

MINUTES  
NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL SEWER DISTRICT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
MARCH 2, 2023

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  
Marjorie Chambers  
Samuel Alai

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

II. Approval of Minutes

**MOTION** – Ms. Chambers, and Mayor Alai seconded to approve the Minutes of the February 16, 2023 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 that on February 17, NEORS hosted its first career fair. At the time of the career fair, there were 54 open positions, the majority of which are in the Operation and Maintenance and Watershed Programs departments. There were 166 attendees, many of whom were highly qualified, including for difficult-to-fill positions. The event was staffed by 60 NEORS employees. The feedback from attendees was positive.

The next step will be for Human Resources to meet with hiring managers to discuss qualified candidates and arrange for panel interviews, then begin planning the next career fair, which will be held before the end of the year.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells acknowledged Constance Haqq, Chief Administrative Officer, and her team for the successful event.

On February 21, Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells; Ken Duplay, Chief Financial Officer; Frank Greenland, Director of Watershed Programs; Eric Luckage, Chief Legal Officer; and Jacqueline Muhammad, Senior Manager of Government and Customer Relations, traveled to Akron to meet with the Summit County Executive and her team. NEORSD's service area includes 11 communities in Summit County. NEORSD staff regularly meets with those community leaders and the Summit County Engineer but had not previously met with the County Executive. The meeting was productive, with discussions regarding the relationship between NEORSD and the County on sanitary sewers, the Regional Stormwater Management Program, and the ongoing coordination in the upper Cuyahoga River.

On February 23, Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells and Donna Friedman, Manager of Community Watershed Coordination, attended the Hudson State of the City Address. City Manager, Thom Sheridan, had asked NEORSD to attend this address because he wanted to recognize the partnership on the Barlow Community Center Dam Rehabilitation project, which was funded through the Regional Stormwater Management Program in 2019 for \$1.7 million to rehabilitate two ODNR Class 2 dams and to add stormwater storage to Brandywine Creek.

In closing, Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells reminded the Board that the Finance Committee Meeting will be held March 7, 2023, at 10:00 a.m.

V. Action Items

Authorization to Advertise

Resolution No. 65-23      Authorization to publish notice calling for bids, in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section 6119.10, for a two-year requirement contract for Fuel Delivery and Monitoring Services at all District facilities with an anticipated expenditure of \$865,000.00.

Resolution No. 66-23      Authorization to publish notice calling for bids, in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section 6119.10, for the construction of the Southerly Secondary Effluent Capacity Improvements project with an anticipated expenditure of \$2,400,000.00.

**MOTION** – Ms. Chambers moved, and Ms. Dumas seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 65-23 through 66-23. After the following discussion, without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

President Brown asked, regarding Resolution No. 65-23, whether there has been an increase in requests to cycle off the electricity grid due to increasing fuel costs, thereby increasing NEORSD's costs.

Frank Foley, Director of Operation and Maintenance, explained that there have not been any requests to come offline due to fuel costs. Under the program that NEORSD participates in to reduce electricity charges, NEORSD intentionally goes off the grid during high-demand days of summer. The goal is to come off the grid during the highest five peaks in a year. This has not resulted in utilizing more fuel than planned. However, the fuel price is not set, as it is tied to an index. Last summer, when NEORSD used the most fuel, diesel rates were at or near their peak cost, which is why the contract funds are being used faster than anticipated.

Authorization to Issue Request for Proposal (RFP)

Resolution No. 67-23      Authorization to issue a joint RFP with Cuyahoga Community College for the procurement of professional consulting services to provide technical, legal, and financial expertise to develop an RFP for an offsite Solar Power Purchase Agreement (SPPA), and to evaluate, educate, recommend, and assist with implementation of the SPPA and renewable energy procurement for both entities' operations, thereby leveraging the aggregate electricity consumption, and also to provide technical, legal, and financial expertise to develop an RFP for onsite solar renewable energy at the District's Southerly Wastewater Treatment Center.

**MOTION** – Mayor Bacci moved, and Mr. Sulik seconded to adopt Resolution No. 57-23. After the following discussion, without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

President Brown noted that last year, NEORSD entered into an \$18 million contract for this purpose, as NEORSD has made a commitment in terms of attaining renewable energy sources within a specific time period. President Brown requested additional information regarding the spending associated with the project.

Mr. Duplay explained that this RFP represents the next step in NEORSD's long-term plan for energy procurement and greenhouse gas reduction. The contract that President Brown referenced is for power at the Southerly WWTC and outlying facilities. Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) has chosen to partner with NEORSD in order to aggregate the combined usage for a better price. Mr. Duplay invited Marie Fechik-Kirk, Manager of Sustainability and Special Projects, and Jacqueline Williams, Manager of Procurement Services, to provide additional information.

