



Onondaga County Legislature

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MELANIE VILARDI
Deputy Clerk

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE – JULY 13, 2021 **JOHN McBRIDE, CHAIRMAN**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. McBride, Dr. Chase, Mr. Kelly

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mrs. Abbott-Kenan, Mrs. Tassone

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. DeSantis, Ms. Primo, Ms. Vilardi, Mr. Frantzis, Ms. Harty, Ms. Velasco

Chairman McBride called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. *A motion was made by Dr. Chase and seconded by Dr. Cody to waive the reading of the minutes of the previous committee. MOTION CARRIED. A motion was made by Dr. Chase and seconded by Dr. Cody to approve the minutes of the previous committee. MOTION CARRIED.*

1. WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION: Mary Beth Primo, Deputy County Executive/Physical Services, Shannon Harty, P.E., Acting Commissioner

a. Confirming the Appointment of Shannon L. Harty, P.E. as the Onondaga County Commissioner of the Department of Water Environment Protection

Ms. Primo:

- Pleasure to present the County Executive's ("CE") appointment of Shannon Harty – serving as acting for past four to five weeks – been with Water Environment Protection for two years – worked closely with consolidation and other occasions – observed professionalism, energy and how smart she is – received BS in chemical engineering and environmental engineering, masters in environment water sources from University of Texas
- Currently taking a Water Innovation Leadership Class at Duke University– which is what she stars in at WEP – need big changes at WEP – wealth of experience in waste management – was at Village of Skaneateles for 4.5 years handled waste, electricity and DPW –when she left Skaneateles they replaced her with a few people – needed more than just one to do the work she performed

Mr. McBride:

- Good person, liked her background in private practice and owned her own business

Dr. Chase:

- What are your plans?

Ms. Harty:

- Next resolution will get into in detail

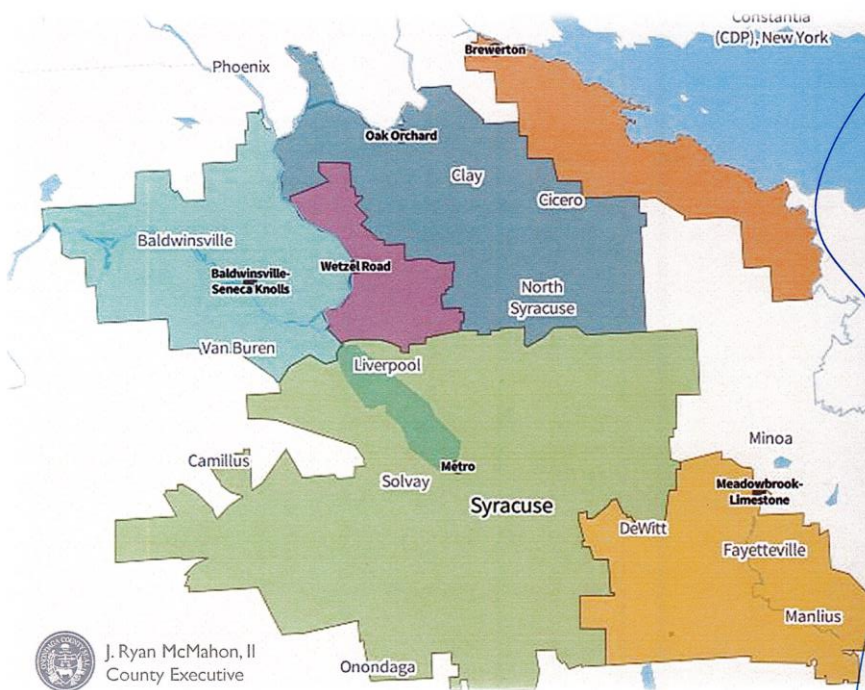
A motion was made by Dr. Chase, seconded by Dr. Kelly to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED

b. Personnel Resolution

Ms. Harty:

