



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE MINUTES – FEBRUARY 24, 2026 GREGG ERIKSEN, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Eriksen, Mr. Garland, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Meaker, Mr. Thompson
ALSO PRESENT: Chairwoman Watts, Ms. Denton, Mr. Romeo, Mr. Ryan; also see attached list

Chair Eriksen called the meeting to order at 11:49 a.m., and asked the Deputy Clerk to call the roll. The previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION (WEP): Odean D. Dyer, Commissioner; Cydney Johnson Deputy County Executive for Human Services

a. INFORMATIONAL – Overview of WEP (*Attachment No. 1: WEP Presentation*)

- Management: four deputies and a Director of Workforce Development overseeing the department, which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Divisions include: Safety, Training, Capital Improvement, Asset Management, Administrative Services, Regulatory Compliance, Technical Services, and Operations and Maintenance
- Asset overview: 31,862 manholes, approximately 1,400 miles of sewers, 223 pump stations, 167 miles of force main, and six treatment plants

Treatment Plants:

- Metro (Hiawatha Boulevard): Average 71.3 MGD; capacity 84 MGD
- Baldwinsville Seneca Knolls: Average 3 MGD; capacity approximately 9 MGD
- Brewerton: Average 1.9 MGD; capacity approximately 3 MGD
- Meadowbrook Limestone: Average 4.3 MGD; capacity approximately 6.5 MGD
- Oak Orchard: Average 5.4 MGD; capacity approximately 10 MGD
- Wetzell Road: Average 3.5 MGD; capacity 7 MGD

Municipal Services:

- Consolidated Agreement: long-term lease arrangement
 - WEP performs capital work on assets in different towns and villages
- Inter-Municipal Wastewater Agreement: short-term agreement - five-years
 - Towns and Villages own their assets; WEP maintains assets for them

WEP Assets:

- Drainage Districts:
 - WEP manages several drainage districts that capture stormwater and channel it to natural water bodies untreated
 - Harbor Brook, Bloody Brook, and Ley Creek drain to Onondaga Lake
 - Meadowbrook Drainage District drains to Oneida Lake

Current Capital Projects:

- Force main rehabilitation
- Meadowbrook Limestone large-scale upgrade
 - Inflow and Infiltration abatement
- Wetzel Road Comprehensive Asset Renewal
- Emergency Response Plan: covers all county-owned and leased WEP pump stations, force mains, and sewer mains
 - Primary goals are protecting public health, environmental protection, regulatory compliance, and service continuity

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Eriksen: Referencing the Oak Orchard discussion, what other WEP assets will realistically need work over the next ten years, and what are the timeline and funding plans?
- Mr. Dyer: All current projects are on the 2026 CIP
- Mr. Eriksen: Can you provide more detail on the Comprehensive Asset Renewal project at Wetzel Road?
- Mr. Dyer: Wetzel Road is one of WEP's smaller and older treatment facilities. The project is a comprehensive review aimed at increasing efficiency and extending the useful life of pumps and force mains leading into the plant
- Mr. Eriksen: Is that because of the age of the facility or because we are expecting additional growth?
- Mr. Dyer: It is a combination of both. The facility is aging; if you build something in 1971, you don't know what to expect in 2026. We are making adjustments because of the age, but it is also going to help with what is to come
- Mr. Eriksen: Will the Wetzel Road project expand its capacity?
- Mr. Dyer will consult with his engineers, but the primary goal is to extend the useful life of existing assets
- Mr. Eriksen: A lot of facilities were built in the late 1970s and 1980s. What is the typical expected lifespan for a wastewater treatment facility?
- Mr. Dyer: Approximately 40 years with continuous maintenance
- Mr. Eriksen: Noting that many WEP facilities were built in the 1970s and 1980s, how many Oak Orchard-scale expansion or improvement projects should the committee anticipate needing over the next eight years?
- Mr. Dyer: While the facilities have been upgraded along the way, no projects of Oak Orchard's scale are anticipated in terms of dollar amounts. The focus is on maintaining all assets at a steady pace through the CIP
- Mr. Eriksen: Is WEP expecting to see other significant improvement projects necessary over the next eight years for some of the non-Oak Orchard facilities?
- Mr. Dyer: I will have to review the overall CIP once more, but a big chunk of what we have planned that is not an emergency is within the CIP and posted on ongov
- Mr. Eriksen: Is it more likely to say that we are looking at just regular maintenance for non-Oak Orchard facilities over the next eight years?
- Mr. Dyer: Yes, that is true

- Mr. Kelly notes that the CIP is a rolling six-year plan
- Ms. Smiley: It is renewed every year based on priorities and adjusted as new needs arise or situations change
- Mr. Thompson: A constituent, a town supervisor in the Town of Geddes, has flagged a problem on Bronson Road. The sewer trunk in that area was built to a capacity that is now being exceeded due to subsequent development, causing backflow into residents' basements. A valve-installation patch has been offered as a stopgap. What steps can be taken to address the issue?
- Mr. Dyer: WEP is familiar with Bronson Road and it is one of the service areas currently under study. The study will gather data on pipe capacity, which will then be used to make fact-based decisions about any CIP adjustments or maintenance projects needed
- Mr. Thompson: When will the study be complete?
- Mr. Dyer: Data from the study should be available around August of this year. A consultant's report will follow
- Mr. Thompson: When would you take action on the findings?
- Mr. Dyer: If the findings indicate action is necessary, the department will begin developing a CIP response. If it rises to an emergency level, the timeline would accelerate. It could extend into 2027 for actual remediation
- Mr. Thompson: A constituent in the Village of Solvay has reported a shortage of sewer (plumbing) inspectors, said to be down to two inspectors due to an unusual series of departures, creating a bottleneck for basic home inspections. What is being done to address this?
- Mr. Dyer: This has been a very unfortunate series of events leading to the department not having enough staff in that division. WEP has been working with the Deputy County Executive to address the staffing gap. Two additional plumbing inspectors were recently hired and are currently in training
- Mr. Thompson: So, the two you hired are those in addition to the two on the job?
- Mr. Dyer: There are three on the job and we brought an additional two
- Mr. Thompson: Are there things we can do to speed up the process? There's clearly a demand and more of a backlog. Are there things we can do to make things easier?
- Mr. Dyer: Legislature can assist by helping to identify more qualified plumbing inspectors through their own networks
- Mr. Thompson: What is driving the shortage?
- Mr. Dyer: There's shortage across all trades
- Mr. Garland: Can plumbing inspectors be contracted out rather than hired directly?
- Mr. Dyer: WEP is primarily hiring but is also exploring the contracting option, though significant research is needed before that route could be pursued
- Mr. Meaker: What is the experience level needed for the position?
- Mr. Dyer: Plumbing Inspector I requires apprentice-level experience, Inspector II requires journeyman-level, and the Plumbing Control Supervisor requires master-level licensing
- Mr. Thompson: Is WEP offering competitive salaries and benefits to attract candidates?
- Mr. Dyer: We are doing everything possible to entice candidates
- Mr. Eriksen: What are the funding sources for this year's capital projects?
- Ms. Smiley: That information is available in the CIP; funding is based on reimbursement

