



# Onondaga County Legislature

**JAMIE McNAMARA**  
Clerk

**TIMOTHY T. BURTIS**  
Chairman

**TAMMY BARBER**  
Deputy Clerk

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## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE MINUTES – OCTOBER 7, 2025 JULIE ABBOTT, CHAIR

**MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Kelly, Ms. Cody, Mr. Romeo, Mr. Brown**

**ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Burtis, Mr. Meaker, Ms. Harvey, Mr. Garland, Mr. May, Ms. Hernandez;** also see attached list

Chair Abbott called the meeting to order at 1:12 p.m., and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

*(Full Environmental Assessment Form is on file with Resolution No. 137)*

1. **WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION:** Odean Dyer, Commissioner, Eric Schuler, Deputy Commissioner, Cydney Johnson, Deputy County Executive Physical Services
  - a. **Resolution Authorizing the Classification of a Type I Action Under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA); Accepting the Environmental Assessment Form; and Accepting and Adopting a Negative Declaration for the Oak Orchard Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvement Project**

Opening remarks from Chair Abbott:

- Will not be voting on item 1a
- Maintenance and improvements need to be done at the Oak Orchard Wastewater Treatment Plant (OOWTP)
  - SEQRA is making sure there will not be an environmental impact
  - Executive Branch is requesting a Negative Declaration be implemented

**Questions/Comments from the Committee:**

- Please walk the Committee through exactly what is happening at the OOWTP and include Micron vs. private
  - County Executive
    - A Negative Declaration means that a thorough study has been conducted with a determination that there will be no or minimal environmental disturbance to the area for the work to be done
    - The work to be done is about growth and includes upgrades to infrastructure and expansion to capacity to serve residents and economic development within the area
    - The SEQRA includes:
      - A 2 page basic description of the project
      - Explanation of all areas that could be impacted
    - The goal is to ensure adequate capacity within the existing campus
- Is there a piece of this project that serves just the community and a piece that serves commercial?
  - WEP
    - This project is solely municipal related
    - All commercial and residential flows are treated in the same manner
- Is the Negative Declaration for community growth and nothing to do with Micron?
  - WEP
    - Yes, it is for community growth

- County Executive
  - The Negative Declaration is about impact to the environmental surroundings as improvements are getting done
- There is not 1 centimeter beyond the existing footprint of the campus?
  - County Executive
    - Correct
- What qualifies a determination of no significant impact?
  - WEP
    - Everything is looked at from air and noise impacts, storm water, etc., and if the area was previously disturbed
    - All proposed construction is being built on areas that were previously disturbed when initial campus was built
- Page 8 talks about .16 tons of biosolids; does that include what will be created by the proposed work being done?
  - WEP
    - Biosolids are currently produced out of OOWTP then hauled to and processed at Metro campus
    - Looking to process biosolids at OOWTP to take some of the burden off Metro
- There will be no increase, just moving where it is?
  - Any increase would be based on community growth; this is a net even
- Page 9 refers to no treatment of hazardous waste
- Is the waste produced not considered hazardous?
  - WEP
    - The EPA has very explicit definitions of what hazardous waste is
    - Municipal wastewater is not classified as hazardous waste
    - Once the clean water is taken out, many times what is left is residual biosolids
    - It is then discharged to a landfill, not a hazardous waste landfill
      - Municipal waste has own classification
- Page 8 states that operational noise is not expected to increase above existing levels
- What baseline used and how is it being tracked?
  - WEP
    - Operating state looks at DB ratings of existing equipment
    - Intent is to not create a condition that is worse than existing
- Is there an odor and complaint tracking system?
  - WEP
    - Complaints go through internal complaint process
    - The newer assets will also consider odor control
  - County Executive
    - One of the key benefits to the project is the upgrade to machinery, equipment, processes, and technology
    - The expectation is better efficiency
- Discuss the timeline and what kind of expansion it will be
- What are the steps with a Negative Declaration; is there a public hearing or notice to the community, etc.?
  - WEP
    - WEP has an internal schedule that can be provided to the committee
    - Construction will happen in phases
  - County Executive
    - There are a series of 4 or 5 components that are sequenced
    - As each component comes on, construction can begin with the next component
    - Essentially a bridging project that allows one system to go offline, but can ensure capacity, then go to the upgrade that will take in digesters, liquids, thickening, etc.
    - After that will look at biosolids and move on from that point

