

**ORANGE COUNTY SEWER DISTRICT NO. 1 ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2023
2:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Peter Tuohy, Chairman,
Michael Amo, Katie Bonelli, Barry J. Cheney,
Glenn Ehlers, Laurie Tautel

ALSO

PRESENT: Betsy N. Abraham, Esq., Legislative Counsel
Richard B. Golden, County Attorney
Joseph F. Mahoney, Esq., Senior Assistant County Attorney
Michael Torelli, Assistant to the County Executive
Dorey Houle, Ombudsman, Human Resources
Erik Denega, Commissioner, Department of Public Works
Robert Gray, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Public Works/EF&S
Mary Beth Bianconi, Partner/Senior Project Manager, Delaware Engineering, D.P.C.
Gedalye Szegedin, Village/Town Administrator, Village of Kiryas Joel/Town of Palm Tree

Mr. Tuohy called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislator Tautel who arrived at 2:10 p.m.

Ms. Bianconi provided a copy of the Executive Summary to the Final Facility Plan (On file in Clerk, Legislative Office). They received comments on the Facility Plan that they submitted at the end of last year. They have a comment response letter that is 32 pages long that staff will review. To do the project in phases would be more costly and disruptive. They recommend that they build the pipe at least at the lower interceptor. The cost for the reverse osmosis has been updated in the plan and the costs are staggering. She reviewed cost analysis within the plan and noted that they took into consideration inflation. She addressed the regional approach and the different ways it can be done by eliminating some of the flows. The recommendations are to upgrade the plant to a 9 MGD Sequencing Batch Reactor (SBR) and upgrade the lower interceptor to accommodate future flows. The two costs together and assuming a 7% escalation out to 2025 the project cost is \$200 million.

Mr. Tuohy asked if Ms. Bianconi felt we were ready to go forward since they have the Final Facility Plan.

Ms. Bianconi responded that they feel that they have addressed all of the comments and they feel the document is a complete document. They are close to the end of getting the response to the comments that the DEC had on the original variance application. There is additional sampling going on now and there are some other small pieces of information to collect. In about a month they should have that material together and she plans to work with staff to finalize the language on the response to the variance application. There will be a public comment period, and there will be feedback from involved agencies and the D.E.C. Once the variance response is completed, the intent will be that the variance information goes in the DEIS. Then they can proceed to the final impact statement which is in response to the draft. The final step in the SEQRA process is the issuance of a findings statement.

Mr. Tuohy asked how long would it take to get a response from the D.E.C.

Ms. Bianconi responded that she hopes it would be within a month.

Mr. Tuohy further asked if she thought that the D.E.C. would come back with more questions.

Ms. Bianconi responded that she thinks that the D.E.C. may want more information. The D.E.C. is looking at this for a variance for them but they are also looking at it as a variance for others. She added that levels of total dissolved solids (TDS) is starting to show up in other permits and is appearing all across the region, not just in Orange County. They are either just naturally occurring or it is a combination with human activity which adds chloride through household use, salting roads, etc. It has become a statewide issue and the D.E.C. is really looking into it.

Mr. Amo asked if an updated timeline could be prepared which Ms. Bianconi confirmed that she could do that.

Ms. Bianconi addressed the funding and noted that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) allowed additional funding to the state revolving fund which is something that New York State uses to fund public infrastructure water and sewer infrastructure around the state. BIL provides 50% grant, 50% zero interest borrowing for a term up to 30 years. It is a great program that works well with other programs.

Mr. Tuohy asked the committee if they should entertain a resolution to ensure that they include broadening the funding for the intermunicipal grant program.

Ms. Bianconi confirmed that it would be a good idea to encourage them the eligibility criteria for applying for a grant can include situations like Orange County.

Mr. Szegedin stated that the funding distribution and the score system often depends on economics. When a municipality submits an application, they track income levels and he noted that this district is unique because it bundles together multiple municipalities with different types of economic data. If the application for the grant comes from Orange County they might look at Orange County as a whole and there are some wealthy municipalities that would not be eligible for some of the grant funding. It would be beneficial to have a demographic analysis. This would be helpful to submit for the June deadline.

Mr. Tuohy pointed out, if they are ready by June.

Ms. Bianconi mentioned that they do have demographers and they do plan to do what Mr. Szegedin suggested. She clarified that June 16th is the date to submit engineering reports and assessments so that the project can be listed on the intended use plan for 2024.

Chairwoman Bonelli suggest that they work with technical staff to put something together whether it be a letter or a resolution.

Mr. Cheney suggested they reach out to the municipalities and encourage them to send something as well.

Ms. Bianconi confirmed that it would be a good idea to encourage the municipalities.

Mr. Amo asked Ms. Bianconi if she thought that they were ready to submit a proposal on June 16th and are they close.

Ms. Bianconi stated that they need take the engineering report which is currently not in the format required for submission. It is not hard to do and they need to fill out an assessment form which is what is required to make the submission. It is not a proposal submission, it is uploading documents online and it will put this project in a giant list of other projects that might want financing.

Mr. Amo suggested making a motion just to be on the record saying that they, as a committee, want to move this fast since they are the committee recommending this.

Mr. Tuohy stated that they rely on their experts and it is up to them if they feel comfortable.

Chairwoman Bonelli understood what Mr. Amo was requesting, but she did not want to put anyone on the spot. She asked if the experts can take a look and see what is in their best interest. She reminded everyone that they are an advisory committee. She suggested that they poll the committee members to see if there is a consensus. There was a consensus by the committee.

Mr. Tuohy would like to continue to move forward and noted that they have made a lot of progress over the last several years.

Mr. Golden stated that it was not a commitment being added to this list with other projects to apply for funding. In his opinion, there is no requirement for Legislative authorization to have this filed, there was no need for it to go to the Physical Services Committee.

Mr. Denega mentioned that it makes the timeline a little easier.

Mr. Gray updated the committee on the sewer meters and noted that they plan to do the installation. There is a service contract of five years that includes monitoring and the rounded number is \$480,000 out of the \$500,000 budget, which is much better than the previous costs and was worth the wait.

Mr. Tuohy commended Mr. Gray on the great job he and his staff have done. He announced the next meeting date of April 18, 2023 at 2:00 p.m. and going forward all meetings will be held on Tuesday at 2:00 p.m. prior to the Human Services Committee meeting.

On the motion of Ms. Tautel, seconded by Mr. Amo, the meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.