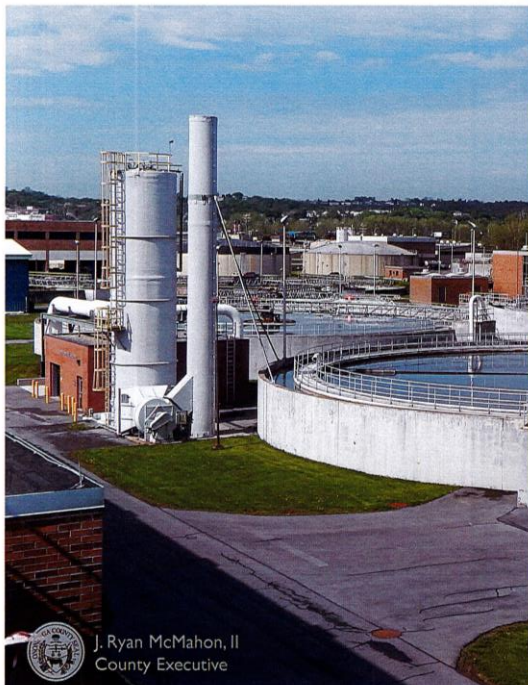
- Resolution is the tail end of the presentation – important to see the setting of who WEP is and what it does – name doesn't fully represent all that WEP does for Onondaga County ("OC")
- County owned utility – own six plants throughout OC – 400 miles of sewers and many pump stations

- Provide sewers to 75% of the OC population – emphasize single largest health benefit – improving water quality – provide economic development
- \$95M budget – employ biologists, electricians, engineers, mechanics – some work at plants, some at collection locations
- Wastewater plants are advanced with technology – remote monitoring – treating 33 billion gallons of water a year - 390 employees



WHAT IS WEP?

- County-owned public sewer utility
- Six wastewater treatment plants and 400+ miles of sewer
- Provides service to 75% of Onondaga County
- Single largest public health benefit and vital for economic development



WHO IS WEP?

- Average Annual budget of \$95 million
- A diverse team of operators, maintenance mechanics, electricians, operators, engineers, biologists, chemists, laborers, clerks, and more.
- Complex conveyance and treatment facilities that utilize advanced technology and computer systems to maintain 24-7 reliability

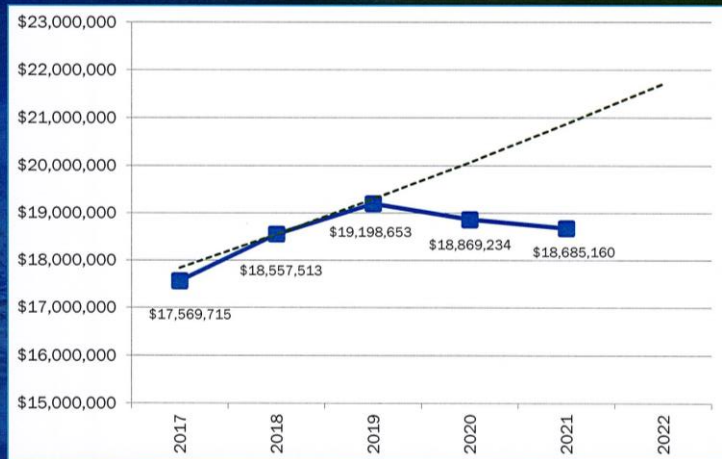
Treating over 33 billion gallons of wastewater a year



- What happened in 2020 and into 2021 – significant hiring trends – reduction in work force – currently employ 325 employees
- Have vacancies at all levels – electrical segment – running at 50% - tough to get the job done

PERSONNEL TREND AND STATUS

- ~390 personnel historically
- Current roster:
 - 325 active employees
 - 20 vacant funded positions
 - 48 vacant unfunded positions



Some areas are operating at or below **50%** of necessary staffing!