- What is the capacity increase?
  - WEP
    - Going up to 14.72
  - County Executive
    - Peak goes up to 25-30
- Is there an estimated service capacity?
  - WEP
    - Currently working on an internal document of EDU's (Equivalent Dwelling Units)
    - The EDU assessment is an internal forecast document that calculates flow
    - WEP will provide the Legislature with the EDU assessment
- Please clarify the capacity numbers
  - WEP
    - Sanitary sewer flows change throughout the day
    - Flows are higher in the morning when people are getting ready and drop off as the day goes on
    - There are significant peaking factors during rain events in areas that have storm sewer connections
    - Pump stations feed in to trunk sewers or force mains and flow spikes when it hits the Treatment Plant
- Would the capacity then be 25 and not 15?
  - WEP
    - No, peak day is a very finite period
    - The design is based around an average or max month
    - Need to be ready to hydraulically accommodate peak flows through the plant, but it is not designed for max flow continuously through the entire plant
- Is there a temporal component that allows sustainability of a certain level of flow over a certain period of time?
  - WEP
    - Yes, otherwise there is a risk of burning out pumps and assets
- Are the metrics in thousands of gallons?
  - WEP
    - No, millions of gallons
- An increase to 14.72 was mentioned, where is it at today?
  - WEP
    - The permit is rated at 10 but limited to less than 10 due to constraints of older equipment
    - Upgrade will be a significant capacity increase
- How much of this project is simply upgrading the capacity?
- Other than biosolids processing, what other new possibilities are being considered?
  - WEP
    - Considering reclaimed water, which is taking waste water effluent and treating to a very high quality to sell to users
- Will OOWTP be transitioning to methane energy?
  - WEP
    - Not being looked at now but could potentially be considered down the road
      - If considered, energy capture would be used to support onsite boilers, not to be put back into the grid
- What are the steps in the process of a Negative Declaration?
- In transparency to constituents, is the report required to be made public?
  - County Executive
    - It is not a closed process
    - County reaches out to peer agencies to get an opinion on the SEQRA review

- A Commissioner’s Public Hearing is held and open to the public
- Following an environmental assessment, a Negative Declaration affirms that the project will not have a significant environmental concern
- How long is the process?
  - WEP
    - About 3 months
- Please provide an explanation regarding the spill incident mentioned in part 1, page 10
  - WEP
    - WEP will follow up with that information
- What level of change would trigger legislative re-approval of a SEQRA?
  - WEP
    - At the preliminary level, the metrics are very conservative and consider the worst case impact
    - As a project progresses, the metrics get refined, which theoretically provide more of a buffer for error
    - The Legislature revisits a SEQRA each time funding is requested for a project
    - Any changes in SEQRA require Legislative approval prior to requesting additional funds
      - SEQRA must be compliant before funding is secured
- For each phase, the SEQRA is revisited to make sure the project is in compliance
  - Floor Leader Brian May
    - The project is overseen by regulatory partners who determine whether the SEQRA needs to be revisited
  - County Executive
    - There is a lot of monitoring; nothing is done in isolation
- How was the peak number of 25M gallons and sustained average of 14.72M gallons settled on?
- Are these numbers sufficient for the expected growth?
  - WEP
    - It was a combination of past and current design
    - Part of the exercise with consultant partners was to look at:
      - All available property within the service area
      - All available developmental property
      - Apply EDU numbers to each property to come up with a flow metric
  - County Executive
    - In terms of preparation, this project started in 2021
- Because new sewers are going in, some residents are thinking they can get on sewer system
- Is the residential buildout in the design phase?
  - WEP
    - Yes, a portion of it is; there will be additional phases as well
    - Need to wait until phases are complete before it is known which residents can tap into the system
- In terms of assessing footprint, is the mission is to maximize the capacity for today?
- What happens if the time comes when the facility requires a larger footprint?
  - WEP
    - Space is currently being withheld for additional tankage if needed for the future
      - If growth is needed, will come back to the Legislature for approval to move forward
- Municipal waste and residential waste are terms that have been used interchangeably
- Industrial waste requires special treatment
- Of the municipal or residential growth, how much is from commercial growth utilization?
  - County Executive
    - Currently have residential, commercial, and some industrial users

- WEP
  - The EDU assessment document looks at service area throughout the entire county including OOWTP
  - Future forecasting for commercial and residential growth has to be included in the basis of design reports that get submitted, reviewed, and approved by the DEC
- Explain difference between commercial and industrial
  - WEP
    - Target in Cicero is Commercial
    - Clinton’s Ditch is Industrial
- From historical perspective, what are some of the big advancements in wastewater treatment in general?
- What technology is there today that was not there 20 years ago?
- How has technology improved to meet the demands of the community?
  - WEP
    - Regulation changes drive technology in wastewater treatment plants
      - The current system is a more conventional aeration/liquid oxygen based system
      - MBR’s (Membrane Bioreactors) is new technology that provides a cleaner, higher quality effluent that meets current regulations
      - MBR’s were not common place 25 years ago
        - This project will be a big application of it in NYS
- Where will the wetland refill occur and what is the ratio?
  - WEP
    - There are lagoons onsite (classified as wetland) that aid in some of the wastewater treatment
    - These lagoons will be filled in with treatment plant processes
  - County Executive
    - There is a map included in the SEQRA

The meeting was adjourned at 1:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



TAMMY BARBER, Deputy Clerk  
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE  
DATE: OCTOBER 7, 2025

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Odean Dyer	WEP
Erte Schuler	WEP
Dan Krantz	CFE
Cyd Johnson	↓
Isabella Hume	↓
Anthony Jim	WEP
Dan Mulvihill	DMB
Darcie Lesniak	Leg
Joe Fratkeschi	Legal Counsel
Jim Beebe	Leg.
John DeSantis	Leg.