- Mr. Eriksen: Can you provide a general characterization of staffing levels across WEP's wastewater treatment facilities, including the availability of backup staff?
- Mr. Dyer: Staffing is adequate, positions posted online
- M. Eriksen: How does backup work between the wastewater facilities, do they back each other up or get it from elsewhere else. How does that process work?

- Mr. Dyer: Our staff is trained to do everything. Within each division, we have the ability to bring staff from different plants; technology is fairly similar
- Mr. Eriksen: Over the last year, have you found that our ability to pull staff from other facilities, if need be, has that been adequate?
- Mr. Dyer: Yes, the team operates well as a team
- Mr. Eriksen: Have there been instances where we've brought in outside help or are we in relatively good shape?
- Mr. Dyer: We are in relatively good shape, and emergency contracts are in place as a backstop for situations that would require outside assistance
- Mr. Kelly: What level of surveillance does WEP maintain on its pipes, treatment plants, and other infrastructure to make sure we are made aware of any incidents that come up?
- Mr. Dyer: Flow meters along pipes provide data on conditions outside the plants. Within the treatment plants and pump stations, WEP uses a SCADA system, a network of computer-monitored nodes or computer parameters that detect when equipment is down and allows the team to pinpoint issues
- Mr. Kelly: This is all in real-time?
- Mr. Dyer: Yes, the system is continuously being upgraded
- Mr. Thompson: Is WEP conducting studies in other areas beyond Bronson Road where constituents have reported flooding, particularly during heavy rain events? How does WEP prioritize where to direct resources?
- Mr. Dyer: There are other studies in the works, for example, the Brewerton wastewater treatment plant, which was in the CIP last year. Prioritization is based on the useful life of the facility and the urgency of the situation in the area. The most pressing issues are addressed first
- Mr. Thompson: Can you provide the committee with a general list of locations where studies similar to the Bronson Road study are being conducted?
- Mr. Dyer: Yes, that list will be provided

b. INFORMATIONAL – CSO Pipes/I-81 Construction (Franklin Square) – Cydney Johnson, Deputy County Executive for Human Services

- Ms. Johnson clarified that the I-81 project, including work in the Franklin Square area, is a New York State project and not a county project
 - Advised that it would be inappropriate for the county to comment on the project given ongoing issues at the state level.

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Eriksen: Is there anything the county is comfortable sharing or commenting on at this point?
- Ms. Johnson: Long term project which is a point of interest: Flow Control Facility, currently located at Webster's Landing
 - It is a small, fully operational facility in a parking lot, and while there is nothing wrong with it currently, there is a long-term possibility of upgrading or relocating it when the right opportunity and funding arise
 - No timeline is anticipated at this stage
- Mr. Eriksen: Can you provide a brief description of the facility?
- Ms. Johnson: It functions as a screening point where debris coming through the sewer system is captured and cleaned
- Mr. Kelly notes his appreciation for the county's partnership with the state on the CSO program and the savings it has generated for taxpayers
- Mr. Ryan: Has the county seen designs showing the impact of the proposed changes on the creek walk?
- Ms. Welch: It is a state project and the county is not in a position to comment

- Mr. Ryan: What is the environmental impact?
 - Ms. Welch: It is a state project
 - Mr. Ryan: Is the county taking any steps to be involved in the project?
 - Ms. Welch: The county defers, noting it is a state project. The county does not believe it will come before the Legislature
 - Mr. Garland suggests it may be worth presenting questions or concerns to the state proactively
- c. INFORMATIONAL – Meadowbrook Limestone Wastewater Treatment Plant Update
- Mr. Dyer reports that the Meadowbrook Limestone Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade project is currently in final design and has an anticipated construction start date in mid-fall 2026
 - Mr. Eriksen: That’s the construction date?
 - Mr. Dyer: Yes

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Thompson: Can construction continue through the winter if needed?
 - Mr. Dyer: Yes. The work is internal
 - Ms. Denton: What kind of community outreach is being done for neighbors in the surrounding area concerning odors?
 - Mr. Dyer: Extensive outreach has been conducted over the years. When the project reaches the appropriate stage, a commissioner’s hearing will be held to provide a public forum for community input
 - Mr. Eriksen: What are the goals of the project? Is it done in anticipation of growth or to repair existing infrastructure?
 - Mr. Dyer: The project is focused on redundancy within Meadowbrook Limestone itself and on addressing odors, which are a known community concern
 - Mr. Eriksen: Is it going to expand capacity?
 - Mr. Dyer: The project will not expand capacity
 - Mr. Eriksen: What are the practical effects of this project?
 - Mr. Thompson: How will we know if the project is a success?
 - Mr. Dyer: Primarily through a reduction in odors, and through the improved ability to perform maintenance on individual units without taking the plant offline
 - Mr. Eriksen: How is the Meadowbrook project being funded?
 - Ms. Smiley: The majority will be funded through bonding, with some cash as well; page 141 of Safety Book; staggered approach
 - Mr. Eriksen: Will additional staff be needed at Meadowbrook upon project completion?
 - Mr. Dyer: No
- d. 2025 Transfer Resolution – Kristi Smiley, Chief Fiscal Officer
- Just over \$700,000 being transferred into the all-other expense account, related to the sludge dryer project and sludge hauling costs
 - Just over \$1 million for maintenance and utilities, driven by unanticipated National Grid rate increases in September and a more severe winter than budgeted for
 - There are two components. For utilities, the 2026 budget reflects a significant increase that should address this. For the sludge hauling component, it was budgeted into 2026; however, the Legislature placed a portion of it in contingency as part of the feedback loop on that project. There may be a need to return for release of contingency funds, but there is money available

- Ms. Smiley clarified that all funds are being reallocated from within the department's existing appropriations and no additional fund balance is being requested. She noted a correction to the cover sheet: the supplemental page had the account numbers transposed; account 719 corresponds to the all-other account (\$700,000) and account 410 corresponds to utilities (\$1.1 million).

