

MINUTES
NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL SEWER DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
SEPTEMBER 3, 2026

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS D) was called to order at 12:30 p.m. by Darnell Brown.

I. Roll Call

Present: Darnell Brown
Ronald Sulik
Jack Bacci
Marjorie Chambers

Absent: Timothy DeGeeter
Sharon Dumas
Samuel Alai

The Secretary informed the President that a quorum was in attendance.

II. Approval of Minutes

MOTION –Mayor Bacci moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded, to approve the Minutes of the August 6, 2026 Board Meeting. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

III. Public Session

There were no items.

IV. Chief Executive Officer's Report

Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, Chief Executive Officer, advised the Board of Trustees that on August 12th staff from Sanitation District 1 in Northern Kentucky (SD1) visited NEORS D for a tour and discussion of the Westerly Tunnel Dewatering Pump Station. SD1 is building a smaller 10 million gallon per day pump station and a 12-foot diameter tunnel and wanted to meet with NEORS D as part of their work to control combined sewer overflow and see a finished project. Doug Lopata, Program Manager for Planning and Design, Josh Dress, Assistant Manager for Sewer System Maintenance and Operation, Josh Jeffi, O&M Construction Coordinator, and Nate Ledbetter, Sewer System Maintenance and Operation Supervisor, guided the group through the planning and design of the Westerly Tunnel System. During the field visit, there was discussion regarding operations at the site since 2024 and changes that will be incorporated in the to-be-built Southerly Tunnel Dewatering Pump Station.

President Brown noted that AECOM was present and asked whether they were onsite serving as consultants for either party. Mr. Lopata confirmed that they were in attendance serving as SD1's consultant.

On August 22nd Donna Friedman, Manager of Community Watershed Coordination, joined the Ward 3 meeting in Richmond Heights to discuss NEORSD's work in that city. Ward 3 Councilwoman Cassandra Nelson invited Ms. Friedman, Council President Bobby Jordan, and State Representative Dan Troy to address the approximately 55 residents in attendance. Ms. Friedman provided an update regarding the Member Community Infrastructure Program funding that has been invested into Richmond Heights as well as stream restoration work performed under the Regional Stormwater Management Program and NEORSD's cost savings programs. About half of the City is part of the Sewer District and the remainder of Richmond Heights sends their wastewater to the City of Euclid's wastewater treatment plant.

On August 27th Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells had the privilege of being the 2026 James Tinnin Service Learning Speaker at Kent State University. Dr. Tinnin was the founding director of the Center for Public Administration and Public Policy at Kent State University, and he remains committed to supporting local government. Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells discussed NEORSD's work in wastewater and stormwater with a group of undergraduate students, graduates and professors. In addition to Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells' presentation, there was an approximately 30-minute-long discussion with the attendees. Jenn Elting, Senior Manager of Strategic Partnerships and Media, was also in attendance and wished for Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells to mention that attendees were engaged and many are now considering careers in clean water.

V. Action Items

Authorization to Advertise

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| Resolution No. 142-26 | Authorization to publish notice calling for bids, in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section 6119.10, for a twelve-month requirement contract for the delivery of up to 8,200,000 wet pounds of sodium hypochlorite solution to all District Wastewater Treatment Plants, with an estimated probable cost of \$1,230,000.00. |
| Resolution No. 143-26 | Authorization to publish notice calling for bids, in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section 6119.10, for a public improvement contract for the Southerly Solids Handling Improvements project, with an estimated probable construction cost of \$31,000,000.00. |

Resolution No. 144-26 Authorization to publish notice calling for bids, in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section 6119.10, for a two-year requirement contract for property demolition services with an estimated probable cost of \$2,000,000.00.

MOTION – Ms. Chambers moved, and Mr. Sulik seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 142-26 through 144-26. After the following discussion, without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

President Brown requested additional information regarding the services associated with Resolution No. 143-26. Robin Rupe, Director of Engineering and Construction, explained that currently at the Westerly WWTC, NEORSD is able to haul sludge in solid cake form; however, if the centrifuges are having issues, it is difficult for staff to remove the sludge. NEORSD is currently building an unloading station to be able to remove everything in a liquid form. This project provides the ability to receive it at the Southerly WWTC and use the Renewable Energy Facility to process it. This is one part of a project which includes eight other areas throughout the solids management process at the plant that will undergo improvements.

President Brown thanked Ms. Rupe for the information and added that upgrades that provide redundancy to ensure that mechanical operations are backed up when something fails are always good to have.

Authorization to Purchase

Resolution No. 145-26 Authorization to purchase laboratory chemicals and supplies from sole source vendor Idexx Laboratories, Inc., necessary for *E. coli* analyses, in an amount not-to-exceed \$200,000.00.

