

MINUTES  
 NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL SEWER DISTRICT  
 SUBURBAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
 APRIL 25, 2013

I. Call to Order and Welcome

The Meeting of the Suburban Council of Governments (hereinafter “SCOG”) was called to order at 10:11 a.m. by Mayor Renda.

II. Roll Call of Member Communities

<u>COMMUNITY</u>	<u>REPRESENTATIVE &amp; TITLE</u>
Bath Township	Absent
Beachwood	Honorable Merle Gorden
Bedford	Absent
Bedford Heights	Honorable Fletcher Berger
Berea	Absent
Village of Boston Heights	Absent
Village of Bratenahl	Absent
Brecksville	Absent
Broadview Heights	Absent
Brook Park	Absent
Brooklyn	Absent
Brooklyn Heights	Honorable Michael Procuk
Cleveland Heights	Absent
Columbia Township	Absent
Cuyahoga Heights	Honorable Jack Bacci
East Cleveland	Absent
Euclid	Honorable Bill Cervenik
Garfield Heights	Honorable Victor Collova
Gates Mills	Absent
Glenwillow	Absent
Highland Heights	Honorable Scott Coleman
Highland Hills	Absent
Hudson	Honorable William Currin
Independence	Absent
Lakewood	Absent
Linndale	Absent
Lyndhurst	Honorable Joseph Cicero, Jr.
Macedonia	Absent
Maple Heights	Absent

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COMMUNITY

REPRESENTATIVE & TITLE

Mayfield Heights	Absent
Mayfield Village	Absent
Middleburg Heights	Absent
Moreland Hills	Honorable Susan Renda
Newburgh Heights	Absent
North Randall	Absent
North Royalton	Honorable Robert Stefanik
Northfield Village	Absent
Northfield Center Township	Absent
Oakwood	Absent
Olmsted Falls	Absent
Olmsted Township	Absent
Orange Village	Honorable Kathy Mulcahy
Parma	Absent
Parma Heights	Honorable Michael Byrne
Pepper Pike	Honorable Richard Bain
Richfield Village	Absent
Richfield Township	Absent
Richmond Heights	Honorable Daniel Ursu
Sagamore Hills Township	Absent
Seven Hills	Absent
Shaker Heights	Absent
Solon	Honorable Susan Drucker
South Euclid	Honorable Georgine Welo
Strongsville	Honorable Thomas Perciak
Twinsburg	Absent
Twinsburg Township	Absent
University Heights	Honorable Susan Infeld
Village of Valley View	Absent
Village of Walton Hills	Absent
Warrensville Heights	Absent
Willoughby Hills	Absent

*A quorum was present.*

III. Report on District Operations

Executive Director Ciaccia moved to the first report item and he advised that the District's Regional Stormwater Management Program (hereinafter "SMP") is underway and that customers received bills for the first quarter. Executive Director Ciaccia noted that the number of calls being made to the District's Customer Service Center is far less than anticipated.

Stormwater maintenance contracts are in place and the first emergency job took place in Garfield Heights. Mill Creek was compromising the roadway. The District's contractor provided a temporary fix as the District moves forward with a permanent solution.

Executive Director Ciaccia moved discussion to the ongoing SMP litigation which is in the appellate court. Ten communities and business interests continue to be opposed to the SMP. Oral arguments are scheduled for Monday, April 29, 2013.

Executive Director Ciaccia indicated that he would be willing to entertain any questions from the member communities.

Mayor Welo appreciated the updated information that is provided by Executive Director Ciaccia as well as District staff to the member communities. She advised that the District's Community Cost Share Program will enable the communities to apply for funding for the purchase of certain equipment related to stormwater such as a street sweeper since there is an abundance of dirt the communities pick up each year. Mayor Welo indicated that the program will be beneficial for Lake Erie.

Executive Director Ciaccia thanked Mayor Welo and he advised that the District intends using a collaborative approach in its dealings with member communities. District staff, equipment, and the Community Cost Share Program are all intended to be great resources for the communities.

Executive Director Ciaccia moved to the next report item regarding the decision made by the City of Cleveland (hereinafter "Cleveland") to re-separate the water and sewer bills. Executive Director Ciaccia explained that Cleveland previously issued separate bills for water and sewer under one account. In 2008, with the implementation of the new billing system, it was determined that issuing a combined bill would be more cost effective and save Cleveland save about \$800,000.00 in operating costs each year. Consequently, Cleveland moved to a combined bill at the time it went live with its new billing system in 2009.

Executive Director Ciaccia advised that Cleveland has since made the decision to re-separate the water and sewer bills and establish two separate accounts. Sewer fees for

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communities and Cleveland's waste collection charge will appear on the water bill. There will be a separate bill for the District's charges. Executive Director Ciaccia stated that from an operating standpoint, it will be more expensive to issue separate bills and the customer will be inconvenienced by having to issue two separate checks or set up two direct withdrawal accounts.

