the same PPL substation which is not recommended because it is possible that a disruption at the PPL substation could leave the plant without backup power. Amy Rohrbach described the Method of Supply letter required by PPL and the construction scope. The Board asked if a generator was feasible. Ms. Rohrbach said a generator was reviewed in a prior study and was found to be more costly in terms of upfront capital expense as well as ongoing operational and maintenance expense.

On a motion by Marc Grammes, seconded by Amir Famili, the Board approved the Capital Project Authorization to PPL Electric Utilities in the amount of \$779,000.00 and the Letter of Authorization to PPL Electric Utilities (8-0).

Spring Creek Force Main Condition Assessment

Amy Kunkel provided an overview of the Spring Creek Force Main that is 25 years old. The Spring Creek Pump Station has transitioned from a peak wet weather relief station to a daily mode of operation to address surcharges sections of the Western Lehigh Interceptor. A shutdown of the pump station would trigger dry and wet weather overflows in the Western Lehigh Interceptor. The Authority would like Arcadis to conduct an assessment of the condition of the force main and will focus on nine locations where deterioration is most likely to occur. This condition assessment will be used to scope additional rehabilitations projects for inclusion in the regional Act 537 Plan that is currently under development.

Jeff Morgan asked if Authority staff could do the excavations required for the inspections. Ms. Kunkel said that field staff will assist the consultant with clearing access and opening manholes but does not have the manpower to do the actual digs. There was some discussion regarding potential outcomes of the inspection and rehabilitation methodologies that may be required.

On a motion by Sean Ziller, seconded by Norma Cusick, the Board approved the Capital Project Authorization: Planning Phase in the amount of \$205,000.00 which includes the Professional Services authorization to Arcadis in the amount of \$190,000.00 (8-0).

Spring Creek Force Main Relocation - PA Turnpike Commission

Chuck Volk explained this project is part of the Pennsylvania Turnpike widening project and bridge replacement on Lower Macungie Road. The Spring Creek Force Main is impacted by the project requiring the relocation of approximately 1,800 linear feet of 24-inch main. The force main will be relocated within newly required state, Turnpike, and Township rights-of-way and will cross under Interstate 476. Amy Kunkel explained that the project will be funded by the Turnpike Commission at

50 percent for the existing facilities in the Township, PennDOT and Turnpike Commission rights-of-way, and 100% reimbursed for existing facilities located in private easements.

Sean Ziller asked for clarification on the funding when the final reimbursable amount will be determined by the Turnpike Commission, and Ms. Kunkel explained this information will be provided to the Authority at the completion of construction. Some additional Board discussion followed regarding project sequencing to maintain operability of the facility during construction.

On a motion by Norma Cusick, seconded by Jeff Morgan, the Board approved the Capital Project Authorization – Construction Phase in the amount of \$841,055.72 which includes the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission’s Cost Sharing Agreement in the amount of \$821,055.72 (8-0).

Emergency Declaration: Emergency Sewer Main Repair on Ellsworth Street

Chris Moughan explained that on June 22, 2024, Authority emergency crews were dispatched to a small sinkhole on Ellsworth Street in Allentown. After a thorough inspection of the water system, all was found in good operating condition. The team proceeded to jet the sewer line to look for damage. Upon visual inspection, the crews found a collapsed section of 15-inch main. Staff responded to the urgency of the situation, noting that the sewage flows from the Iron Pigs Stadium is directed into the damaged line and they had a home game scheduled later that evening and another on Sunday. Scheuermann Excavating was called upon to execute a time-sensitive repair on the line. After the emergency repair, crews conducted a CCTV inspection which revealed multiple additional cracks, fractures, and broken section of pipe. Replacement of the entire sewer main and manholes is in process. The contractor estimates the total repair cost to be between \$200,000 and \$250,000.

On a motion by Ted Lyons, seconded by Sean Ziller, the Board approved the emergency declaration retroactively to June 22, 2024 to cover expenses incurred as a result of the emergency and waive standard purchasing guidelines as a result of acting as expeditiously as possible to address the emergency (8-0).

MONTHLY PROJECT UPDATES / INFORMATION ITEMS

Liesel Gross reviewed the July 2024 report and noted that there are numerous items for the July 22 meeting. The Operations Center project will be brought back at a later meeting. She noted that staff have been working with the Solicitor to prepare a draft Resolution related to the Board’s delegation of duties, and a discussion on this topic will be scheduled in August. She also noted that the 2025-2029 Capital Plans will be distributed for review and comment beginning in August. Ms. Gross noted that there are a few projects listed in the report as being in “project closeout” phase, which will be removed from the list in August.

Jeff Morgan noted the project in the report regarding Chemically Enhanced Primary Treatment for the Kline’s Island Wastewater Treatment Plant, and suggested staff discuss this project with the City of Bethlehem, where a similar project was recently completed.

STAFF COMMENTS

None.

SOLICITOR’S COMMENTS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS / OTHER COMMENTS

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 2:06 p.m.

Jeffrey J. Morgan
Secretary