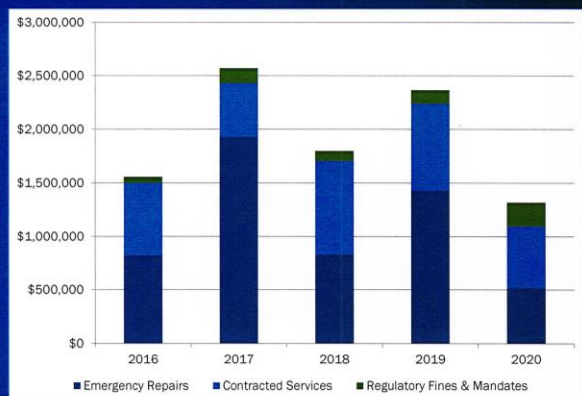


J. Ryan McMahon, II
County Executive



Ms. Harty:

- Answered yes to Dr. Kelly's question, "Is trend line similar prior to 2016?"
- Early retirement – departure of senior staff leave a gap in training and expertise – next level may lack supervisor skills – have management with broken salaries – results in lack of leadership – losing supervisor skills – efficiencies go down – increased overtime – work isn't getting done
- For example sludge truck drivers – haul from outside plants into metro – back up results in asset failures and neighbor complaints
- Hiring contractors and outside engineers at significant increased costs
- I stepped up because we are a critical point – morale is low
- Quite lean in management – left hand side is core functions – water plants, maintenance – red blocks are vacant and each manage 50-60 people



EMPLOYEE MORALE IS AT AN ALL TIME LOW

IMPACT OF CURRENT STAFFING

- LACK OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
- LOSS OF ADHERENCE TO POLICY AND PROCEDURE
- INCREASED OVERTIME
- WORK NOT BEING COMPLETED
- CAPITAL PROJECT DELAYS
- CONTRACTED SERVICES
- ASSET FAILURES
- SPDES PERMIT VIOLATIONS



J. Ryan McMahon, II
County Executive



- Answered Mr. McBride's question – yes, positions are funded – only one isn't funded – been open for 2 years

Ms. Harty:

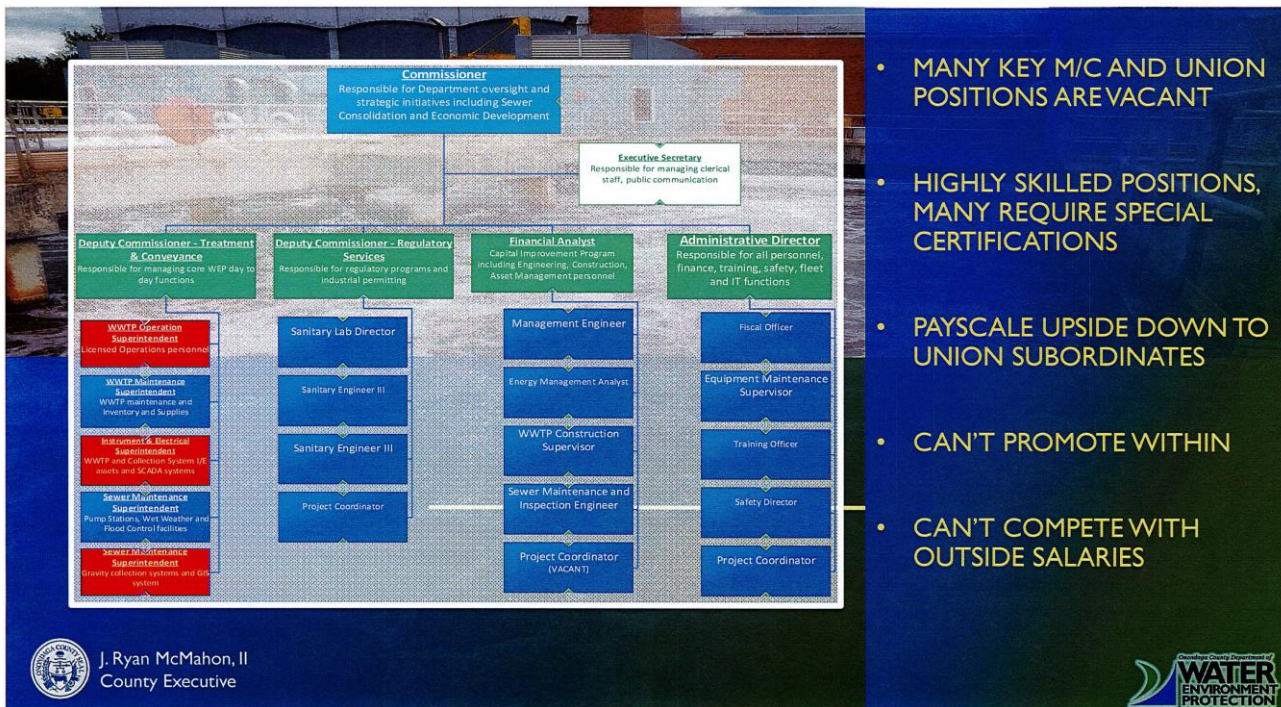
- Head operators can make \$80-100K with overtime in union positions – manager for those positions start at \$71K
- Answered Dr. Kelly's question as to how this is happening – union contract going up and management salaries not going up