Mayor Perciak inquired as to which agency will serve as the collection agent for the District. Executive Director Ciaccia advised that the City of Cleveland through their Utilities Department will remain as the District's collection agent and provide customer service.

Executive Director Ciaccia noted that the decision to move from a combined bill to separate bills with separate accounts was solely made by Cleveland.

Mayor Bacci requested that Executive Director Ciaccia provide the SCOG with an overview of Cleveland's decision to change the bills.

Executive Director Ciaccia advised that Cleveland professed that the combined bill is confusing for its customers. However, Executive Director Ciaccia speculated that the customers may have been more confused as to which agency is responsible for water and sewer, and according to Mike McIntyre's "Tip Off" column in *The Plain Dealer*, the reason behind Cleveland's decision to re-separate the bills was an attempt to differentiate the CWD's rate increases from the District's.

Executive Director Ciaccia advised that the District intends protecting its interests and while working cooperatively with Cleveland.

One point of consideration is determining which bill should include the local sewer charge. Executive Director Ciaccia explained that the communities are charged \$6.17 per bill by Cleveland and he would like to entertain discussions with Cleveland on how to reduce those costs.

Mayor Stefanik questioned when all these changes came about.

Mayor Mulcahy indicated that she first read about it in Mr. McIntyre's column wherein Mayor Bain confirmed that the article coincided with Cleveland's proposal. Executive Director Ciaccia added that the changes transpired about three weeks ago, which was a surprise to him as well.

Mayor Mulcahy suggested that the communities remain open-minded and wait to hear the reasoning behind the changes.

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Mayor Welo was concerned about how the residents' inquiries will be handled. She stated that often times the residents will contact their local municipalities when there are changes even though it is not the proper authority to handle the complaints. Mayor Welo stated that they can receive thousands of calls from residents.

Mayor Perciak commented that it is a step backwards.

Mayor Mulcahy stated that having the local sewer charges on the water bills will create more confusion. Mayor Perciak agreed.

Executive Director Ciaccia added that he would like for the local sewer charges to be listed on the sewer bill. Mayor Perciak agreed.

Executive Director Ciaccia indicated that he would like for the \$6.17 charge reduced.

Mayor Mulcahy inquired if the residents will be billed the \$6.17 twice. Executive Director Ciaccia explained that the District is billed \$6.17 and the resident is billed \$6.17. Mayor Bain questioned, when the bill is split, will the resident be billed two separate \$6.17 charges? Executive Director Ciaccia clarified that it will be one \$6.17 charge that is passed on to the residents as part of operating costs.

Executive Director Ciaccia explained that the money from the local sewer charge could be used for sewers instead of defraying billing costs. Mayor Bain agreed.

Executive Director Ciaccia indicated that the District has an interest in local municipalities receiving a reduced rate. He noted that some communities do not have a local charge because they believe it to be prohibitive and it would be ideal for more communities to charge a local fee. Executive Director Ciaccia advised that with consent from the communities, he would like to further discuss these matters with Cleveland.

Executive Director Ciaccia moved to the next report item regarding the District's 25 year consent order to reduce combined sewer overflows (hereinafter "CSOs"). The U.S. Conference of Mayors raised some issues and the Environmental Protection Agency (hereinafter "EPA") now embraces integrated planning. The EPA regulates CSOs and will soon regulate sanitary sewer overflows (hereinafter "SSOs") and stormwater. Executive Director Ciaccia was concerned about the sources for funding as well as the likelihood that issues considered a priority in one community or region may not necessarily be a priority in the next. Consequently, the District proposes at a point in the future going back to the state and federal governments and reopening its consent order for the repurposing of a portion of its CSO program to local suburban sewers. Otherwise, the communities will have to raise money in addition to the District's \$3 billion CSO program in order to comply with local mandates for SSOs and stormwater.

Executive Director Ciaccia indicated that the proposal is in its conceptual phase and that unified support from the communities will be necessary before the District requests for the consent order to be reopened. Executive Director Ciaccia wanted to apprise the communities of the District's proposal and will be launching a study at the end of 2013.

Mayor Mulcahy questioned if the District was concerned that the customers will prefer a rate reduction rather than rearranging funds in order to comply with the requirement.

Executive Director Ciaccia indicated that although some customers may share that perspective, the District is financially committed to the program through its obligation to comply with the court ordered consent agreement. If there is an opportunity to open and/or reduce the cost, the District will pursue that effort. However, at this time, the District's strategy is to repurpose funds rather than reduce rates. It may be more beneficial to the environment to repurpose funds to address local problems rather than simply capturing additional CSOs.

Mayor Welo agreed that local issues need to be addressed given the age of the homes and the pipes. She indicated that there are many tributaries in the City of South Euclid and that she immediately noticed a difference.

