

THE LANDIS SEWERAGE AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING
April 4, 2022

Pledge of Allegiance.

The regular meeting of the Landis Sewerage Authority was called to order by Chairman Reuben at 6:00 p.m. The following members were present at roll call: Barse, Miranda, Angelo and Reuben were present. Villar was absent.

The proper notice was given to all members in accordance with the by-laws.

Chairman Reuben stated that public notice of this meeting, pursuant to the Open Public Meeting Act, has been given in the following manner:

1. Posting written notice in the lobby entrance of the Authority.
2. Hand delivering notices to the offices of the Daily Journal and The Press.
3. Filing written notices in the offices of the Authority and City Clerk.

Also present: Dennis W. Palmer	Executive Director
Anthony Tobolski	Field Engineer
Stephen D. Barse	Solicitor
Thomas J. Post	Business Manager
Carol A. Ricci	Executive Assistant
Cari Moore	Allocations Coordinator
Dawn Stroud	Court Stenographer
Steven Lewis	Vineland Resident

It was moved by Barse and seconded by Miranda that the reading of the minutes of the regular meeting held on March 21, 2022 be dispensed with and the same be approved in the form submitted to all members by mail. Roll call: Barse, Miranda, Angelo and Reuben voted "yes".

Solicitor Stehen Barse stated his name and opened the public hearing for the Landis Sewerage Authority with respect to rate setting for its annual user fee, allocation/ connection fee and gold star families and also stated that he would like to swear in all of the individuals who will be providing testimony on behalf of the Authority.

Please state your name:

Dennis W. Palmer, Executive Director/Chief Engineer, Landis Sewerage Authority
Thomas J. Post, Business Manager, Landis Sewerage Authority

Dennis Palmer, do you swear that the testimony you are about to provide tonight is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Dennis Palmer replied "I do".

Thomas J. Post, Business Manager, do you swear that the testimony you are about to provide tonight is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Thomas J. Post replied "I do".

Dennis Palmer made the following statement:

My name is Dennis W. Palmer, P.E., Executive Director of the Landis Sewerage Authority. I am the hearing officer for the public hearing being held on the above noted date in the matter of setting rates. I find that pursuant to NJ State Law, specifically N.J.S.A. 40:14A-8 et seq. the Authority followed the appropriate procedures in advertising the public hearing. The public hearing was published in two newspapers at least 20 days prior to the hearing as well as notices were sent to the appropriate municipal clerks in accordance with the law. The legal ads appeared on March 7, 2022 in the press of Atlantic City and March 10, 2022 in the Daily Journal, meeting the legal requirement of at least a 20-day notice in both official newspapers (exhibit A 1 & 2) and mailed to the respective clerks (exhibit B 1, 2 & 3). Beyond the basic advertisement, a front page story was in the Daily Journal a week ago also providing the public with additional notice.

The Authority would like to put forth the basis and background as well as rationale for adjusting the sewer rates. This is driven by several factors, the largest being the 2016 borrowing the Authority did to finance the upgrading in improvement in its infrastructure in addition to increased cost for fuel, chemicals and supplies. In being proactive and a responsible utility, a total of \$25 million was borrowed to invest in the treatment plant, collection system and pumping stations as well as major maintenance equipment. As an example, the oldest pumping station, Sears PS was installed in 1950 and approaching 70 years old. It did not meet today's electrical codes and was in an area which experienced flooding. The station was rebuilt and elevated to protect it from flooding and impacts of climate change. Several stations were upgraded as well as gravity and pressure sewer lines. The treatment plant had almost every piece of steel and iron in contact with wastewater removed and replaced. Many components were 25 to 30 years old; one was over 50 years old and had reached their useful life. With that, the Authority's debt service increased from approximately \$1.2 million in 2019 to 1.5 million presently. To meet this increase, the Authority had projected in 2016 a rate increase in 2020. With COVID and its impact financially on both residents and businesses, it was not the time to raise rates and the Authority utilized reserves to balance the 2021 budget and it did the same to start 2022. Utilization of reserves cannot go on forever and a rate increase is necessary and needed. The improvements will carry the Authority to year 2040 and beyond. Exhibit C is the resolution adopting the budget for 2022 and note the use of unrestricted net position to balance the budget.

The purpose of this meeting is to conduct a public hearing on a proposed rate increase on user charges of 6.7%. It is noted rates have not been increased for five (5) years. User charges are proposed to be increased from semi-annual billing of \$195.00 to \$208.00 for a single-family residential unit and all other unit's user charges will also increase in accordance with the proposed rate chart at the Authority's office. Flow based

customers will also be increased from \$2,920 to \$3,100 per million gallons. A chart has been prepared (Exhibit D) which lays out specific rates for each class of user.