Ms. Primo:

- Not attracting people because people are going into sexier jobs with more money – a lot of factors that make a smaller pool of people
- Within WEP we need to buff up training and attract good people

Ms. Harty:

- Inability to promote from within – employees leave WEP for private sector, and engineering firms
- WEP competes with Westrock and National Grid Electricians – WEP employees are looking at going elsewhere – results in high attrition
- Average salary in NYS is: Commissioner \$175-200K, WEP is currently at \$120K, Deputy Commissioner is \$110-170K, Superintendents \$140-170K
- Need to compete with these other markets Results in this resolution –



• MANY KEY M/C AND UNION POSITIONS ARE VACANT

• HIGHLY SKILLED POSITIONS, MANY REQUIRE SPECIAL CERTIFICATIONS

• Payscale upside down to union subordinates

• CAN'T PROMOTE WITHIN

• CAN'T COMPETE WITH OUTSIDE SALARIES

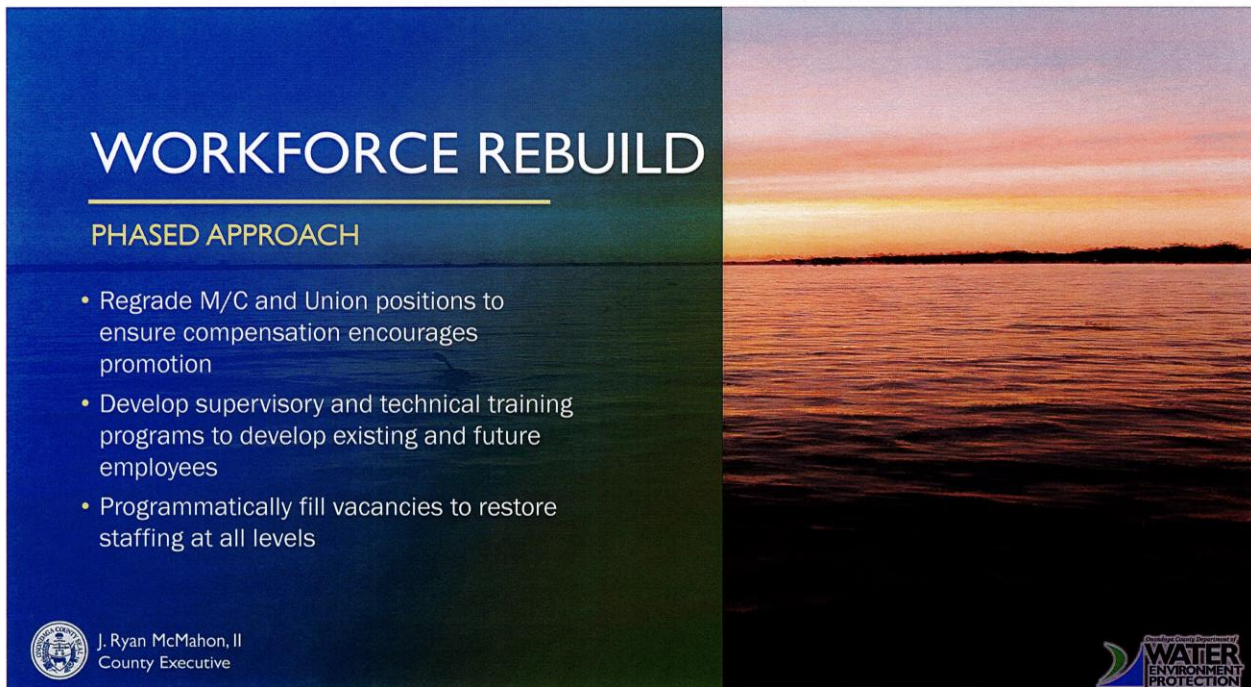
Ms. Primo:

- Recognize we aren't getting to that level but must make changes
- Salary and management needs to change to see light at the end of the tunnel
- CE asked how we can change the culture – salaries is one

Ms. Harty:

- Salaries is one of the pieces – want salaries to match a career path – show both management and laborers opportunities – both mgmt. and laborers
- Confident that if we set up salary – other piece is personal development, training, and supervisor skills - allows them to lead and not boss

- Need a robust workforce development program to include technical skills – need a training program for safety and efficiency



WORKFORCE REBUILD

PHASED APPROACH

- Regrade M/C and Union positions to ensure compensation encourages promotion
- Develop supervisory and technical training programs to develop existing and future employees
- Programmatically fill vacancies to restore staffing at all levels

J. Ryan McMahon, II
County Executive

Seal of DuPage County

Seal of DuPage County Department of WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

- Partnering with High Schools, BOCES and trade schools



PHASE I - 2021

Rebuild critical leadership team, add select new roster positions, and fill vacant funded positions

LEADERSHIP, NEW POSITIONS & TRAINING

- ADVANCE STEP SALARIES TO SECURE CANDIDATES
- CREATE NEW ROSTER POSITIONS AND ABOLISH BASED ON DETAILED WORKLOAD ANALYSIS
- IMMEDIATELY BEGIN SUPERVISORY TRAINING TO RE-ESTABLISH POLICY & PROCEDURE

REMAINING VACANCIES

18 CSEA POSITIONS

- (4) OPERATIONS
- (5) INSTRUMENTATION & ELECTRICAL
- (4) WWTP MAINTENANCE
- (3) SEWER MAINTENANCE
- (2) FLEET & ADMIN

J. Ryan McMahon, II
County Executive

Seal of DuPage County

Seal of DuPage County Department of WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

Mr. McBride:

- What is training program as of today- how does someone out of HS get trained

Ms. Harty:

- Inconsistent and incomplete – shadow journeyman – similar to an apprentice – on the job training –
- Trainer comes in one day a week - teach how to do a house call – run a cleaning truck – includes a CDL – learn the fundamentals

Dr. Kelly:

- With salary increases will there be in-house candidates – Ms. Harty answered yes, have two in house and one former WEP employee

Ms. Primo:

- This didn't happen overnight – not on anyone's shoulders

Dr. Chase:

- What about the 18 CSEAs?