Ms. Fechik-Kirk explained that NEORSD has two interrelated strategic plan tactics. The first is to procure 50% or higher renewable energy in the next electric bid at FirstEnergy sites, which includes the Southerly WWTC, GJM, EMSC, and 50 outlying sites, pump stations and odor control facilities. The second is to develop goals for long-term sustainable greenhouse gas reduction. Last year, NEORSD reduced its overall electricity usage by 19% against the 2014 baseline. This is critical as 70% of its greenhouse gas emissions can be attributed to electricity, which is typical for a

wastewater utility.

Ms. Williams explained that on February 3, 2022, the Board authorized NEORSD to enter into a contract with Energy Edge for the short-term procurement and the long-term procurement strategy for electricity generation. The result of that was a contract with Engie for \$0.07 per kilowatt hour (kWh), with 27% Green-e renewable certified energy credits, and \$0.06 per kWh for GJM and outlying facilities. These contracts will expire in May 2025. The previous contract's pricing was \$0.03 per kWh with 50% Green-e renewable credits.

In working with the consultants, NEORSD has been guided into evaluating the possibility of doing an offsite solar power purchase agreement and an onsite power project for the Southerly WWTC. The current request is for permission to issue an RFP to hire one or more consultants to assist in developing an RFP for renewables for both onsite and offsite, with Tri-C for the offsite and then the onsite for the Southerly WWTC.

NEORSD on its own has 90 million kWh usage annually. Partnering with Tri-C will take the total to 130 million kWh, making the project more attractive to developers. Additionally, the partnership will result in greater economies of scale as the greater amount of usage should result in better pricing, and there are reduced consultant fees.

Ms. Fechik-Kirk explained that NEORSD wants to ensure that it understands the market and has up-to-date information regarding who the primary companies are, the rapidly changing laws and incentives, and key-market influences, to incorporate that market intelligence into the RFP, and to ensure competitive responses.

Because NEORSD plans to enter into a longer-term contract, the intent is to retain a consultant to model costs and understand the potential risks and benefits and find a solution that fits the economic and environmental needs. Completion of the analysis will drive decision making as to how NEORSD can best reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

Ms. Williams summarized that NEORSD is requesting to issue a joint RFP with Tri-C to hire one or more consultants to help investigate options for an offsite solar power purchase agreement and the onsite solar Southerly WWTC project, in order to meet the goal of 50% renewable energy as well as actionable greenhouse gas emissions, while gaining price stability.

Authorization to Purchase

- Resolution No. 68-23 Authorization to enter into multiple contracts for the purchase of maintenance and support services from sole source vendor Oracle America, Inc. necessary for the District's Enterprise Oracle database and applications software beginning June 1, 2023 through May 31, 2024 in the amounts presented, for a total purchase amount not-to-exceed \$837,604.27 for all contracts combined.
- Resolution No. 69-23 Authorization to purchase four ¾-ton class cargo vans from Valley Truck Centers through the State of Ohio Cooperative Purchasing Program in a total amount not-to-exceed \$250,000.00.
- Resolution No. 70-23 Authorization to purchase thirteen gas utility carts from Clark Equipment Company doing business as Bobcat Company through the State of Ohio Cooperative Purchasing Program in a total amount not-to-exceed \$282,000.00.
- Resolution No. 71-23 Authorization to purchase a Flygt Model 3301.185 submersible sump pump from sole source supplier Buckeye Pumps, Inc. in an amount not-to-exceed \$77,217.00.

**MOTION** – Mr. Sulik moved, and Ms. Dumas seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 68-23 through 71-23. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Enter Into Contract

- Resolution No. 72-23 Authorization to enter into a contract with sole source supplier Buckeye Pumps, Inc. for services necessary to rebuild a Flygt Submersible pump for the Westerly Wastewater Treatment Center in an amount not-to-exceed \$56,743.00.
- Resolution No. 73-23 Authorization to enter into a contract with Best Equipment Co., Inc. for one sewer inspection video truck in an amount not-to-exceed \$345,950.00.
- Resolution No. 74-23 Authorization to enter into a two-year requirement contract with Veolia ES Technical Solutions, LLC, for transport and disposal of regulated wastes, including hazardous, universal, non-hazardous, and special wastes, in an amount not-to-exceed \$170,550.89.

Resolution No. 75-23 Authorization to enter into a contract to purchase four 48” diameter knife gate valves from DeZurik, Inc. in an amount not-to-exceed \$618,040.00, and authorization to enter into a contract to purchase four 48” diameter butterfly valves from Hydro Controls, Inc. in an amount not-to-exceed \$213,960.00, for a total amount not-to-exceed \$832,000.00 for both contracts combined.