Resolution No. 146-26 Authorization to purchase PC desktops, laptops, monitors and accessories from Dell Marketing L.P., under the State of Ohio Cooperative Purchasing Program, in an amount not-to-exceed \$424,175.00, including a \$20,000.00 allowance.

MOTION – Mayor Bacci moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 145-26 through 146-26. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Enter Into Agreement

Resolution No. 147-26 Authorization to enter into a loan agreement with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the Ohio Water Development Authority to accept WPCLF funding for construction costs related to the Big Creek Tunnel project for a total amount up to \$324,821,130.00.

- Resolution No. 148-26 Authorization to enter into Memorandum of Agreement with Ohio Council 8 and Local Union 2798, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO (AFSCME), substantially in the form presented, to modify certain language in Article 1, Recognition, and Appendix D, Wages, of the current collective bargaining agreement between the District and AFSCME, to recognize the new classification of Field Technician Operator-Heavy Equipment In-Training (HEFTO-IT), and to establish a rate of pay for the new HEFTO-IT position, and to adjust the pay rate for the current classification of Field Technician Operator-Heavy Equipment (HEFTO).
- Resolution No. 149-26 Authorization to sponsor projects under the Ohio EPA's Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP) and to enter into sponsorship agreements with Appalachia Ohio Alliance, Ohio Valley Conservation Coalition, Put-In-Bay Township Park District, Ross County Park District, Arc of Appalachia, Natural Areas Land Conservancy, and The Nature Conservancy for the 2026-2027 funding cycle, as presented, for a total of \$27,109,938 awarded by Ohio EPA under the WRRSP at no cost to the District.

MOTION – Mr. Sulik moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 147-26 through 149-26. After the following discussion, without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

President Brown requested additional information regarding the loan funding under Resolution No. 147-26. Ken Duplay, Chief Financial Officer, explained that the loan has been part of the long-term plan of finance as NEORSD moves through the last large spending years of the Consent Decree. NEORSD has always anticipated additional borrowing, and this was considered for the 2027 through 2031 rate study period. This will be the largest new loan taken by NEORSD and is the first since 2022. As was done with the Shoreline Storage Tunnel, NEORSD will work with its municipal advisors to develop a structured repayment schedule that is advantageous for long-term rate impacts to customers, probably with a 40-year term.

President Brown then requested an explanation regarding the sponsorship agreements associated with Resolution No. 149-26. Matt Scharver, Director of Watershed Programs, explained that this is the 2026 round of the Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program, which is administered by Ohio EPA and is tied to the Big Creek Tunnel project. The program will provide \$27 million to project implementors and NEORSD would like to sponsor 12 projects in this funding round. NEORSD receives 1/10% reduction on its loan rate for sponsoring projects in the 2026 funding round of eligible, approved project implementors.

This is an opportunity that Ohio EPA has created to conserve the highest quality of natural resources across the state. Normally NEORSD would sponsor projects in its service area; however, there are not many this year. These projects will result in protection of 2,700 acres of land, 20,000 linear feet of mainstream and 108,000 feet of primary headwater habitat, totaling approximately 20 miles of primary headwater habitat streams and 195 acres of wetlands, which are important for watershed protection and stewardship. Since 2002, NEORSD has sponsored 63 projects, totaling \$74 million in WRRSP funding, which has produced 8,000 acres of preserved land and 4,000 acres of wetland preservation across Ohio.

Authorization to Amend Agreement

Resolution No. 150-26	Authorization to amend Agreement No. 25001233 with Health Express Urgent Care Centers, LLC for occupational health services, to update the scope of services to include color vision assessments and accommodations, with no change in the total agreement amount.
Resolution No. 151-26	Authorization to enter into a second amendment to Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) No. 19005014 with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District, for Section 214 funding, to extend the expiration date of the MOA from September 30, 2026 to June 27, 2029, or exhaustion of the funding under the MOA, whichever occurs first, and to amend the fully burdened cost per hour for regulatory personnel, with no change in the total MOA amount.

MOTION –Ms. Chambers moved, and Mayor Bacci seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 150-26 through 151-26. After the following discussion, without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

President Brown requested additional information regarding Resolution No. 151-26. Mr. Scharver explained that this is an extension of an existing agreement with the US Army Corps of Engineers under the Water Resource Development Act of 2000, Section 214. This agreement has been in place since 2019 and helps coordinate with a permit writer assigned to NEORSD to ensure the timeliness of permitting. These agreements provide a process improvement for public entities to receive expedited permit reviews and predictable responses to permit applications. Prior to this agreement, it would take more than 45 days to process NEORSD's permits and now is completed in less time.

This is the second amendment to the agreement to extend the time period from September 30, 2026 to June 27, 2029 or until the exhaustion of funds. NEORSD typically submits six to ten applications per year under both the wastewater and stormwater programs.

