



## CITY OF CORTLAND WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY



### *Meeting Minutes*

**Date: 01/24/11**

**Time: 5:30 pm**

**Conference Room,  
Cortland Wastewater**

#### ■ Members:

- Chairman John Troy – Present
- Vice Chair William Starr – Present
- Commissioner Sally Horak – Present
- Commissioner Todd Morris – Present
- Commissioner Paul Lorenzo – Present
- Village of McGraw Trustee – Absent
- Village of Homer Trustee – Absent
- Harvey Davis, Plant Manager – Present
- Tom McCall, Maintenance Supervisor – Present
- Jeremy Houghtaling, Cortland Standard – Present

Meeting called to order at 5:30 pm.

Minutes from December 20, 2010 meeting for approval.

**Motion** to approve the minutes from December 20, 2010 meeting by Paul Lorenzo. Seconded by Sally Horak. **UNANIMOUS**

**Plant Manager's Report:**

Administration: At last months meeting Harvey Davis believed there was headway made regarding the Common Council and the labor budget for the facility. Harvey Davis believed he addressed all of the Common Council's concerns in an email he sent out reconciling the total staffing of the facility. The Common Council challenged if Harvey Davis's budget assessment really did state that there were 11 positions budgeted for 2010 and 12 budgeted for 2011. Harvey Davis put forth a plan of how the facility should move forward and also justified why a Laboratory Technician is not needed. Tom McCall provided a copy of the *ABC (Associated of Boards of Certification) Need-to-Know Criteria for Wastewater Treatment Operators; a Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certification Manual*. This details what Operator's of different classifications need to know and it also outlines the level of proficiency that is expected of the Technicians. The Class I, II, III, and IV are listed and Laboratory Analysis is part of their certification. The Facility currently conducts Process Control Testing 365 days a year. A Biological Nitrogen Removal Plant isn't going to be much different then what the facility is currently conducting. There are already in house Phosphorus and Nitrogen removals being conducted to accommodate anything in the future. There is not a Certified Lab here on site so the idea of someone pigeon-hole into one spot is something that Harvey Davis feels is a waste of money. Paul Lorenzo asked who's idea it was to have a Laboratory Technician? Harvey Davis explained that the idea came from the Barton & Loguidice study completed by a gentleman by the name of Don Davis. Harvey believes that Don Davis didn't think about the fact that there is no certified lab here on site. Harvey looks at it that the report did not come to him first; it was intercepted by the Common Council at the Mayor's request. Due to that Harvey feels that he does not really know what the original report stated, he was informed that changes were requested before it was provided to the facility. Harvey Davis requested the report many times, but was only provided three out of the twelve pages. The report requested 14 staff members once the facility became a B N R, but Harvey Davis requested a staff of 12 until that time due to not having enough work for a staff of 14 at this time. Harvey was concerned with overlapping due to Wayne Swindon's retirement in August of 2010 and Gary Conklin retiring April 1, 2011. The facility