**MOTION** – Mayor Bacci moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded to adopt Resolution Nos. 72-23 through 75-23. After the following discussion, without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

President Brown noted that, regarding Resolution No. 73-23, the request is to award to the highest bidder due to a preferred feature of touchscreen operative interface and requested an explanation.

Mr. Foley explained that the low three bidders did not meet the specifications for the touchscreen interface which allows the operator to both control the robotic camera that goes into the sewer and also to log the observations that they are taking while performing inspections.

President Brown asked if this is new technology. Mr. Foley invited Josh Dress, Assistant Manager of SSMO, to address the question.

Mr. Dress explained that while it is not new technology, it is improved technology and NEORS’s current camera truck operates with the system. The new truck brings an expanded capability wherein the reel system is able to come away from the truck with the control unit run from a separate power source, further expanding the capabilities of the CCTV equipment versus the competitors.

#### Authorization of Contact Modification

Resolution No. 76-23 Authorization to modify Contract No. 3856 with the County of Cuyahoga and the Board of Park Commissioners of the Cleveland Metropolitan Park District for the County’s disposal of hauled wastewater from various Cleveland Metroparks facilities at the District’s Southerly Wastewater Treatment Center, to extend the term of the contract by an additional six-month period through October 17, 2023, to increase the disposal rate from \$139.00 to \$140.15 per ton of grit, and to increase the contract amount by \$100,000.00, thereby bringing the total revenue to the District not-to-exceed \$250,000.00.

**MOTION** – Mayor Alai moved, and Ms. Dumas seconded to adopt Resolution No. 76-23. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Amend Agreement

Resolution No. 77-23 Authorization to amend professional services Agreement No. 19006923 with Protiviti, Inc., and professional services Agreement No. 19007579 with RSM US LLP, and professional services Agreement No. 19006915 with Jefferson Wells, formerly Experis US Inc., for internal audit services, to extend the agreement expiration dates of all three agreements through exhaustion of the funds, and to increase the amount of the Protiviti agreement by \$28,560.00, thereby bringing the total Protiviti agreement amount not-to-exceed \$563,560.00.

**MOTION** – Mr. Sulik moved, and Ms. Chambers seconded to adopt Resolution No. 77-23. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Grant Credit

Resolution No. 78-23 Authorizing the District to issue a credit adjustment in the total amount of \$165,903.54 against sewer charges on the NEORSD account ending in 0002 for the Holy Family Community Center at 7367 York Road, Parma.

**MOTION** – Mayor Bacci moved, and Mr. Sulik seconded to adopt Resolution No. 78-23. After the following discussion, without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

President Brown asked whether the City of Cleveland Division of Water was also asked to make a billing adjustment. Mr. Duplay answered affirmatively.

VI. Information Items

Ms. Haqq provided an update regarding NEORSD's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) Program, beginning with a review of the purpose statement. The program ensures that NEORSD is an employer and business partner of choice where people of all identities and experiences are understood, appreciated, and fully included in creating a culture of performance excellence. NEORSD leverages the power of diversity to produce results that support the organization's mission, vision, and core values.

There are five goals associated with the purpose statement: to recruit, engage, and retain a diverse workforce; to work together in ways that incorporate employees' skills, talents, creativity, and perspectives; to learn and apply DE&I principles to business practices; to eliminate barriers to participation that employees, customers, or vendors may face; and to engage businesses and

community partnerships that promote DE&I. Every department of NEORSD has developed DE&I goals over the past couple of years, utilizing more than 230 tactics, 190 of which have been completed. Ms. Haqq provided some examples of the ways in which goals were executed specific to departments, including creating full-time positions that do not require a college degree, and revising scoring criteria for the Member Community Infrastructure Program in order to allow less financially resources communities to participate.

NEORSD's employee retention numbers have been relatively flat for the past three years. Given the job market, NEORSD is satisfied but recognizes there is work to be done. It is worth noting that NEORSD employs twice the number of women compared to similar organizations.

Ms. Haqq provided a graphic demonstrating female and minority recruitment from 2020 through 2022. Minority hiring has increased from 19.8% to 26.3%.

NEORSD is working to create a pipeline for a diverse workforce through the Good Neighbor Ambassador program, which allows for part-time employment for one year. Since its inception 8 years ago, 31 Good Neighbor Ambassadors have become full-time employees. Additionally, NEORSD launched a Clean Water Fellowship. NEORSD currently has one Clean Water Fellow, who is a graduate of the Water Resource Management Program at Central State University. He will rotate through key departments and hopefully, become a full-time employee. NEORSD has participated in and provided scholarships for the Congressman Louis Stokes' Scholarship for over 20 years, targeting individuals in Central State University's Water Resource Management Program. The Human Resources Department has developed career pathing for all departments. All our interview panels are diverse, and NEORSD has hired a recruitment consultant, who specializes in hard-to-find diverse candidates.