Authorization to Enter Into Contract

Resolution No. 152-26 Authorization to enter into a three-year requirement contract with RCR Services, Inc. for Waste Heat Boiler Repair Services at the District's Renewable Energy Facility in an amount not-to-exceed \$673,390.00.

Resolution No. 153-26 Authorization to enter into a three-year requirement contract with NG Overhead Garage Door Company for Overhead Door Maintenance, Repair, and Condition Assessments in an amount not-to-exceed \$349,595.00.

MOTION – Mr. Sulik moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 152-26 through 153-26. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization of Contract Modification

Resolution No. 154-26 Authorization to modify Public Improvement Contract No. 24007033 with Fabrizi Trucking & Paving, Inc. for the CSO-249-East 112th Sewer Improvements project to approve a non-compensable 150-day time extension for administrative closeout of the project and to investigate and confirm full sewer separation as intended.

MOTION – Mayor Bacci moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded to adopt Resolution No. 154-26. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Close Out Public Improvement Contract

Resolution No. 155-26 Authorizing the Final Adjusting Change Order to close out Public Improvement Contract No. 25003586 with Marra Services Inc. for the MCT-3 Shaft 13 Flow Drop project, to decrease the contract amount by \$95,635.29, thereby bringing the total contract amount to \$2,284,364.71.

MOTION – Ms. Chambers moved, and Mr. Sulik seconded to adopt Resolution No. 155-26. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

VI. Information Items

Lydia Hartman, Manager of Employee Experience and Engagement, explained that NEORSD focuses on employee experience and engagement to ensure that they are able to bring their best selves to work and deliver excellent service.

NEORSD has had various employee engagement efforts over the years. The current team and program were formed in January of this year, with a focus on creating a strategic framework, realigning initiatives to fit under this new scope of work and identifying ways to increase connection and build trust across facilities and departments.

Research shows that when employees are engaged, absenteeism and safety incidents decrease, while retention rates and productivity increase. Reasons employees choose to leave are usually centered around engagement, culture, wellbeing, and work-life balance.

The team has developed six strategic priorities to strengthen employee engagement, build bridges, amplify voices, empower leaders, advance wellbeing, think regionally, and evaluate impact.

Building bridges is about increasing connection between employees, departments, facilities, and leadership. Related activities include quarterly employee recognition events at each facility; interactive gallery walk events that focus on cultural observances; and employee resource groups.

Amplifying voices is to ensure that there is a comprehensive listening strategy to allow employees to provide feedback regarding their experiences. In addition to the new hire and exit interviews, NEORSD will begin an annual employee engagement survey, the feedback from which will be used to empower leaders to make good decisions for their teams.

Efforts to advance wellbeing will be multifocal, considering intellectual, emotional, and physical safety, by providing robust resources and partnerships externally and internally.

Thinking regionally means that employees are connected to the mission and vision of NEORSD and understand how their work connects to the services provided to the community. NEORSD's internal data shows that one of the most frequently cited reasons that employees recommend working for NEORSD is the mission and purpose of the work.

In order to measure and communicate progress with employees, Ms. Hartman advised that her team will be establishing metrics in 2027, to determine the success of their efforts to enhance employee experiences.

President Brown thanked Ms. Hartman and her team for their efforts and noted that because people spend a significant portion of their lives at their workplaces, it is always better when the environment is engaging, and the work provides a benefit to the community.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells invited Jeremy Short, Director of Human Resources, to provide an update.

Mr. Short advised the Board that the Human Resources Department (HR) supports NEORSD employees throughout their time with the District, beginning with talent acquisition, through total rewards ensuring competitive pay and benefits, while supporting employee relationships, and building on training and workforce development to meet NEORSD's future needs.

Mr. Short explained HR monitors workforce trend to develop strategic responses that ensure NEORSD has staffing to meet its operational needs through capacity and continuity assessments. NEORSD responds to workforce trends with initiatives designed to position itself as a meaningful and desirable employer of choice.

In reviewing capacity, NEORSD went from having 772 filled positions including interns, in 2024, 787 in 2025, and currently as 804 filled positions. While there is relative stability across various departments, there has been an increase in the average filled positions in Watershed Programs and Operation and Maintenance. When including Engineering and Construction, this represents more than two thirds of NEORSD's overall workforce, meaning that technical skill sets are an area to maintain focus. NEORSD maintains a philosophy of developing internal talent. Accordingly, internal hires and promotions have increased from approximately 70 in 2024 and 2025, to almost 100 already this year.

As for turnover, new hire retention is strong with 98% of new employees staying beyond their first year. Overall turnover is 7.1%, with voluntary turnover at just 3.5%. In assessing staffing needs, NEORSD takes retirement risk into consideration by identifying staff who are eligible for retirement under OPERS as well as staff over 60 years of age, in order to plan proactively. Additionally, HR assesses employees with 10 years or more of service with NEORSD to highlight opportunities for succession planning and leadership growth.

