

MINUTES
NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL SEWER DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
FEBRUARY 6, 2025

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

I. Roll Call

Present: Darnell Brown
Ronald Sulik
Timothy DeGeeter
Jack Bacci
Sharon Dumas
Samuel Alai
Marjorie Chambers

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 January 16, 2025 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, informed the Board that on January 15th NEORS held a hiring event for its Good Neighbor Ambassador (GNA) and Job Training Program. The event was very successful with 165 candidates interviewed and 104 moving forward from the initial phase, with hopes for at least 50 candidates to move forward to in-depth panel interviews. Human Resources and GNA staff put forth significant effort to advertise this event, including collaboration with organizations under the Built Environment Collaborative, such as Hard Hatted Women of Ohio and Towards Employment.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells provided photographs from the hiring event and explained that more than 35 NEORS staff members served as interviewers, ensuring that each attendee had an opportunity to be interviewed. Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells thanked everyone who participated in the event.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells acknowledged Jim Bunsey, Chief Operating Officer, who is stepping down from his current role to serve as Senior Technical Advisor, until he retires in Spring 2025. Mr. Bunsey previously served as Deputy Director of Engineering and Construction, then the Director of Engineering and Construction before taking over the role of COO. Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells explained that she and Mr. Bunsey joined NEORSD at the same time and she has relied on his wise counsel and deep knowledge since becoming CEO in 2017. Mr. Bunsey has extensive experience and knowledge that allows him to identify what ideas will be useful to NEORSD from across the industry. Mr. Bunsey has supported ongoing efficiencies and excellence at the wastewater treatment plants and construction sites, leading innovation in areas such as demand response and greenhouse gas emissions. Mr. Bunsey worked tirelessly to find a long-term solution for commissioning the NEORSD Security Department and led the establishment of the Technical Services Group. Mr. Bunsey will be missed at NEORSD and his efforts to get his teams in the great condition that they are in is greatly appreciated.

President Brown added that Mr. Bunsey is, in many respects, the reason that NEORSD is where it is today. When NEORSD first began Project Clean Lake, it relied heavily on external consultants. Eventually, the Board of Trustees determined that it would be best to rely on in-house services, and Mr. Bunsey was brought in. President Brown explained that he has known Mr. Bunsey for a number of years, including during his time as a consultant, which gave credibility to consultants for President Brown.

President Brown presented a proclamation highlighting Mr. Bunsey's achievements over the past 15 years, noting that much of the progress made on time and on budget in Project Clean Lake is due to his efforts. President Brown read from the proclamation "Whereas through the years Jim Bunsey was a dependable and loyal employee", noting that that resonates as Mr. Bunsey is in the category of people like former NEORSD employee Lester Stumpe, that have been dedicated to NEORSD and the wastewater industry. President Brown thanked Mr. Bunsey for all that he has done for NEORSD.

Ms. Dumas added that when she was working as the Finance Director for the City of Cleveland and Mayor Jackson had issues understanding the delivery of electricity from Cleveland Public Power, she reached out to Mr. Bunsey for help. Together they created a three-person panel of volunteers who created projections and worked for months with Mayor Jackson to create an understanding of what was happening at CPP.

Mr. Bunsey thanked President Brown and Ms. Dumas for their comments and added he is grateful to have been on the ground floor of bringing program management in-house for NEORSD. It is one of the finest examples of ownership of the utility running a program of this size. It is impressive considering the challenging heavy civil work involved, to bring it on time and on budget while continuing to meet program key performance indicators.

Mr. Bunsey offered special thanks to the Board and former then-Executive Director Ciaccia at the time for the vision and support to bring program management in-house. Mr. Bunsey also thanked Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells for the opportunity and support provided to him as COO. As COO, Mr. Bunsey has enjoyed working with the Operation and Maintenance Department, which has seen significant change under the leadership of Frank Foley, Director of Operation and Maintenance, including the replacement of the asset management system, replacement of the process data management system, maintaining and operating all facilities, new and old all during this construction period, and making permit all the while, and keeping the budget in line.

Mr. Bunsey expressed appreciation to the staff in the Technical Services Group, Security, and Sustainability Departments, adding that they are always seeking out opportunities to increase their own efficiency and assist other Departments within NEORSD.

Mr. Bunsey added that NEORSD has solid management and qualified, devoted staff. Devona Marshall will undoubtedly be an outstanding COO. He is glad to have been a part of the team, with his time at NEORSD being the highlight of his career. Mr. Bunsey wished NEORSD staff luck in the future.