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Eriksen: Can you provide an update on the status of the sludge dryer facility?
- Mr. Dyer: deferred to Ms. Welch
- Ms. Welch: Because the matter appears to be moving toward litigation, the county cannot make statements that could be detrimental to the county's position or to taxpayers
 - No substantive information can be shared at this time
- Mr. Eriksen: Is there anything that can be said beyond what was reported in the prior day's newspaper article?
- Ms. Welch: Everyone has been working hard to provide a safe environment for WEP employees and to be fiscally responsible for taxpayers, and this will be demonstrated further
- Mr. Eriksen: The news report indicated the facility was scheduled to open the first week of March. What safety metrics and testing measures are in place?
- Ms. Welch noted she is not the right person to speak to air quality testing specifics but confirms the county is in ongoing communication with the union
- Mr. Eriksen: Are the metrics?
- Ms. Welch: There are metrics that are prescribed by New York State and they are both regulations
- Mr. Hummel: Safety metrics exist, prescribed by New York State regulations
- Mr. Eriksen: Do we have testing mechanisms in place?
- Mr. Hummel: We are using third-party testing is being used. The article spoke to this. The air inside the building has been tested and is safe. The changes were to the stack and that's where the testing is ongoing
- Mr. Meaker: Is the facility still on track to open in early March?
- Mr. Dyer: Yes. That is the plan
- Mr. Meaker: Is the litigation referenced by counsel between the contractor and the county?
- Ms. Welch: There is no current litigation; the discussions are between the county and the contractor
- Mr. Garland: Was CSEA among the initial complainants, and will the county be meeting with them before the facility opens to get their sign-off?
- Mr. Hummel: County continues to meet with CSEA. However, the county will not be requiring CSEA's approval before opening; rather, the county will ensure that testing demonstrates it is safe before anyone enters or works around the building
- Mr. Eriksen: Where specifically around the building have there been issues?
- Mr. Hummel: The original issue was with the exhaust system: building air was setting off the alarms, and it needed to be redesigned. The work is completed
- Mr. Kelly: That level of surveillance will remain going forward?
- Mr. Hummel: Yes
- Mr. Dyer: All WEP employees are required to carry a meter in whichever building they go into
- Mr. Eriksen: Will that continue even after the building is open?
- Mr. Dyer: Yes, in perpetuity
- Mr. Ryan: What is the expected lifespan of the sludge dryer facility, and does the county still expect it to generate the projected long-term savings?

- Mr. Dyer: The facility's lifespan aligns with WEP's other assets, approximately 40 years. WEP will continue to maintain it as needed and is confident in the long-term value
- Mr. Romeo: Is the Co-Generation (Co-Gen) project at the Metro plant up and running with National Grid? Has that been finalized?
- Mr. Dyer: I will have to follow up with my team and get back to you
- Mr. Thompson: Much of what sparked discussion at today's meeting came from a newspaper article rather than direct communication with the committee. Are there ways to improve lines of communication so legislators are informed through WEP before learning through the media?
- Mr. Dyer: WEP commits to being more communicative going forward. Today's informational presentation is itself a step in that direction
- Mr. Hummel added that there was a period of reduced communication during a transition in administration but looks forward to improved engagement going forward

A motion was made by Mr. Meaker, seconded by Mr. Garland, to approve this item; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- e. Discussion of the Resolution Approving the Oak Orchard Industrial Sewer District within the Onondaga County Consolidated Sanitary District
- Mr. Eriksen noted that the public hearing on this item is still open and no vote will be taken today
 - The item is on the agenda for the next session (March 3)
 - Encouraged members of the public watching the livestream or otherwise following the proceedings to submit written comments to the Legislature's email: OnondagaCountyLegislature@ongov.net (also available on the county website).

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Thompson: Is there a mechanism for the public to view the submitted comments?
- Ms. Watts: All public comments are being collected. They will not be posted online while the hearing is open, but will be published as part of the minutes once the public comment period closes
- Mr. Berg confirmed the email address for public comments: OnondagaCountyLegislature@ongov.net
- Mr. Meaker requested that the Chair direct staff to forward public comments to committee legislators as they are received, rather than waiting for them to be compiled at one time
- Mr. Eriksen agreed and made a formal request to staff that public comments be forwarded to committee members as they come in
- Mr. Kelly: Will creating the industrial sewer district also involve user agreements with the actual treatment itself?
- Ms. Smiley: The creation of the district is simply the administrative mechanism to establish a cost center. The process, once approved by the Legislature, goes to New York State for confirmation of the district, after which one additional legislative action will finalize the district. User agreements are a separate matter
- Mr. Garland: What contingency plans are in place if construction costs exceed the bond amount?
- Ms. Smiley: Any additional costs would have to come back to the Legislature for approval
- Ms. Watts clarified that the district creation resolution before the committee is entirely independent of any bonding or financing mechanism
- Ms. Smiley: Correct. This is creating the district only. This is not related to the actual industrial project
- Mr. Eriksen: To confirm, this resolution is just for the creation of the district?
- Ms. Smiley: Yes, this is just the creation of the district