Ms. Harty:

- Need to get superintendents to lead those divisions – need to regrade but looking to advance step to get them started – back to workforce management and supervision – then can get to the 18 CSEA positions – operations, electrical, maintenance treatment plants, maintenance sewer lines
- Build back the management team – question how we do business – add only when we know what we need – adding positions because we have critical missing titles – phases to make manageable – not prepared to bring on 48 positions



Ms. Primo:

- 48 positions – may not ask for them – as this rolls out we need to work with union – so much to do the bottom and middle levels to be able to do the job but also move up—have employees that haven't worked before – we hire but don't give them a fair chance because lack of training to include soft skills – importance of getting to work on time and listening to your supervisor
- Hope to be more efficient and effective – if we get supervisor positions filled they are able to guide
- Huge endeavor – will roll out in phases over time – will be back at budget and probably again next year
- Don't want fat but want muscle

Mr. McBride:

- Explain 3 creates

Ms. Harty:

- Radios and alarms are set up to call back to control center – managed by grade 9 and above – daily testing and calling the board to tell of alarms – not efficient to have higher level answer the phones – they will support sewer maintenance

Dr. Chase:

- What is the grade 9 person going to do?

Ms. Harty:

- There was a person at Oak Orchard – when that call center closed there wasn't a replacement – doesn't require a certified operator to answer the call
- Second position – coordinator split between north and south – currently coordinator for instrumentation for north was abolished – so currently don't have a supervisor
- Construction engineer – very robust CIP program but don't have enough project managers – need employees to carry out asset renewal and design to help replace current infrastructure
- Abolish positions because title doesn't work with career path – work load will be picked up by higher levels
- Research aid is within IT career path – don't see it working anymore
- Told Dr. Chase that she would get back to her with the corresponding pay grade

Mr. McBride:

- Asked to provide list of all vacant positions – funded and unfunded
- Do you anticipate any more abolishes – Ms. Harty answered not at this point – will be re-titling

Ms. Harty:

- Funded for 345 currently have 325
- Salary step advances for management positions – based on candidates we are looking on, responsibilities
- Commissioner – advance step to \$150K doesn't put us to other comparable facilities but gets closer
- Deputy Commissioner – longtime WEP employee that has internal WEP knowledge, experience working with the DEC and leadership skills – to 120
- Engineer Management Analyst incumbent position was intended to analyze usage – expanded to energy performance
- Superintendent – core functions - outside candidate has knowledge of WEP
- Incumbent head operator to promote out of union and into management team
- Sewer maintenance – have one currently as we consolidate we will split into two positions – has less certifications

Dr. Chase:

- Currently looking at people under treatment and conveyance – what about the other three columns – are they being left off or is there a plan?

Ms. Harty:

- No vacancies in other three columns – only one as of now –
- Will there be a problem that you are upgrading some and not the others – possibility of losing people because of this change
- Moral issues – other than money –
- Answer lack of leadership and supervisory – aren't getting direction, no supervisor, lack of communication

Ms. Harty:

- Department recognizes that has to be done in time – have trust that this will continue
- Started with the entire roster – MC or Union – salaries aren't where they need to be – advance step or regrade – takes time to submit paperwork – union positions are being evaluated – started conversations – hoping to get them locked into 2022 budget

Ms. Primo:

- Met with Mr. Williams and Mr. Ryan – Williams worked at WEP for one year – he liked what he was hearing
- Discipline by supervisors – don't have the time or don't know – so bad behaviors are not being stopped

Ms. Harty:

- Inconsistency of supervisors – if you have a supervisor that tries to do what is right when others aren't it becomes very unfair
- The Union is encouraged because they want to get back to the basics

Dr. Chase:

- Consistency with union and management is very important for morale and retention - nothing costs more than losing people

Ms. Harty:

- Onboarding process suffers when supervisors don't have the skill

Mr. McBride:

- Mrs. Abbott-Kenan is in full support of Shannon Harty and regrets not being here
- Note for the record that this resolution was considered

The meeting was adjourned at 10.32 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



MELANIE VILARDI, Deputy Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

DATE: **JULY 14, 2021**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
yvette velasco	LAW
S. Harty	WEP
R. Petak	WEP
MB Primo	WEP