V. Action Items

Authorization to Advertise

Resolution No. 18-25	Authorization to publish notice calling for bids, in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section 6119.10, for a two-year requirement contract for Hydro Vac and Jetting Services to ensure proper conveyance of stormwater at and to the District's nine Project Clean Lake Green Infrastructure facilities with an estimated probable cost of \$200,000.00.
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MOTION – Mr. Sulik moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded to adopt Resolution No. 18-25. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Issue Request for Proposal (RFP)

Resolution No. 19-25	Authorization to issue an RFP, in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Chapter 6119, for one or more professional services agreements for Environmental Assessment Services in support of the District's Capital Improvement Program and Regional Stormwater Management Program in a total amount not-to-exceed \$1,500,000.00 to be allocated among the agreements according to District needs.
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MOTION – Ms. Chambers moved, and Ms. Dumas seconded to adopt Resolution No. 19-25. After the following discussion, without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

President Brown requested an explanation as to what work product this procurement will provide. Matt Scharver, Director of Watershed Programs, explained that there is significant work to be performed under this proposal in the area of environmental assessments. The intent is to allocate \$1.5 million for an anticipated minimum of three years of service. The previous contract of a similar dollar amount lasted for five years and completed more than forty tasks.

Environmental screenings are important to the Capital Improvement Program and the Regional Stormwater Management Program to assess issues such as land transactions, hazardous materials sampling, and construction oversight.

Authorization to Purchase

Resolution No. 20-25 Authorization to purchase furniture, including installation, from American Interiors under the Knoll Omnia cooperative purchasing program for the Easterly Stockroom Relocation project in an amount not-to-exceed \$185,072.42.

MOTION – Mr. Sulik moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded to adopt Resolution No. 15-25. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Enter Into Agreement

Resolution No. 21-25 Authorization to enter into a professional services agreement with Tata Consultancy Services, Ltd. to integrate the Oracle Enterprise Business Suite with Paymentus, the District’s bill payment software, and the District’s single sign-on application, in an amount not-to-exceed \$406,420.00.

Resolution No. 22-25 Authorization to enter into a project agreement with the City of Richmond Heights to stabilize 300 feet of Claribel Creek, a tributary to Euclid Creek East Branch, to address streambank erosion on the Regional Stormwater System under the City’s Claribel Creek Bank Stabilization project, with a District contribution toward design and construction costs in an amount not-to-exceed \$350,000.00.

MOTION – Mayor Bacci moved, and Ms. Dumas seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 21-25 through 22-25. After the following discussion, without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

President Brown noted that Resolution No. 21-25 appears to be related to an earlier direct billing project and requested additional information as to what this contract will facilitate. Mohan Kurup, Director of Information Technology, explained that this is in support of the project to allow direct bill customers to process payments through credit cards, debit cards, or ACH electronic payments. In September, the Board authorized NEORS D to enter into an agreement with JPMorgan Chase to implement Paymentus, which is the electronic billing solution that will be used for the Oracle integration to transfer data between the programs. NEORS D requires an Oracle certified firm to perform the integration. NEORS D will also perform work to integrate with the Active Directory and will allow for single sign-on and cybersecurity work in support of the project.

Authorization to Enter Into Contract

Resolution No. 23-25 Authorization to enter into a public improvement contract with Sona Construction, LLC, necessary for construction of the Westerly Admin Building Roof and Windows Replacement project in an amount not-to-exceed \$1,033,000.00.

MOTION – Mayor Alai moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded to adopt Resolution No. 23-25. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Close Out Public Improvement Contract

Resolution No. 24-25 Authorizing the Final Adjusting Change Order for Contract No. 20005176 with The Great Lakes Construction Co. for the Westerly Tunnel Dewatering Pump Station project to decrease the contract amount by \$210,948.01, thereby bringing the total contract amount to \$27,125,062.26.

Resolution No. 25-25 Authorizing the Final Adjusting Change Order for Contract No. 24000270 with Nerone & Sons, Inc. for the West Park CSO Improvements project to decrease the contract amount by \$364,876.85, thereby bringing the total contract amount to \$1,605,553.15.