As for the goal of working together to incorporate employees' skills, creativity, perspectives, and talents, NEORSD has guided 30 team members through inclusive leadership training; over 280 employees have received unconscious bias training; and NEORSD has promoted cross-training throughout the organization.

Learning and applying DE&I principles to our business practices has relied heavily on learning with 8 racial justice dialogues with an average attendance of 75. There are 9 organized employee resource groups (ERG) with 127 active members. There were 45 ERG events held between 2021 and 2022, with average attendance of 45 employees. The newest ERG is the LGBTQ+ ERG, which was formed in 2022. There are 7 DE&I trainings available to employees, including Crucial Conversations, Allyship 101, Allyship at Work, Poverty Simulation, Inclusive Leadership, and Unconscious Bias. Over the past two years, 630 employees have participated in these training sessions.

NEORSD's DE&I efforts are coordinated by an advisory committee with 5 subcommittees, composed of individuals from throughout the organization. Additionally, NEORSD has included



learning goals for DE&I in its performance management system, meaning that individual staff can select DE&I goals for the year.

NEORSD's core values are ethics, honesty and transparency, environmental stewardship, customer focus, balanced and informed decision making, progressive culture, accountability, respect, and equity. Equity has been added as a core value ensuring that DE&I principals, policies, and practices are embedded in NEORSD's work at all levels of the organization. Through DE&I discussions, training sessions, and events, there have been over 3,000 touch points among employees over the last couple years.

Ms. Haqq shared an anonymous quote from an NEORSD employee voicing appreciation for NEORSD's DE&I efforts and progressive work environment. She advised the Board that NEORSD now offers paid parental leave as an employee benefit. Additionally, NEORSD has instituted an environmental justice statement ensuring that its engagement and work with the communities are meaningful, with informed actions and equitable treatment. NEORSD developed a public engagement statement years ago, promising to always have two-way engagement, be truthful, timely, and thoughtful.

Ms. Haqq reminded the Board of the Utility Resource Fairs that NEORSD has hosted, assisting over 900 people to date.

In order to enhance business and community partnerships that promote DE&I, NEORSD has enhanced DE&I language and requirements in contracts and has been involved in several student mentoring programs with Cleveland Metropolitan School District. Last year, NEORSD developed a relationship with John F. Kennedy High School and invited students from their Industrial Machine Maintenance Program to visit the Southerly WWTC. Additionally, NEORSD has adjusted its Business Opportunity Program to include reporting on goods and services spent.

Looking ahead, this year NEORSD will develop DE&I Learning Communities. These will be small groups of people that will gather and discuss a topic of interest to them over the course of several months. The racial justice dialogues will continue, as will the rollout of the environmental justice statement and program. A DE&I survey will be performed for the first time in several years. NEORSD is adding a disability inclusion subcommittee and will perform an annual demographic audit.

Ms. Haqq introduced Lydia Stump-Hartman, DE&I Specialist, and expressed appreciation to her and other staff who perform DE&I tasks, explaining that there are many staff members working toward transforming the culture.

President Brown expressed appreciation and offered congratulations on behalf of the Board for the fine work on these strategic initiatives and positive outcomes. President Brown further commended the organization for this work and urged to keep pushing the initiatives further.

Ms. Dumas commended Ms. Haqq for a job well done with this difficult task, adding that this work is changing people's opinions and informing people of barriers and biases that they may not have previously aware of.

Ms. Dumas asked if there is statistical data available regarding men and non-minorities to show comparisons in applications received, interviews conducted, and individuals hired. This statistical measure may provide further insight into what areas need strengthening, and what biases and barriers need to be overcome.

President Brown added that it is particularly enlightening in this industry that is typically very male and non-minority dominant across the country. President Brown offered kudos for the focus on the topic, as there are things that can be learned.

Ms. Haqq thanked the Board for their comments and added that these efforts can be very difficult and the support of the Board, staff members, and senior staff is very appreciated.

VII. Open Session

There were no items.

VIII. Public Session (any subject matter)

There were no items.

IX. Executive Session

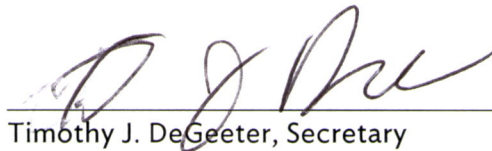
There were no items.

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. Dumas seconded the motion to adjourn at 1:35. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.



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



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