- Mr. Eriksen: Many of the public’s questions relate more to the overall Oak Orchard project more than to the creation of the district. Where should those questions be directed, and when does the county anticipate being able to address them in more detail?
- Ms. Johnson: The project (Industrial Facility project) is ongoing. The Municipal has been going on for four or five years. An RFP has just been issued. The project is on a design-build structure. That information continues to be put together and will be brought before Legislature once it is ready to be put forward for presentation and discussion
- Mr. Romeo: Why is the district needed, and how will the district boundaries be determined?
- Ms. Johnson: The industrial sewer district is strictly a financial and administrative mechanism. It ensures that taxpayers are not paying for an industrial facility
- Ms. Smiley compared it to the existing Consolidated Sewer District structure, noting this is simply creating a subset within it so that costs are clearly categorized and not commingled
- Mr. Kelly reiterated his support for the item, emphasizing the importance of ensuring industrial wastewater costs do not fall back on the general taxpayers
- Mr. Ryan: Is this mechanism only applicable if the county borrows the money?
- Ms. Johnson: It is simply an administrative structure; the financing will be determined
- Ms. Denton: WEP has 49 companies providing industrial services. Is the district intended to serve only one user (Micron), or is it designed to accommodate additional industrial users?
- Ms. Johnson: As currently envisioned, there is one primary user, which is Micron. There is a possibility that supply chain-related companies could potentially be included, but the focus is on establishing the cost center for this facility and this user
- Ms. Denton: How does the December \$49 million bond for the residential sewer improvements interact with the county’s overall borrowing capacity, and could creating this industrial district impact the county’s ability to continue financing future needs?
- Ms. Smiley: The county has a maximum indebtedness limit, it is 7% of the 5-year real property tax value; approximately \$2.5 billion
 - County only utilizing 14% or less
 - The majority of WEP-related projects can be excluded from the calculation under New York State law
 - The district should not have a substantial impact on the county’s debt capacity
 - The debt service cost will be covered by the industrial user
- Mr. Kelly noted that the county’s debt capacity and position are covered in detail at the front of the annual CIP book, with data current through August 2025
- Ms. Smiley: Page 38 of the CIP overviews the county’s total indebtedness
- Ms. Denton: If the county owns the facility and there is a spill or release, who bears liability?
- Ms. Johnson: In any such situation, the county would work with the DEC to contain and minimize the incident, following New York State protocols. The specifics of liability would depend on the circumstances
- Mr. Ryan: Why is the district being created now?
- Ms. Johnson: As the project progresses, having the district in place ensures expenses can be captured and managed. While the timing could technically vary, it makes practical sense to establish the administrative mechanism before significant costs begin to be incurred
- Mr. Ryan: When we take this on, the district would be under WEP? If the bonding were to happen by OCIDA or some other civic development. How would that work?
- Ms. Smiley: It would fall under the Sewer fund. County is still exploring financing options, and a definitive answer is not yet available
- Mr. Kelly: Do bonding resolutions require public hearings?
- Ms. Smiley: For WEP they do
- Ms. Watts: What is the process for public bonds?

- Ms. Smiley: Commissioner’s hearing, public hearing, then the bonding resolution
- Mr. Ryan: What is the financing game plan? What is “Plan A” and how will the county do it?
- Ms. Smiley: Multiple options are being worked through. This is a project on a scale no one has undertaken before, with many consultants assisting
- Ms. Johnson concurred and added that this has been a long-term project, and financing is something they are now actively working through
- Mr. Eriksen expressed the committee’s concern directly: depending on which financing mechanism is ultimately used, there may or may not be built-in legislative oversight checkpoints. If financing routes are pursued that do not require this body’s involvement, that would be an unwelcome outcome. Robust oversight and the ability to engage meaningfully at key decision points is a paramount concern for this committee
- Ms. Johnson: Secrecy is not the intent. A critical prerequisite before any financing conversations can advance is the execution of a user agreement with Micron. Until that agreement is in place, financing discussions remain premature. Once that threshold is met, more detail will be shared with the Legislature
- Mr. Kelly states that no member of this body should have any desire to abdicate oversight responsibility, and the committee shares a strong consensus on that point
- Ms. Watts: Can the administration commit that before any financing documents are signed, regardless of whether the county pursues municipal bonding or another option, it will come back to the Legislature with a presentation before moving forward?
- Ms. Johnson indicated she is happy to commit to giving an update on the project before moving forward

2. OFFICE OF THE ENVIRONMENT: Elizabeth Bough Martin, Director

a. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing Ash Tree Management in and for the County of Onondaga, New York, at a Maximum Estimated Cost Of \$750,000, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$750,000 Bonds of Said County to Pay Costs Thereof (\$750,000)

- Ms. Martin distributed a handout (*Attachment No. 2: Ash Tree Management*)
- Onondaga County is currently in Year 12 of a 15-year program
- Bond resolution will provide this year’s funding
 - Capital project, Ash trees provide services to the county
 - Useful water quality; reducing carbon footprint

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Eriksen: What species are used to replace removed ash trees?
- Ms. Martin: Works with the Soil and Water Conservation District
 - 10% replacement commitment; the county has approximately 46,000 ash trees
 - Over 1,000 replacement trees have already been planted
 - A mix of species and sizes is used, seedlings for volume, and larger-diameter trees in key locations
 - Jamesville Beach along Butternut Creek is an example, where approximately a dozen two-inch-diameter trees of varied species (both hardwood and softwood) have been planted in recent years
 - The goal is to restore biodiversity rather than replanting a single dominant species. The Soil and Water Conservation District is a partner on replanting
- Mr. Ryan: Does the program operate solely on county parcels, or does it also extend to private or municipal properties?
- Ms. Martin: The program covers county parcels and rights-of-way where the county has jurisdiction