MOTION – Mr. Sulik moved, and Mayor Alai seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 24-25 through 25-25. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Property Related Transaction

Resolution No. 26-25 Authorization to acquire one parcel in fee simple known as PPN 457-30-040, located at 7425 Malibu Drive in the City of Parma, owned by Deborah A. Audie, also known as Deborah Ann Audie,

necessary for the construction and maintenance of the SWMP Project Area 6 – Flood and Erosion Reduction Near York and Pleasant Valley Road project, and to enter into a six-month no-cost lease agreement with Ms. Audie, and to allow for the entirety of the payment to be disbursed to Innovative Title and Escrow Services, LLC. with total consideration of \$285,000.00 plus closing costs.

Resolution No. 27-25

Authorization to acquire one parcel in fee simple known as PPN 457-29-004, located at 11703 West Pleasant Valley Road in the City of Parma, owned by Connor Morrison, necessary for the construction and maintenance of the SWMP Project Area 6 – Flood and Erosion Reduction Near York and Pleasant Valley Roads project, and to enter into a six-month no-cost lease agreement with Mr. Morrison, and to allow for the entirety of the payment to be disbursed to Innovative Title and Escrow Services, LLC. with total consideration of \$190,000.00 plus closing costs.

MOTION – Ms. Chambers moved, and Mr. Sulik seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 26-25 through 27-25. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Grant Credit

Resolution No. 28-25

Authorizing the District to issue a credit adjustment in the total amount of \$61,433.35 against sewer charges on the account ending in 8805 to M-St. Clair, LLC, 18301 St. Clair Ave, Cleveland.

MOTION – Mayor Bacci moved, and Ms. Dumas seconded to adopt Resolution No. 28-25. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

VI. Information Items

Mr. Foley provided the Operation and Maintenance (O&M) update for the fourth quarter of 2024, beginning with safety. In 2024, there were 10 lost time accidents. There were more lost or restricted workdays than there were for the last several years with 257 lost workdays and 91 restricted workdays. The target DART rate limit of 2.0 was met District-wide but was not met in O&M with a rate of 2.43. Between mid-July and mid-August, there were 4 lost time accidents, and 5 more through the rest of the year.

Mr. Foley, along with Jeremy Short, Director of Human Resources, Matt Scharver, Director of Watershed Programs, Robin Halperin, Deputy Director of Watershed Programs, Tom Madej, Deputy Director of O&M, and Tracy Phelps, Deputy Director of O&M, have met with groups

throughout the organization to discuss safety and are working to compile the information and make recommendations to reduce injuries going forward.

As for effluent quality, total suspended solids and carbonaceous biochemical oxygen demand (CBOD) were well below limits for the fourth quarter. Phosphorus was still below limits, though there were some challenges at the Southerly and Westerly WWTCs. It was a dry year, so the influent concentrations of phosphorus were higher at the plants. Staff will continue to investigate and work to optimize the use of ferric chloride for reducing phosphorus in the effluents. The *E. coli* limits in October were well below the limits.

In 2024, the total amount of wastewater treated at all facilities combined was approximately 76 billion gallons, down from approximately 87 billion gallons in 2023 due to weather. On average, 30 million gallons per day less was treated during 2024 than in 2023.

On an annual basis, there are approximately 5,000 permit compliance points. These are instances of comparing what is discharging in the effluents to the permits. During July 2024, there were two excursions from the permit at the Southerly WWTC, both related to the same event and due to mercury. One of these was a concentration-based excursion and the other was loading-based. NEORS is anticipating National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) Peak Performance Awards at each of its facilities for 2024: Silver at the Southerly WWTC; Gold at the Westerly WWTC; and Platinum at the Easterly WWTP. Mr. Foley congratulated staff for a job well done.

Mr. Foley provided a graphic demonstrating year-to-date costs of maintenance for assets. The greatest amount of maintenance spending is at the Southerly WWTC. As for corrective maintenance costs versus preventive maintenance costs, the collections system has a higher proportion of preventive maintenance costs and the WWTPs have higher proportions of corrective maintenance costs.

There were five dry weather overflows in the collection system in 2024 due to debris and equipment failure, as well as one with an undetermined cause. Approximately 10 years ago, there were as many as 40 dry weather overflows in a given year. This reduction is a testament to the commitment of the Board and NEORS to funding Project Clean Lake, as well as the work of SSMO staff.

Automated equipment in the collection system was available almost 100% of the time during wet weather. There was only one incident involving a pump failure during wet weather in the last week of December.

As for budget performance, the 11 budget centers under O&M had a total operating budget of \$71.25 million. As of January 27, a total of \$68.3 million was spent, equating to approximately 96%

of the budget. There are still some outstanding invoices for electric utilities that once paid will bring the spending closer to budget. This is an increase of approximately \$1.7 million from 2023.