There are also several other rate structures being proposed for updating and an increase. It is proposed that a new class of user, code 15, be created for spouses of Gold Star service persons killed while serving the country with a 10% reduction in the sewer bill (also in Exhibit D). The LSA also charges developers a fee to review applications based upon staff review time. This has not been updated for several years. It included the base salary plus fringe benefits and this rate setting will propose new review costs (Exhibit E). Also, the LSA collects a tipping fee for receiving liquid food waste and cooking fates, oils and grease (FOG) and it is proposed to raise all categories by one cent and to create new categories for more concentrated deliveries (Exhibit F). At times raw wastewater is delivered to the plant from holding tanks or wet well of private pumpstation under. The present rate is \$0.035 per gallon with an increase proposed to \$0.04 per gallon (this is also in Exhibit (D)). Finally, the LSA charges a fee for the use of credit cards. It is presently \$3 for residential owners and \$5 for commercial accounts. For a very large payment, this fee does not cover the cost imposed upon the Authority by the credit card processor. It is proposed the \$3 and \$5 would remain, but for payment of a bill above \$500, a 2.5% fee would be collected.

As a measure of comparison, a list of neighboring communities wastewater rates (Exhibit G) clearly indicates that even with the proposed increase to \$416 per year, the LSA is significantly lower than our neighbors who are in the range of \$482 with two at \$520 and one at \$545 per year. This is the end of direct testimony being read into the record by the Authority.

Tom Post, Business Manager added that other than being very competitive, the homeowner rates under the new rate structure is \$1.14 a day to break it down into simple terms.

Dennis Palmer compared it to a cell phone rate or a cable TV rate or other utility bills. With the conclusion of our statements the Authority is available for any cross-examination, questions or comments from the audience.

My name is Steve Lewis and I'm a resident of Vineland, New Jersey. The first thing I'd like to talk about is the rate increase. No one likes a rate increase but you have to understand the fact that you have to be proactive to keep everything running right, especially today where it's probably hard to get new materials if you have a pump breakdown and are you going to be able to get the part. Will you have to keep that pump shut down for a week or a month or just a couple of days. How are the people of the city going to feel if their sewage isn't being pumped and they won't be happy campers. So, I feel to be proactive and to have things on hand in case something does happen, you are able to fix things. If you have things that are 50 or 75 years old, you have to do preventive maintenance, make sure everything is up to snuff so that you shouldn't have any problems because everyone is happy when they don't have a problem and that comes at a cost which of course is the rate increase.

The second thing is the 10% off of the Gold Star spouses bill. I am 100% in favor of that and I'm happy that the city is proactive on this matter. If you looked at the City Council for the past few years helping the Gold Star families and the service members and of course LSA helped the service members that are activated to help them with their bills. I think that's the least we can do for these families and it's very important. This lets them know they're not forgotten. The other problem with this is that they don't know about it so how do we get people to know they are eligible for this? In the newspaper they had one line and no one read that or thought about it. Plus, they are pretty humble people. They don't want anyone to think they need help. This isn't showing them they need help. It shows them that you appreciate and understand what is going on in their lives. Somehow, either in our new bills when we get them for the next couple of billing cycles, something should be put in with the bills explaining to the people that this is something to show you appreciate what they are going through and this might be a way of helping them out.

Dennis Palmer asked if Steve has a liaison with either the reserve facility that's here or anything else in town and Steve stated that he did not. Even in Vineland, people don't apply for the 10% discount on their electric and water bills because there's nothing out there. On one of my bills, I saw something, like a small paragraph how they are eligible. They're too proud and they won't do it. How do you reach people to tell them? It's not that you feel sorry for them that they can't pay their bill. It's just that we care and as a country we should all care. Vineland has been showing quite often that they care.