- Do not replace trees in the right of ways; replaces trees in county parkland and other county parcels
- Mr. Ryan: When do you plan on transitioning to private properties? Is there any town or city oversight issue?
- Ms. Martin: The city has its program; the county is focused on parcels as part of its plan
 - The county's Office of the Environment and its partners, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, and community-based tree committees, work with municipalities and the public on tree planting more broadly
 - A tree canopy assessment completed in 2025 covering core northern towns has generated a parcel-based identification of priority planting areas, and the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board has received a USDA grant to expand that work across all of Central New York
- Mr. Kelly: Is this a municipal bond?
- Ms. Martin: Yes
- Mr. Garland: 95% of the trees you have had to remove, what have been the ecological consequences for species that lived in or depended on the ash trees, such as birds?
- Ms. Martin: When canopy is opened up, secondary scrub species return. The Soil and Water Conservation District arborist (Theresa) has been focusing on habitat expansion through strategic replanting in the parks
 - In areas such as Highland Forest where the canopy opens, a natural seed bank is producing new ash tree seedlings as well as other native species
 - No observed decline in species variety or diversity overall
- Mr. Meaker: Does this have any effect on the Indiana bats?
- Ms. Martin: The ash removal season is set to begin November 1st, consistent with Indiana bat habitat protection requirements, and this schedule is applied uniformly throughout all county operations
- Mr. Meaker: You work in cooperation with towns throughout the year?
- Ms. Martin: Yes, there is coordination with towns, villages, and county departments
 - Originally a coordinated committee met with towns and villages across the county to ensure awareness and planning, but in recent years that formal coordination has pulled back as the issue is now well understood and many localities have addressed most of their ash trees
 - The office remains available to assist any town or village upon request
 - This year's work will include marking ash trees on county, with removal beginning after November 1st

A motion was made by Mr. Thompson, seconded by Mr. Meaker, to approve this item; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Memorializing the Governor and Legislature of the State of New York to Amend Existing State Legislation to Permanently Authorize Rifle Hunting for Deer and Black Bear in Onondaga County (*Sponsored by Leader Hernandez, Mr. May*)
 - Ms. Hernandez presented the memorializing resolution, which she co-sponsors with Mr. May.
 - In 2023, Governor Hochul signed Senate Bill 6125/Assembly Bill 6822, which temporarily authorized rifle hunting for deer and black bear in Onondaga County as an opt-in provision
 - This resolution memorializes the Legislature's support for permanently authorizing this option for county hunters
 - This fits within an agreed practice to limit memorializing resolutions to matters that involve state legislation and opt-in provisions affecting the county
 - Hunters and sportsmen's clubs have been requesting this for approximately three years.

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Garland asked to co-sponsor the resolution
- Raised a concern about long-range and precision rifles: the Camillus Sportsmen's Club recently closed its range in part because of issues with certain high-powered rifle types. Could the resolution include language or advocacy discouraging the use of long-range/precision rifles given the 500-foot rule and the proximity of homes?
- Ms. Hernandez: The current state law is set to expire and the state legislature will be revisiting it to amend the type of rifles authorized
 - Encouraged Mr. Garland to advocate for those specific changes at the state level when the amended legislation is being considered
- Mr. Kelly: Can you clarify the committee's approach to memorializing resolutions going forward?

Mr. Meaker left the meeting at 1:27 p.m.

- Ms. Hernandez: There has been a prior informal agreement not to advance ceremonial memorializing resolutions. However, this resolution and others like it, where the county is opting into state legislation or advocating on a direct pass-through matter, represent a category that should be memorialized
 - Two examples of prior instances where the county could not participate in beneficial programs because no memorializing resolution was passed: rifle hunting for several years and the Harriet Tubman Byway.

A motion was made by Mr. Garland, seconded by Mr. Thompson, to approve this item. Ayes: 4 (Mr. Eriksen, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Garland) Noes: 0 Absent: 1 (Mr. Meaker); MOTION CARRIED.

4. DISCUSSION OF CORRESPONDING OUTSIDE BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS: Nicole Watts, Chairwoman

a. Review and Discussion of Appointments to Outside Boards (*Attachment No. 3: Boards and Commissions*)

- Ms. Watts: There is one appointment for OCRRA (Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency) that I intend to put forward at the March session
- Requested that any legislators who wish to suggest an alternative candidate submit a resume within 48 hours

C. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Garland, seconded by Mr. Thompson to adjourn the meeting. Ayes: 4 (Mr. Eriksen, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Garland) Noes: 0 Absent: 1 (Mr. Meaker); MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



SPENCER BERG, Deputy Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
DATE: FEBRUARY 24th, 2026

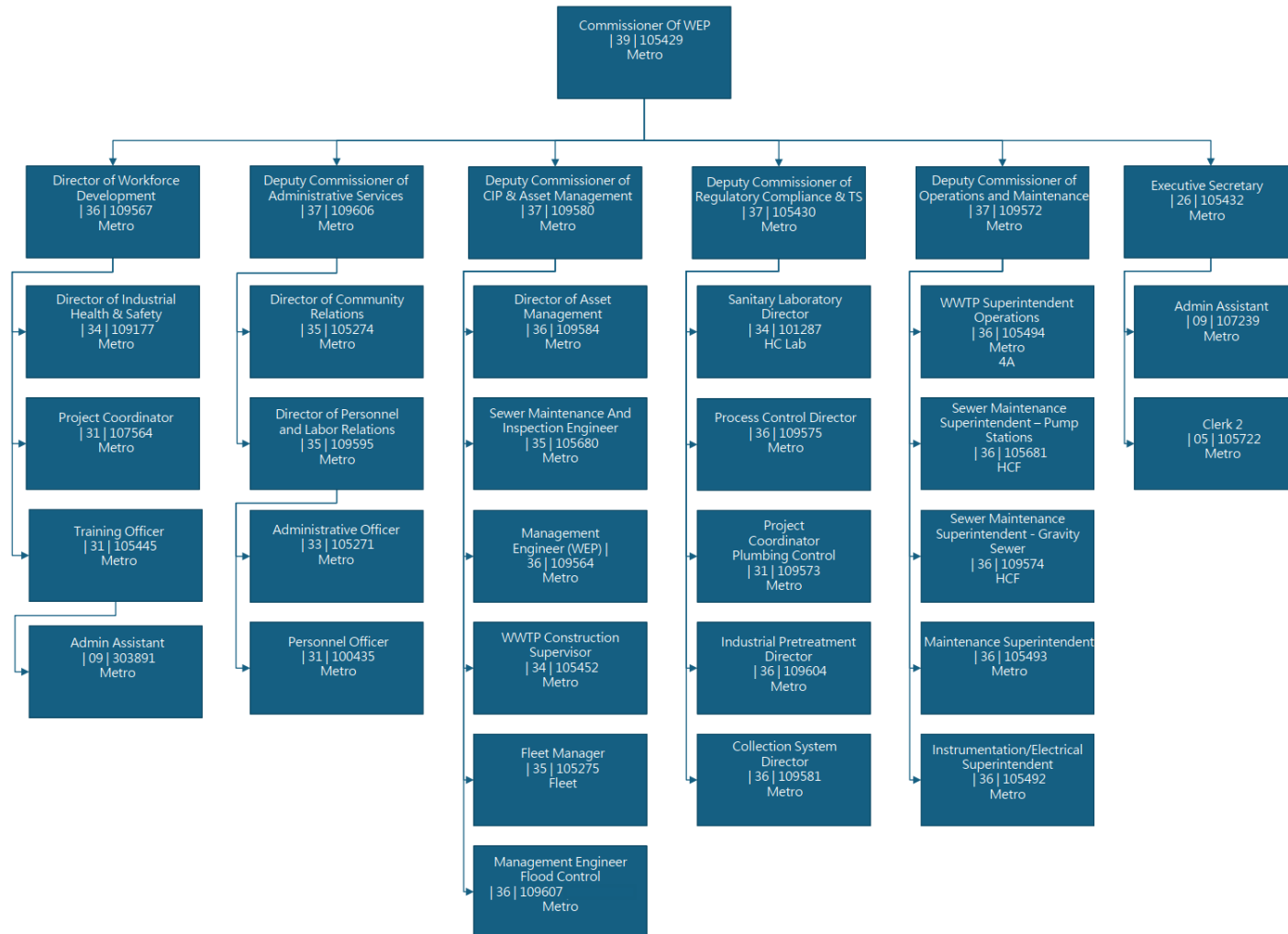
NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
ODIAN DYER	OCDSWOP
Erin Welch Fair	LAW
Kristi Smiley	Finance
Carl Hummel	Personnel
Elizabeth Bough Martin	Environment
LEVO FIN	
John Smith	CEAER DEETS
Maren King	Resident