Mr. Foley then discussed ORI update meetings, which were implemented by Mr. Bunsey. The meetings involve Mr. Foley, Mr. Bunsey, and Bob Pintabona, Deputy Director of District Administration, and other team members who go to each facility on a quarterly basis and present the quarterly update information to O&M staff. They discuss policies and procedures, as well as any technical issues that may impact staff. This provides an opportunity to improve communication between staff and management. Mr. Foley provided a slide demonstrating the progress made in the change management curve since they implemented these meetings as a result of Mr. Bunsey's leadership and thanked Mr. Bunsey for his involvement in the process.

There were ten employees in O&M that were promoted in the fourth quarter. Of note were Jody Wysong, who was promoted to Manager of Fleet Services and Scott Davison, who was promoted to Manager of Building Systems. Additionally, Jose Clavijo was promoted to Field Technician of SSMO and John Davis, III to a Custodial Worker, both of whom joined NEORSD through the GNA Program. Five new employees started in O&M from outside of NEORSD. Mr. Foley congratulated the new and promoted employees.

Mr. Foley invited Hardika Aghera, Network Engineer, to discuss operational technology (OT).

Ms. Aghera explained that operational technology differs from information technology (IT) inasmuch as IT focuses on management, storage and transmission of data across the network on the business side for Microsoft Office and administrative programs, whereas operational technology is a combination of hardware and software systems that control and monitor physical devices and processes at the WWTPs. IT is a traditional enterprise network, which has access to Internet, while OT is closed secure network, which is isolated from outside networks. Limited support integration exists for some applications to allow for historical data from the OT network to be transferred to the IT network via PIN, which carries the data. IT and OT Departments also work together in other areas such as licensing procurements and support contracts.

OT is comprised of three main parts: control systems, monitoring systems and communication networks. Control systems like sensors, actuators and Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs) manipulate physical processes by adjusting the variables based on real-time data. PLCs receive the data from sensors and based on the pre-program logic, send the commands to the actuators to regulate the process.

Operators use Thin Clients and Panelviews to control and monitor the plant processes. NEORSD OT has about 15 physical servers and over 100 virtual servers, which hold applications that are needed to support the plant operations.

The control network consists of about 500 network switches and routers that connect all of these OT devices and systems and enable the data flow. Apart from these devices, staff also manage laptops and environmental monitoring systems.

OT is vitally important because it simplifies automation, optimization and real time monitoring. Key benefits include increased efficiency, enhanced safety, and improved reliability due to the reduction in human error. Another key benefit of OT is improved reliability, which ensures continuous operations of critical infrastructure with minimal downtime. NEORSD routers, core network switches and some servers help with redundancy that provides a fallback option in case the system goes down or if it is under maintenance.

OT systems still come with challenges that NEORSD continues to work to mitigate with ongoing projects to replace obsolete hardware and upgrade software. Different OT components from various vendors do not integrate seamlessly, requiring NEORSD to standardize hardware and software across projects. Change management regularly presents problems because ongoing operations cannot be disrupted. This requires careful coordination and communication to plan outages and allow operators to run processes manually if necessary.

NEORSD works to protect the OT systems from vulnerability by utilizing firewalls, limiting access to networks based on user roles and privileges, port and cable locks, as well as security information and event monitoring to alert staff to suspicious activities.

Current projects include the PLC Replacement Project to replace obsolete PLCs and network switches that are end of life. NEORSD is in the process of rolling out new systems to provide tablets to SSMO crew function as portable Wonderware screens, which would enable crew to monitor the processes when away from a workstation.

Recently the Win-911 software solution was upgraded to the most recent version to provide real-time alarm notifications without any interruption in service.

VII. Open Session

There were no items.

VIII. Public Session (any subject matter)

There were no items.

IX. Executive Session

Mayor Bacci, pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Section 121.22(G)(1), moved, and Mayor DeGeeter seconded, to enter into executive session to consider the investigation and discipline of a public employee. By roll call vote, the Board voted unanimously to enter into executive session at 1:21 p.m.

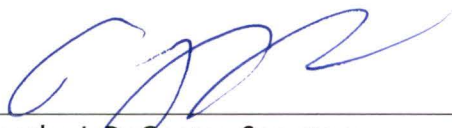
The Board returned to open session at 2:12 p.m.

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 Mr. Sulik seconded the motion to adjourn at 2:13 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