Perry asked why can't we just print a flier? Dennis stated that we can put it on the bills and there's a box on the bill that we can put a message. Perry stated that it's better to have something enclosed with it because they'll see that. What Anthony has instituted since he's been in office is that any time you get an electric bill, you're getting a newsletter about the city. Dennis stated that the bill is closed and we print through the bill. Tom stated that it's a self-close. Dennis again stated that there's a box where we can put messages. Perry asked can we get a mailing list and send out a flier. Anthony stated that the city said that they would put our stuff in their mail. Perry stated that it just doesn't seem that difficult to do and send them something that stands out that they can see to all of the residents. Steve Lewis stated that the city and the LSA get together and they put a full-page ad in the daily paper letting people know exactly what this is and why you're doing it. Dennis stated that their number has dropped significantly in circulation. A direct mail with the city might be a plan. Perry stated that if we send a direct mail to every customer, we know they're going to get it. We have mailing lists for direct mail and we can coordinate with the city. We did a post card years ago regarding sewer backups and we sent out 12,000 cards. Steve stated they put it in the electric bill one time for the discount when they were activated. I don't think anyone applied for the discount on their electric bill. We have the banners on the avenue and it was a great project. Right now, we're working on a project at the Landis Park called the Gold Star Mother's Park. A lot of time and money is being invested. There's a lot going on in Vineland for our service members and that's the way it should be. We should always think of them first because there's all kinds of programs for everyone else and a lot of people take advantage of programs that shouldn't. This is one program that you know

that one person is the person who deserves it and if you can do anything I would deeply appreciate it.

Dennis Palmer asked if there were any additional questions and there were none. Seeing there are no other questions from the public, I would recommend a motion to close the hearing. It was moved by Barse and seconded by Miranda that the public hearing be closed: Roll call: Barse, Miranda, Angelo and Reuben voted “yes”.

Steve Lewis stated that we shouldn't be disappointed if only one person shows up because when he goes to City Council meetings every week, I'm the one person that shows up.

The Chairman asked if there were any general public comments or comments on the proposed Resolutions. There were none.

Resolutions:

It was moved by Barse and seconded by Miranda that Resolution No. 2022 – 28 “Be it resolved by the Landis Sewerage Authority, that the following bills of items or demands are hereby approved and authorized for payment out of the Revenue Fund Revolving Payroll Account.... \$101,666.80”, be adopted. Roll call: Barse, Miranda, Angelo and Reuben voted “yes”.

It was moved by Barse and seconded by Miranda that Resolution No. 2022 - 29, “Be it resolved by the Landis Sewerage Authority, that the following bills of items or demands are hereby approved and authorized for payment out of the Revenue Fund Bills.... \$302,932.74”, be adopted. Roll call: Barse, Miranda, Angelo and Reuben voted “yes”.

It was moved by Miranda and seconded by Barse that Resolution No. 2022 - 30, “A Resolution of the Landis Sewerage Authority allocating sewerage capacity for Round 198 for the Industrial Classification...” be adopted. Roll call: Barse, Miranda, Angelo and Reuben voted “yes”.

It was moved by Barse and seconded by Miranda that Resolution No. 2022 – 31, “A Resolution of the Landis Sewerage Authority summarizing allocation activity through the close of Allocation Round 198...” be adopted. Roll call: Barse, Miranda, Angelo and Reuben voted “yes”.

It was moved by Miranda and seconded by Angelo that Resolution No. 2022 – 32, “A Resolution of the Landis Sewerage Authority adopting policies and procedures on claimant certification requirements...” be adopted. Roll call: Barse, Miranda, Angelo and Reuben voted “yes”.

It was moved by Barse and seconded by Miranda that Resolution No. 2022- 33, “A Resolution of the Landis Sewerage Authority authorizing the Executive Director to enter

into an Interlocal Services Agreement with Cumberland County Improvement Authority..." be adopted. Roll call: Barse, Miranda, Angelo and Reuben voted "yes".

Reports:

Executive Director

Dennis Palmer reported that you have the HomeServe commission report and the Receiving Station had another month with over \$20,000 in income and that's doing well.

We had South State in to sign the contract for Cavallo Drive and we sent them the notice to proceed and that is effective today. The contract starts running now to do the paving job on Cavallo. Steve and I have been working on the foreclosure notice on the next \$38,000 and we don't want to miss out on that and we put the city on notice that we expect to be made whole on those liens. The basis of our bond is a revenue bond. When we sat with the bank, they liked the fact that we can put a lien on the property because other people you loan money to commercially you don't have that ability.

I had a meeting with the City Green Team Committee. We have a tour coming on Wednesday which is Trenton Bio-Energy. They did something like us but on a much bigger scale. They took some old facilities in Trenton to take in food waste. They're taking heads of cabbage and whole vegetables from grocery stores and food processors. We want to come and see what we have.