NEORSD has built substantial training programs to develop its operations workforce, including various skilled trade training programs and the Good Neighbor Ambassador and Job Training Program, which is a proven talent pipeline. Since 2013, 76% of the program participants have found full-time employment within the community, with 43 of them staying at NEORSD. NEORSD supports additional pipeline programs for future employment such as the Louis Stokes Scholarship Program, the Clean Water Fellowship Program, and its intern program, which currently has 31 interns. Over the past five years, NEORSD has promoted 32 interns to full-time roles.

As has been previously presented to the Board, there will be an anonymous reporting tool put in place to reinforce a culture of ethics, accountability, and transparency while providing a strategic tie-in to employee engagement.

NEORSD is looking to be more competitive in the job market, including working on enhancing the internship program to enrich the learning experience of the interns and provide better role clarity, launching a comprehensive compensation study, and evaluating opportunities to enhance benefit offerings. These efforts are focused on strengthening the ability to attract and retain top talent while ensuring the benefits offered are valuable to candidates and support the needs of staff.

President Brown thanked Mr. Short and added that, in the years that he has been with NEORSD, the changes to the culture, leadership, and investments in employees are significantly improved from what they were 20 years ago. The support and programming provided by HR means a lot to the organization and contributes to NEORSD's positive reputation locally and nationwide.

VII. Open Session

Gail Bromley posed the following questions:

"President Brown, members of the Board. Good afternoon. My voice is a little weak because I'm just getting over a cold, so I apologize. I just have several questions. One is it's been very noticeable that a number of trees have been taken down by Lower Lake at the corner of North Park and Coventry and the community is curious as to how that came about. We don't know who is doing it or why they are doing it. We just wondered if you had any information about that."

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells and Mr. Scharver advised that this question has been previously addressed, and the work is being performed by Friends of Lower Lake to remove invasive species.

Ms. Bromley stated: "We knew that was the case before, but it's so much more significant than it was sort of curious that that went on. And, actually, as we walk by there is still saws in the middle of the night left there so I didn't know whether somebody was doing it nefariously. So, thank you."

Mr. Scharver added that the work is being done in coordination with the Cities of Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights, with both municipalities well aware of the activity.

Ms. Bromley asked: "Thank you, Matt. Another question, there were -- there was an executive session between Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights two weeks ago at the same -- during the same week the Sewer District also had executive session. We were wondering if you participated in the joint one between Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights."

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells explained that NEORSD did not participate in that executive session.

Ms. Bromley asked: "Thank you. And the last question I have the project that has been proposed for the Shaker Lake Park is substantial. I've done substantial research to understand if you have another example of something of this magnitude that you've worked on with the Sewer District and the contractors so that we can look at that and understand, you know, sort of what your track record is in terms of the work and the permitting and so forth. Is there another similar analogous project that you have embarked on?"

Mr. Scharver explained that while not the same magnitude in terms of stream length, NEORSD's West Creek Stabilization project in Brooklyn Heights is comparable.

Ms. Bromly asked: "But how many acres is that?"

Mr. Scharver explained that he does not recall the number of acres; however, it is more than 5,000 feet of stream restoration, which will be similar to the Doan Brook Restoration at Horseshoe Park project. There are other examples of similar projects including the Highland Park Golf Course project, the Cleveland Museum of Art project in 2019 was completed near the Nord Family Greenway, including approximately 1,000 feet of Doan Brook restoration.

Ms. Bromley stated: "But not of the magnitude of the 300 acres that you're talking about that you proposed for Shaker Lake?"

Mr. Scharver explained that there are not 300 acres of proposed restoration under the Doan Brook Restoration project. The parcel is approximately 60 acres and there are 26 acres of restoration in Doan Brook Valley.

Ms. Bromley stated: "But the impact is for the total area once you, you know, section that off."

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells explained that the total area of Horseshoe Park is 60 acres and the stream restoration will be 7,000 linear feet of stream overall and 5,755 feet of perennial stream. Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells encouraged Ms. Bromley to look at NEORSD's website, where there is information regarding each of the 69 stream restoration projects that NEORSD has performed, restoring more than 47,000 total linear feet of stream.

Ms. Bromley stated: "Well, you were kind enough to have us meet with John so we're very familiar with the website."

VIII. Public Session (any subject matter)

There were no items.

IX. Executive Session

There were no items.

X. Approval of Items from Executive Session

There were no items.

XI. Adjournment

MOTION – President Brown stated business having been concluded, he would entertain a motion to adjourn. Mayor Bacci moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded the motion to adjourn at 1:21 p.m. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.



Timothy J. DeGeeter, Secretary
Board of Trustees
Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District



Darnell Brown, President
Board of Trustees
Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District