is short positions now, and the facility petitioned to fill two of the vacancies and the council's reason if denial is due to Harvey Davis not providing them with the Staffing Plan. Paul Lorenzo stated that he feels this situation is the same as last year where the facility requested the okay to hire more staff which was budgeted for but the council wouldn't let them. Harvey Davis stated that he was unsure if it was known that the Wastewater Water Board supported the additional staff both times. Tom McCall stated that Ed Poole and he were at the last Common Council meeting and they were not asked any questions or concerns regarding the staffing plan. Tom stated that he was ready to explain everything to the council like he did at the Budget Meeting. Tom McCall spoke of hiring more laborers and cross train everyone so they can all do everyone else's job. So if someone is on vacation or out sick the job will still be completed. Todd Morris asked Harvey Davis if his idea is to hire laborers. Harvey responded by stating that the idea is to hire laborers and move them up through the ranks as it is listed in the ABC Certification. Todd Morris then asked Harvey what he feels the difference in cost would be between a laborer and an Electrician/Mechanic. Harvey Davis responded by stating that there is a difference between the two positions making it not something that can be overlapped. An Electrician/Mechanic is a specialized job and that is a substantial cost. The only issue that has not been addressed by Harvey Davis yet is the completion of the job description for an Electrician/Mechanic position. The Electrician that is needed by the facility is one that is IBEW Certified, high voltage electrician. At this time the work is being sub-contracted out. No one in the facility is able to work on anything above 110v. Todd Morris then asked if Harvey had an idea of the difference in cost between hiring an electrician full-time and sub-contracting the work out. Harvey stated that it would be difficult to do considering it is based on need. There are times when one is not needed for months then something would happen and one would be needed. Two weeks ago there was a 3" waterline break and doused three 480v motors with water. The facility had Ridley Electric came in and disconnected the motors and Wilkins Construction repaired the waterline due to not having enough staff to complete the project ourselves. The motors were sent to Auburn Armature for repairs; two were baked out at \$951 each. The one motor that needed to be rewound and cured was \$3,500. The cost of repairing the pipes has not been received yet. When the motors were fixed Ridley Electric came back in to re-connect them. The RTD in one of the motors is having trouble, EMA has ordered parts. When that happened Harvey notified the Water Dept. due to when the Effluent Water System goes down the altitude valve opens up and the facility receives make up water from the city. If the Water Dept. is not notified that the facility is using the water

the city thinks they have a water main break and would start looking for something that isn't there. Todd Morris asked when an electrician is needed is the response time quick? Harvey Davis stated that it is; the high voltage company comes out of Cicero and Ridley is as close as Skaneateles and Lafayette. During the daytime Wilkins Construction (for the most part) have workers over at Cortland HS or Cortland State so they are close when needed. Tom McCall stated that when the main transformer blew on 5/18/09 at 1:30 am he had HMT here within the first hour, along with Niagara Mohawk. When the water line broke last week John Lubner from Ridley was working at Cortland HS and he came right over to disconnect the motors for the facility.

Blue Heron Construction finished the installation of the new grating and finish work around the new overhead door. The door was furnished and installed by the Overhead Door Company of Cortland.

Paul Lorenzo asked if the fire department was here at the facility last week (Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> or Friday 21<sup>st</sup>), and Harvey Davis stated that they were. This was due to a call that came in stating there was a fire at the facility. That is the way it looks at night when the Methane Gas is burning off up on the roof. This is normal, it is the waste burner; it is old technology and when it was updated in the 1970's it was not moved so when you drive North on I-81 at night and the gas is burning off it lines up with the window on the second floor of the old Lab building making it look like it is on fire. NOTE: Everything was fine.

Harvey Davis now has constraints on his time. He was informed by Bryan Gazda last year that the Common Council was/are opposed to him (Harvey) building up any accumulated time except for the Wastewater Board meetings and an occasional Common Council meeting. If any accumulated time was built Harvey is to take it within the pay-period if possible or the following pay-period. It also states in Harvey's contract that he is to exhaust all of his vacation time prior to retirement. He currently has 74 vacation days remaining at this point. The reason why Harvey has so many days is due to the facility being understaffed. Between that and the city demanding that Harvey use up his vacation time prior to his retirement, he has limited effectiveness. He is however completing work for the department under these conditions. He greatly appreciated the assistance he has received from the majority of the staff and the Wastewater Board. It is also noted that Wayne Swindon has not received any pay for his vacation at this point.

The board spoke of their purpose and Chairman John Troy stated that he believes the board is the "eyes and ears" of the Common Council in regards to the facility, but Commissioner Paul Lorenzo disagrees with that statement. John Troy noted that he has been on the Wastewater Board for over 20 years and he has been asked to speak at a Common Council meeting only once! It was stated that the charter does not list many responsibilities of the Wastewater Board; approve budgets, and allocate grievances mostly. There have been previous mayors and various trustees over the years that have attended meetings but not for a few years now. Paul Lorenzo stated that the facility is in a crisis due to being understaffed; work orders are not able to be completed in a timely manner and it is only a matter of time before someone gets hurt. John Troy commented that he did attend a Common Council meeting as a concerned citizen. That meeting the Council did hire one out of two positions, even with that addition the facility has been understaffed for over two years now.