Mayor Mulcahy inquired if the \$3 billion consent order was slated for specific projects or certain outcomes wherein Executive Director Ciaccia indicated that there are both projects and outcomes.

Under the agreement, the District is required to reduce CSOs from 4.5 billion gallons to one half billion gallons. The current rate of CSO capture is at 80% and that is expected to increase to 98% through the agreement. Executive Director Ciaccia explained that it costs more to capture additional gallons of CSO and if the District were to reduce its capture rate to 90%, then those resources can be used for more productive projects.

Executive Director Ciaccia stressed that the District and communities must reach a consensus prior to the District proceeding forward with its request to reopen its consent order. The District and communities cannot be divided on this issue.

Mayor Welo inquired about the District's future role with the watershed groups since the District will be paying a portion of its fees.

District's Manager of Watershed Programs, Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, inquired if Mayor Welo was referring to the operating support grants. Mayor Welo affirmed.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells stated that the District has been involved with the watershed groups over the last three years and respects the groups' independence and has therefore let them

set the tone. The District can arrange to have their watershed team leaders present at those meetings, if desired.

Mayor Welo was curious if the District's role will change given its financial support. Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells explained that the watershed groups recently provided the District with a yearly update, which she indicated was phenomenal. Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells indicated that the watershed groups should proceed accordingly and the District will continue to stay in the background.

Executive Director Ciaccia added that the communities in opposition to the SMP fear that the District is "going to come down hard on everybody and strip local rights." Executive Director Ciaccia assured that the District is going to remain respectful and continue to be a resource for everyone.

Mayor Welo requested that the District provide an overview of the customer service interview process conducted by Baldwin Wallace University.

District's Director of Administration and External Affairs, Constance Haqq, stated that the District contracted with Baldwin Wallace University (hereinafter "BWU") to conduct a customer appreciation and customer awareness survey. The District was interested in the perception of its customer service function as well as the impacts of its outreach efforts. BWU's Dr. Pierre David and Dr. Tom Sutton conducted the survey. A number of interviews were held to provide the District with a better understanding of the customers' perception as well as the development of a baseline.

Note: Mayor Currin entered the meeting.

Mayor Welo inquired about the survey's results.

Executive Director Ciaccia stated that the District will provide Mayor Welo with a copy of those results.

Mayor Welo commented that she found it beneficial for the mayors to have the ability to provide input and feedback.

Ms. Haqq stated that the survey also compared the District with sewer districts in five other cities, which resulted in interesting comparative data.

Executive Director Ciaccia explained that the survey's findings showed that customers are confused about the difference between locally-owned sewers, county maintained sewers, and the differentiation between the District and the CWD. At this time, the District is uncertain as to whether resources will be used in order to clarify those services.

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Mayor Welo stated that given the constant turnover in elected offices, it would be beneficial if the elected officials were educated on whom to contact or direct their concerns to with respect to sewer and water issues.

Executive Director Ciaccia advised that the survey findings supported that initiative and suggested that the District consider assigning someone to specifically handle dealings with the suburbs. Executive Director Ciaccia noted that he recently authorized a personnel request to post for a position dedicated to suburban outreach. This person will act as a liaison between the District and member communities. He or she will attend council meetings and meet with the mayors. The District intends to be more visible going forward.

Mayor Welo commented that the District's increased outreach has peaked public curiosity as to this agency's roles.

District's Senior Government Affairs Specialist, Darnella Robertson, advised that she would provide those survey results to any interested mayors.

IV. Election of Officers

Ms. Robertson explained that nominations may be made from the floor or by ballot. The SCOG members made their nominations from the floor.

PRESIDENT

MOTION – Mayor Mulcahy moved and Mayor Currin seconded the nomination of Mayor Renda as President of the SCOG.

There being no further nominations, without objection, the motion by acclamation carried.

VICE PRESIDENT

MOTION – Mayor Mulcahy moved and Mayor Bacci seconded the nomination of Mayor Welo as Vice President of the SCOG.

There being no further nominations, without objection, the motion by acclamation carried.

SECRETARY

MOTION – Mayor Mulcahy moved and Mayor Renda seconded the nomination of Mayor Currin as Secretary of the SCOG.



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There being no further nominations, without objection, the motion by acclamation carried.

2013 SCOG Officers

*President – Mayor Susan Renda, Village of Moreland Hills*  
*Vice President – Mayor Georgine Welo, City of South Euclid*  
*Secretary – Mayor William Currin, City of Hudson*

V. Adjournment

**MOTION** – There being no further business to come before the SCOG, Mayor Bacci moved and Mayor Byrne seconded the motion to adjourn the SCOG meeting at 10:43 a.m. Without objection, the motion carried unanimously.

  
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Mayor Susan Renda, President  
Suburban Council of Governments