Field Engineer

Anthony Tobolski reported that in accordance with Contract No. 5, which is the North and South Mill Road force main replacement, Pioneer Pipe will be working on North Mill Road tonight to make the final connection on the 10-inch force main from Burnt Mill Pump Station. Mill Road will be closed between Landis and Almond and also between Almond and Oak from 9 p.m. tonight until 7 a.m. tomorrow morning. The connection will conclude the pipe work portion of this contract leaving only paving and restoration work.

Contract No. 4 which is the comminator project, B & H contracting brought the new muffin monsters on sight today and are starting the electrical work tomorrow.

Solicitor:

Stephen Barse reported that we're looking at our options and sending a letter to the City's attorneys about what we think they should be doing to protect our liens so that we can be made whole when these properties ultimately get sold. That is an ongoing process.

Also, we had union negotiations today and we think they went very well and we anticipate they will be coming back probably at the next meeting for ratification.

Chairman: No Report

Issues and Correspondence: None

Committee Reports:

Engineering/Plant:

Dennis stated that one of the issues we had on one of the gas treatment units for the co-gen, the stainless-steel tank was clogged and it got pulled in. We're in the process of sending that out to get new stainless steel get installed and it is now thirteen years old and it needs to be repaired. We can save the tank, but some of the plates need to be replaced.

We've been working with the City on Fiocchi Field and we gave them a new estimate today. The price is going up and they're trying to put in a small pumping station and sewer facility for a rest room. They have partial funding or a grant from the State and the updated numbers indicate it's going up another 25 or 30% from where we were. They got the numbers and the bad news today so we'll see how they want to proceed. We'll do the engineering, bidding and all of those costs.

Yari Miranda asked what the time line for the building replacement is. Dennis stated that's we need to provide a building with environmental control for long term record storage. The second thing is the Union trailer has a lunch room, a locker room and shower facilities. With COVID it was very tight in there. We staggered shifts having them come in half hour differences. We'd have half the number of people getting dressed at the end of the day or showered. The floors are rotting plus other issues. The only thing that's good is the AC and heater unit is fairly new and we can move that to the building for record storage. We're looking at a pole barn that goes up fairly quick.

Budget/Finance: No Report

Human Resources:

Dennis reported that as Steve mentioned we had negotiations today for the farm contract. We settled the plant in the beginning of the year. They have to vote on it and I sent them a memorandum of understanding so they can take it back to the guys. Hopefully by the end of the week we get the acknowledgement that it's a go and you will see a resolution at the next meeting for the contract.

Public Relations:

Dennis stated that he received the AEA award and thank you Joe for coming down. I put it on our Facebook page and Linkden. WRA had it on their page also as I was chair of that organization.

Insurance Committee:

Carol Ricci stated that she is just waiting for numbers on the commercial liability renewal and also, she and Dennis will be meeting with Mike Snyder from Glatfelters Insurance on Thursday the 7th of April for a risk management inspection. It's a regular inspection which will take a couple of hours.

Allocations/Administration:

Dennis stated that New Jersey first had an executive order replaced by a law that dealt with people if they're behind for the period of March 2020 to March of 2022 that you can't put a lien or interest on them without first giving them a chance for a payment plan. If they don't take the payment plan and fail to make the payments on past due you get interest and you potentially go to lien. You also must keep your payments current. There's a requirement in the law to put it on your web page so it's in both Spanish and in English on our page and also on our Facebook page and also on the late notices. You don't need a payment plan if you're not late. Tom did a nice job pulling together an agreement similar to the one we had previously but with the new citations of the new law. The governor just signed last week another bill that says you can't do these things if they've signed up for the assistance program that the state has. And DC has to print out monthly to utilities all of the names of those affected and I can't imagine how they can do it. That's another wrinkle and we don't know that until they give it to us. We're moving forward with the announcement that's on the bill and on our page and you have to have a plan established with us by April 29th and if not, it goes the course of interest and if they're a year plus behind, it goes to lien sale. We have to make those other steps first. It will be in that message box on the bill. We have five so far. We did this a couple of years ago for accounts that were \$1000 behind. We called them in for a meeting and that was done by resolution. That was prior to credit cards and they have done a lot as far as going into the lien sale to get people to come in, not having their property to lien. They can do their own payment plan with their credit card company and not go to lien.

Old Business: None

New Business: Carol Ricci reminded everyone that a reply was needed regarding attendance at the Chamber dinner on May 18th.

Adjournment:

At 6:30 p.m. there being no further business to come before the Board, it was moved by Miranda and seconded by Barse that the meeting be adjourned. Roll call: Barse, Miranda, Angelo and Reuben voted "yes"

THE LANDIS SEWERAGE AUTHORITY

CARLOS VILLAR, Secretary