

ONONDAGA COUNTY – DEPARTMENT OF WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

2027 EXECUTIVE BUDGET WRITTEN STATEMENT

SECTION 1:

2026 INITIATIVES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- A review of divisions such as plumbing control, collection systems, and asset management was completed, and adjustments were made to increase efficiency.
- The department continues to focus on meeting current maintenance demands and preparing for future growth.
- Steps have been taken to enhance our customer service focus, ensuring communication with the public is clear, concise, and the County's elevated standards of customer service are met.
- The Safety Division has strengthened its policies and procedures and established a framework to promote a consistent safety culture throughout the department.

Key Infrastructure Investments:

- Feasibility Studies are underway that will define each plant's capacity and the most efficient path to enhance it.
- White Pine Pump Station construction is almost complete and ready to take on municipal flows
- Meadowbrook Limestone WWTP I/I abatement project is in the construction phase to improve wet-weather treatment performance, and address the requirements of the NYSDEC Consent Order.
- Camillus Force main Replacement project is underway to increase the service life of a 7-mile long force main and prevent future failure.

2026 BUDGET REVIEW

WEP is forecast to finish 2026 within its total departmental budget, although transfers between individual appropriation accounts may be necessary to align the budget with actual expenditures.

SECTION 2

2027 BUDGET OVERVIEW

The 2027 budget includes standard salary and wage increases consistent with the County's baseline budgeting approach. The budget also includes one new funded FTE, previously approved as part of the 2026 Modified Budget, to support increased workload within the Plumbing Control Division.

The Department's 2027 Supplies and Maintenance & Utilities appropriations increase primarily due to inflation and contractual escalators. Utility costs increase by approximately \$1.3 million, reflecting higher utility rates and the Department's significant energy consumption associated with wastewater treatment operations.

The Department's 2027 Travel and Training appropriation decreases from 2026 and supports required meal reimbursements and employee training, with a significant focus on workplace safety and technical requirements. Training includes confined space, OSHA, HAZWOPER, CPR/First Aid, electrical and arc flash safety, equipment operation, CDL, welding, wastewater and collection system operations, and professional development necessary to maintain licenses and certifications.

The Department's 2027 Professional Services appropriation increases by \$609,657, primarily due to contractual increases and costs associated with required regulatory permits and monitoring services. The account supports a broad range of specialized services necessary for wastewater operations and regulatory compliance, including air quality and emissions testing, analytical and laboratory services, environmental monitoring, chemical and petroleum bulk storage compliance, hazardous waste removal, equipment and system assessments, SCADA programming and technical support, employee testing and physicals, legal and consulting services, spill response, and other specialized technical services.

The Department of Water Environment Protection's 2027 All Other Expenses and Contingency appropriation decreases by \$1.9 million primarily due to lower anticipated costs associated with biosolids hauling.

The Furniture and Fixtures appropriation maintains a consistent level of funding to support the proactive and routine replacement of sewer cameras, cleaning equipment, and other operational equipment as it reaches the end of its useful life. Spending may fluctuate from year to year based on specific replacement needs, while larger equipment replacements and significant upgrades are generally planned and funded through the County's Capital Improvement Program.

The Automotive Equipment appropriation continues to support the WEP Department's ongoing vehicle replacement plan, helping ensure a safe and reliable fleet for departmental operations. Specific vehicle replacement information is provided in the Executive Vehicle Summary.

After accounting for the increase in expenditures, sewer unit charge revenue must increase by approximately \$10.76 million in 2027. The proposal addresses this need through two coordinated changes: reducing the number of gallons represented by one sewer unit from 85,000 to 70,000 gallons and increasing the annual charge per unit from the 2026 adopted rate of \$476.58 to \$490.28. Together, these changes provide the revenue necessary to support wastewater operations while continuing the County's effort to more equitably allocate costs based on system usage.

SECTION 3:

2027 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Workforce safety remains the highest priority. New Contracts are being established for air quality & initiatives to ensure worker safety.
- Efforts to attract and retain talent continue with a focus on strengthening infrastructure support staff and meeting operational needs.
- A countywide capacity plan and comprehensive Master Plan are in development, enabling WEP to increase operational efficiency throughout the CSD.

Key Infrastructure Investments:

- Continued focus on consent order projects, Completing Consent Order projects while strengthening operations to prevent future regulatory issues
- Continue investments in deficient pipelines and deteriorated pump stations; including significant pump station construction projects in Onondaga County.