ATTACHMENT NO. 1: WEP PRESENTATION

WEP Introduction

- What does WEP do?
 - Wastewater & Stormwater management department
 - Treat residential sanitary flow
 - Treat Industrial flows from 49 companies in the County
 - Treat Commercial flows
- Plumbing Control
 - Responsible for regulating all new plumbing connections in the county
 - Plan Reviews
 - Site Inspections

Management Structure



Asset Overview



Metro

FACILITY BUILT	COUNTY SERVICE	TREATMENT TYPE	FLOW RATE	WATER OUTFALL
1924	Residential, Industrial and Commercial	Advanced Tertiary Treatment Process	71.3 mgd · Average 84.0 mgd · Capacity <small>*MILLIONS OF GALLONS PER DAY</small>	Onondaga Lake



Baldwinsville-Seneca Knolls



FACILITY BUILT	COUNTY SERVICE	TREATMENT TYPE	FLOW RATE	WATER OUTFALL
1982	Primarily Residential	Advanced Secondary Treatment Process	3.0 mgd · Average 9.0 mgd · Capacity <small>*MILLIONS OF GALLONS PER DAY</small>	Seneca River



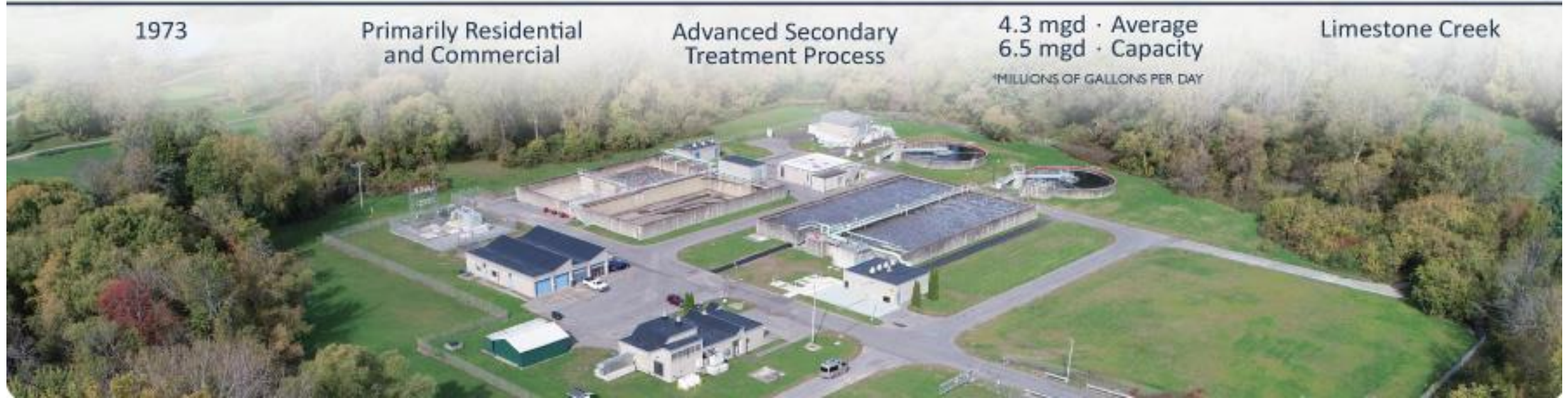
Brewerton

FACILITY BUILT	COUNTY SERVICE	TREATMENT TYPE	FLOW RATE	WATER OUTFALL
1974	Primarily Residential	Advanced Secondary Treatment Process	1.9 mgd · Average 3.0 mgd · Capacity <small>*MILLIONS OF GALLONS PER DAY</small>	Oneida River



Meadowbrook-Limestone

FACILITY BUILT	COUNTY SERVICE	TREATMENT TYPE	FLOW RATE	WATER OUTFALL
1973	Primarily Residential and Commercial	Advanced Secondary Treatment Process	4.3 mgd · Average 6.5 mgd · Capacity <small>*MILLIONS OF GALLONS PER DAY</small>	Limestone Creek



Oak Orchard

FACILITY BUILT	COUNTY SERVICE	TREATMENT TYPE	FLOW RATE	WATER OUTFALL
1981	Primarily Residential and Commercial	Advanced Secondary Treatment Process	5.4 mgd · Average 10.0 mgd · Capacity <small>*MILLIONS OF GALLONS PER DAY</small>	Oneida River