It was noted that the board has not been asked by the Council to comment on things regarding the facility in a long time. Harvey Davis feels that it is a waste of resources due to the Council is not interacting with the board. The Common Council has stated that they are looking for Plant Manager Reports even though the board meets every 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month and it is talked about then; also the minutes are posted on-line every month as well.

Harvey Davis then spoke of how the Common Council is going to the public being fiscally prudent regarding hiring staff for the facility, but they are not being fiscally prudent when 'they' (the Council) are taking money "out the back door." Harvey Davis has not had the time to complete the figures but he believes Andy's goal in 2004 was to alleviate the fiscal pain from the loss of Buckbee Mears. Between 2005 and 2010 the city saved a profit margin that was basically belonged by Covanta due to their 10 year contract would have been about \$400,000/year. According to the audit \$2 million were taken out of the Sanitary Sewer fund to off-set other expenses. That is the amount Barton & Loguidice stated it would cost for the Phase 1 Upgrade, making it where the city would have not had to bond for it. Harvey Davis feels the Council was/is beating the facility up and not allocating the resources that the facility is in need of so they can do their job while on the other hand they are trying to convince everyone that they are being fiscally prudent when they are really taking money to cover their own expenses. Within 24 hrs of Harvey Davis finding out that the budget transfer had not been changed from last year he notified the Council. Harvey went to the budget meeting on November 5<sup>th</sup> (he thought that was the date) he did not have a complete budget. He did receive it from Lori

Crompton on December 7<sup>th</sup>. It stated the same 33% transfer for Administration labor and benefits as 2010, and he pointed it out to the Council. Harvey met with Mayor Feiszli and Lori Crompton a year ago January; also at one of the Department Head meetings Harvey Davis handed out the Plattsburg's Audit to everyone including Linda Armstrong and Brian Gazda pointing out where they were directed to develop actual cost. Harvey Davis feels the Council does not want to know what is really going on. DMR's are about complete for 2010. November's was completed and sent out. December's will be out by end of the month.

**Motion** to approve the Plant Manager's Report by Sally Horak. Seconded by Todd Morris. **UNANIMOUS**

**Finance:** Bills: Last Abstract for December 2010 was provided.

**Motion** to approve the Bills by Paul Lorenzo. Seconded by Bill Starr. **UNANIMOUS**

Financial  
Statements:

Paul Lorenzo asked if there is any way the board can see who is delinquent on payments. Harvey Davis stated it is something that can be requested and he will do so. Harvey stated that the cost use to be between \$86 and \$90 thousand. Paul Lorenzo noted that there were 4 bad checks received by the city; he asked if City Hall takes care of them or if it is something we do. Tom McCall stated that no money is received here at the facility so that is something that City Hall takes care of.

**Motion** to approve the Financial Statements by Bill Starr. Seconded by Todd Morris. **UNANIMOUS**

**Sewer**  
**Grievance:**

**PLEASE NOTE PAUL LORENZO EXCUSED HIMSELF FROM THIS DISCUSSION DUE TO KNOWING THE PROPERTY OWNER.**

Mr. Mark Ligas requested a grievance regarding his sewer. A faulty water softener was disconnected from the power source but water was still flowing through it without knowledge of such. It was discussed and by calculations of the past 3 months of cost to Mr. Ligas; it was agreed to award him \$136.00.

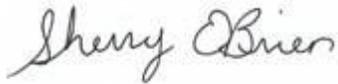
**Motion** to approve a \$136.00 credit by Sally Horak. Seconded by Bill Starr. **UNANIMOUS**

**New  
Business:**

Under the Charter every January a new Chair and Vice Chair must be nominated. Paul Lorenzo nominated John Troy as Chairman; seconded by Sally Horak. Bill Starr was nominated as Vice Chair by Sally Horak. UNANIMOUS

**Motion** to Adjourn at 6:30 pm by Todd Morris. Seconded by Sally Horak.  
**UNANIMOUS**

Respectfully submitted by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherry O'Brien".

Sherry O'Brien  
City of Cortland WWTF