Wetzel Road

FACILITY BUILT	COUNTY SERVICE	TREATMENT TYPE	FLOW RATE	WATER OUTFALL
1976	Primarily Residential	Advanced Secondary Treatment Process	3.5 mgd · Average 7.0 mgd · Capacity <small>*MILLIONS OF GALLONS PER DAY</small>	Seneca River



WEP Municipality Services

- Consolidated Agreements
 - Long term lease (40-yrs)
 - WEP does Capital Improvements
- Intermunicipal Wastewater Agreement
 - Short Term Agreement (5-Yrs Max)
 - Towns & Villages own WEP maintains for an agreed upon fee

Drainage Districts

- Assets that capture rainwater & channel it to natural water bodies
- Harbor Brook
 - Channels to Onondaga Lake
- Meadow Brook
 - Channels to Oneida Lake
- Bloody Brook
 - Channels to Onondaga Lake
- Ley Creek
 - Channels to Onondaga Lake

Capital Projects

- Ley Creek & Liverpool Force main Rehabilitation Program
- Meadowbrook Limestone WWTP Large Scale Upgrade
- Meadowbrook Limestone WWTP Inflow & Infiltration Abatement
- Comprehensive Asset Renewal at Wetzel Road WWTP

Emergency Response Plan

- Provides a structured framework for responding to wastewater and collection system emergencies.
- Applies to County-owned and leased collection system assets, including pump stations, force mains, and sewer mains.
- Primary goals are protection of public health, environmental protection, regulatory compliance, and service continuity.

ATTACHMENT NO. 2: ASH TREE MANAGEMENT

Ash Tree Management

Department: Office of the Environment
Project Type: Environment & Sustainability
Project Status: Ongoing
Budget Status: Partially Authorized
Phase Status: Implementing



Summary

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), an invasive species of beetle that kills ash trees, arrived in the U.S. around 2002 and is spreading across the country. The beetle is already infesting ash trees in Onondaga County. One in nine trees in Onondaga County is an ash tree.

Spending Plan (000's)

Funding Source	Prior	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	6-Year	Total
Authorized Borrowing	4,800	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,800
Borrowing to Authorize	-	750	750	750	-	-	-	2,250	2,250
Cash for Capital	250	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	250
Total	5,050	750	750	750	-	-	-	2,250	7,300

Scope & Details

Onondaga County has developed and is implementing an Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) management strategy in order to minimize the hazard risk to the community, the impact of EAB on County operations and to plan for and minimize EAB costs (tree removal/inoculation, manpower and equipment, disposal and tree replacement). All County-owned ash trees with potential targets in the drop zone (people or physical assets) will need to be removed or inoculated to protect the public, protect assets and reduce liability.

The County owns approximately 300 parcels of land covering roughly 8,000 acres (including parkland, water supply and wastewater treatment plants, drainage districts, pumping stations, radio towers and institutional campuses for uses including administration, correctional facilities, emergency response operations and more) and nearly 800 miles of highway rights-of-way. These properties are home to tens of thousands of ash trees. Steps must be taken by the County to ensure that the threat of harm to humans and/or damage to County-owned property is minimized, that the public cost of managing affected trees on County-owned property is minimized and that overall disruption in the community is minimized (including tree replacement needs). To this end, the County has taken the following steps:

1. Conducted an inventory of ash trees on County-owned property
2. Managing ash trees on county owned properties (treating or removing)
3. Helping organize a community-wide task force to coordinate a Community EAB Management Strategy.

The inventory of ash trees (location, size, health, nearby targets) was initiated in 2012 and was completed in 2014. Early management efforts have been aimed at removing priority hazard trees, and damaged trees that are likely to become priority hazard trees in critical areas.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Onondaga County will implement a balanced or “selective” ash tree management strategy. The benefit of this balanced approach is that management of ash trees can be optimized at each location, preserving tree functions where they provide the greatest value, restoring lost canopy over time in other locations, and preemptively removing less valuable trees before they become a safety hazard. Since the program's inception, the following has been accomplished (as of December 2023):

1. Preemptive removal of approximately 25,590 ash trees over a period of 10 years.
2. Replacement of approximately 3,270 non-ash trees in 59 different species
3. Preservation of 393 ash trees through injection treatment.

To carry out the County's Ash Tree Management Strategy, the County Office of Environment has continued to renew its agreement with the Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) to prepare bid documents, administer contracts with vendors and to oversee tree removal and replacement. The SWCD has also assisted the County with other EAB associated activities such as monitoring for infestations and has held 16 community outreach and engagement events.

When this project started the projected cost to carry out the County's ash tree management strategy over 25 years was \$15.8 million. At this point, due to more competitive bidding as well as savings due to the fact that we are not hiring outside contractors for inoculating the trees, we have reduced the total cost of the project to about \$8 million.

Total Cost of project for tree removal, tree replacement, tree inoculation, and administrative/oversight costs (over 10 years): \$3.51 million

Annual tree removal, tree replacement, tree inoculation, and administrative/oversight costs: \$0.75 million

Estimated total cost (over 25 years): \$10 million

ATTACHMENT NO. 3: BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

OUTSIDE BOARDS & COMMISSIONS Environmental Protection Committee

DEC Region 7 Fish and Wildlife Advisory Board

Established by Article 9 Title 7 of 2010 New York Code ENV, this advisory board has 27 total members, three from each county. The goal of the advisory board is to bridge the gap between state conservation goal and property rights with one appointment from each county being a county legislator and representing the county, one representing the sportsmen of the county, and one representing land owners of the county.

Appointing Authority: Appointments are made by the County Executive and must be approved by the legislature.

Current Appointments:

- **Legislative Representative: VACANT** (was Legislator Hernandez)
- Sportsmen Rep: Stephen Wowelko
 - o Appointed on 9/3/2024
 - o Tern Expires 12/31/2027
- Land Owner Rep: VACANT



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

OUTSIDE BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

Environmental Protection Committee

Deer and Tick Management Advisory Committee

Established by Local Law No. 2-2016 and Resolution No. 39-2016, this advisory committee was established to advise the county on the creation and operation of Onondaga County's deer and tick management. The committee is composed of three ex-officio members including the Director of the Office of Environment, Chair of Ways & Means Committee, Chair of the Health Committee, and two more members are appointed by the Chair of the Legislature. **It is possible this committee is no longer relevant, last activity was in 2022.**

Appointing Authority: Entirely the County Legislature.

Current Appointments:

- VACANT since 2022
- VACANT since 2022



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

OUTSIDE BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

Environmental Protection Committee

Onondaga County Fisheries Advisory Board

Created via resolution 210-2008 to establish an advisory board that could become the proper place for discussing fishery related initiatives in Onondaga County. The board has seven members, two appointed by the County Executive, two appointed by the Chairperson, one appointed by the majority leader, one appointed by the minority leader and one recommended by the New York State Region 7 Fish and wildlife management board.

Appointing Authority: Mixed

Current Appointments:

Possibly all VACANT, unclear as there is no record of appointment resolutions.

- VACANT Seat, appointed by Chair
- VACANT Seat, appointed by Chair
- VACANT Seat, appointed by Majority Leader
- VACANT Seat, appointed by Minority Leader
- Recommendation by New York State Region7 Fish and Wildlife Management Board



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

OUTSIDE BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

Environmental Protection Committee

Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency (OCCRA)

Created by Title 13-B of the New York State Public Authorities Law, the Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency (OCRRA) is a public benefit corporation governed by a 15-member Board of Directors. Its core mission is to manage the county's solid waste stream through an integrated system that emphasizes recycling, composting, and sustainable waste-to-energy recovery. The board provides essential oversight for the agency's fiscal health, environmental permit compliance, and long-term infrastructure planning. Comprised of non-compensated members serving three-year terms, the board represents a partnership between county and city leadership to ensure that regional waste disposal remains ecologically sound and economically viable for the community.

Appointing Authority: Mixed

Current Appointments:

- Alexis Rodriguez (Appointed By CL) < Needs Re-Appointment or New Appointment
 - o Appointed On: 9/3/2024
 - o Expires On: 12/31/2025
- Dan Kranz (Appointed By County Legislature)
 - o Appointed On: 12/2/2025
 - o Expires On: 12/31/2026
- Jennifer Wood (Appointed By County Legislature)
 - o Appointed On: 12/17/2024
 - o Expires On: 12/31/2026
- Bonnke Seakore (Appointed by County Executive)
 - o Appointed On: 12/3/2025
 - o Expires On: 12/31/2026
- Gregory S. Popps (Appointed by County Executive)
 - o Appointed On: 12/17/2025
 - o Expires On: 12/31/2027
- Elizabeth Bough Martin (Appointed by County Executive)
 - o Appointed On: 12/16/2025
 - o Expires On: 12/31/2028
- Vincent Mangan
 - o Appointed On: 12/16/2025
 - o Expires ON: 13/31/2028



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

OUTSIDE BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

Environmental Protection Committee

Onondaga County Water Authority (OCWA)

Authorized by Title 7 of Article 5 of the New York State Public Authorities Law (the OCWA State Law), the Onondaga County Water Authority is a public benefit corporation tasked with the production, transmission, and distribution of a safe and reliable water supply for the region. Its mission extends beyond simple utility management to include significant environmental protection efforts, overseeing the infrastructure that serves Onondaga and neighboring counties. The five-member Board of Directors provides essential governance, managing the authority's fiscal policies, large-scale capital projects, and compliance with state and federal water quality standards. These non-compensated members serve staggered three-year terms to ensure continuity in the oversight of the county's most critical natural resource.

Appointing Authority: Onondaga County Legislature.

Current Appointments:

- Kenneth Gardiner (Appointed By County Legislature)
 - o Appointed On: 3/05/2025
 - o Expires On: 7/1/2027
- Anthony Geiss Jr (Appointed By County Legislature)
 - o Appointed On: 3/05/2025
 - o Expires On: 7/1/2027
- Benedicte H. Doran (Appointed By County Legislature)
 - o Appointed On: 3/05/2025
 - o Expires On: 7/1/2027
- Douglad R. Wickman (Appointed By County Legislature)
 - o Appointed On: 3/05/2025
 - o Expires On: 7/1/2027
- John C. Dougherty (Appointed By County Legislature)
 - o Appointed On: 3/04/2025
 - o Expires On: 7/1/2028



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

OUTSIDE BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

Environmental Protection Committee

Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District

Authorized by the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law and established by the Onondaga County Legislature, the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a local governmental subdivision responsible for the conservation of soil and water resources. Its core mission is to provide technical assistance, educational programs, and administrative oversight to landowners and municipalities to mitigate erosion, protect water quality—particularly within the county’s critical lake watersheds—and promote sustainable agricultural practices. The Board of Directors, consisting of seven members including county legislators and representatives from the farming community.

Appointing Authority: Entirely the Legislature for at least two positions.

Current Appointments:

- Legislator Bush
 - o Appointed: 2/3/2026
 - o Expires: 12/31/2026
- Legislator Thompson
 - o Appointed: 2/3/2026
 - o Expires: 12/31/2026



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

OUTSIDE BOARDS & COMMISSIONS Environmental Protection Committee

Metropolitan Water Board

Established by Local Law No. 2-1962 the Metropolitan Water Board is the administrative body of the Onondaga County Water District. The law establishes that the board has 7 seven members (but now only has 5) appointed by the county government. It appears that the board is somewhat redundant due to OCWA but exists to be the separate legal authority responsible for managing the water district. Interestingly the local law has a rule banning five members from being from the same political party.

Appointing Authority: County Executive four seats which do not need to be approved by the legislature. County Legislature gets to appoint one person, who serves as the chair and can cast votes in cases of tie.

Current Appointments:

- Chair (legislative appointment): William J. Barlow
 - o Appointed On: 12/5/2023
 - o Term Expires On: 12/31/2026
- Steven Morgan (CE Appointment)
- Mary Ellen Dougherty (CE Appointment)
- Nicholas Petrovich (CE Appointment)
- Franck Moses (CE Appointment)