



# Onondaga County Legislature

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Chairman

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## WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE 2018 TENTATIVE BUDGET ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE DEPARTMENTS - SEPTEMBER 25, 2017 DAVID H. KNAPP, CHAIRMAN

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mr. Shepard, Mrs. Ervin, Ms. Williams, Mr. May, Mr. Jordan

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Mr. Kilmartin

**ALSO ATTENDING:** Chairman McMahon, Mrs. Tassone, Ms. Cody, Dr. Chase, Mr. Burtis, Mr. Plochocki;  
also see attached list

Chair Knapp called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

**DEPARTMENT OF WATER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, pg. 5-20:** Tom Rhoads, Commissioner;  
Michael Lannon, Deputy Commissioner; Andy Ohstrom, Administrative Director; Bonnie Karasinski,  
Fiscal Officer; Nick Capozza, Sewer Maintenance & Inspection Engineer

Mr. Rhoads introduced his team and presented the following:

 <p><b>2018 ANNUAL BUDGET</b> Ways &amp; Means Committee Report</p> <p>September 25, 2017</p> <p><b>WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION</b></p> <p>JOANNE M. MAHONEY, COUNTY EXECUTIVE TOM RHODS, P.E., COMMISSIONER</p>   	<p>Table of Contents</p> <p>Section 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2017 Year in Review<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Three Key Points</li><li>- Key Accomplishments</li><li>- Completed Projects</li><li>- Construction Starts</li><li>- Performance Indicators</li></ul></li></ul> <p>Section 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2018 Budget Overview<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Strategic Priorities</li><li>- WEP Revenues</li><li>- Unit Charge</li><li>- Operating Accounts</li></ul></li></ul> <p>Section 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Capital Improvement Plan &amp; 960 Cash Projects</li></ul> <p>Section 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2018 Flood Control Budget</li></ul> <p>3</p> 
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- Will briefly run through high level presentation and answer questions at the end

## ONONDAGA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

### MISSION

To protect and improve the water environment of Onondaga County in a cost-effective manner ensuring the health and sustainability of our community and economy.



## SECTION I: 2017 – YEAR IN REVIEW



## Three Main Points of Today's Presentation

### 1. Pollution Prevention begins with **Save The Rain**.

- Save the Rain continues to emphasize the importance of using green sustainable options to reduce stormwater runoff and pollution to Onondaga Lake.
- Green solutions provide additional benefits by enhancing the community landscape and improving property values.



Leavenworth Park



West Onondaga Street



West Fayette Street

YTD: 185 green projects, diverting 120 million gallons annually.



KEY POINTS FOR THIS PRESENTATION

- Underscore WEP is fundamental to our economy
- Save the Rain prevents pollution at the source, infrastructure projects improved neighborhoods, streets, parking lots, libraries, schools, leads to cleaner environment and resurges private sector investment

## Pollution Prevention – Block Litter Campaign

Connect the Drops teamed with OCRRA to launch its **"Block Litter"** campaign in June 2017, reinforcing the importance of blocking litter from entering our waterways – one **"block"** at a time.



Community residents taking the pledge to **"Block Litter"**.



KEY POINTS FOR THIS PRESENTATION

## Pollution Prevention begins with **Save the Rain**

Pollution Prevention begins at the source – keeping litter out of our waterways.

- Through the use of a skimmer boat



- The skimmer boat has been in operation since 2002.
- In 2016, the boat removed 23.57 tons of debris from the Inner Harbor.



## BLOCK LITTER



Through volunteers



KEY POINTS FOR THIS PRESENTATION

- Nationally 90% of street litter ends up in waterbodies

## Managing I&I – Critical to our Mission

### 2. Successful management of I&I is critical to our mission.

- Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) occurs when clean stormwater and groundwater enter the sanitary sewer system through leaky, cracked, broken pipes and manholes.
  - Inflow comes from stormwater.
  - Infiltration comes from groundwater.
- Both increase operational costs and both are costly to ratepayers.



Inflow potential from heavy rainstorms



Infiltration – Carey Drive Village of Manlius



KEY POINTS FOR THIS PRESENTATION

## Managing I&I – Critical to our Mission

- Successful management of I&I includes working with community partners to reach common goals:

- I-81 Viaduct Project** – ensuring highway drainage systems are designed with components that will reduce the impacts of stormwater runoff.



- Offering green solutions to help protect our environment and preserve water quality.



KEY POINTS FOR THIS PRESENTATION

- I&I significantly adds to treatment costs, overtime and capital projects
- Ask for legislative support of direct engagement with community partners, critical, do not own all sewers maintained – capital repairs by municipalities; key message – keep I-81 stormwater out of the sanitary system

### Managing I&I – Critical to our Mission

As sewer infrastructure ages – I&I increases.

#### Unmanaged I&I results in:

- Sewer overflows – impacts to public health and safety
- Sewer backups – damage to property
- Costly emergency repairs



Pipe deterioration caused by infiltration under Milton Ave – sink hole



Potential fines and penalties

- Extraneous Flow Eats Capacity for Growth!!

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KEY POINTS FOR THIS PRESENTATION

- Treatment plants would have virtually no constraints without I & I – extraneous flow from satellite sewers owned by municipalities is robbing us of the capacity needed for growth

### Infrastructure – the Framework of our Economy

#### 3. Infrastructure is the Framework of our Economy.

- Wastewater infrastructure is a key driver of economic growth. It is evidenced through the willingness of businesses to invest in our community.

- At the Inner Harbor
- At DestiNY
- At Township 5 in Camillus



CONNECT  
the DROPS

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KEY POINTS FOR THIS PRESENTATION

- No economy without the sanitary system; sewer district service, and properly funding it, critical for every commercial and industrial project in the county

### Infrastructure – the Framework of our Economy

- Investment in infrastructure keeps the economy growing and the community prospering – through the expansion of business:



- \$50 million in Syracuse



- \$34 million in Clay

- Sewer capacity is essential for growth and enables business expansion.
- Business expansion leads to job creation and personal income growth.



- 10,000 sq. ft. addition DeWitt Town Center



- \$13 million in DeWitt

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KEY POINTS FOR THIS PRESENTATION

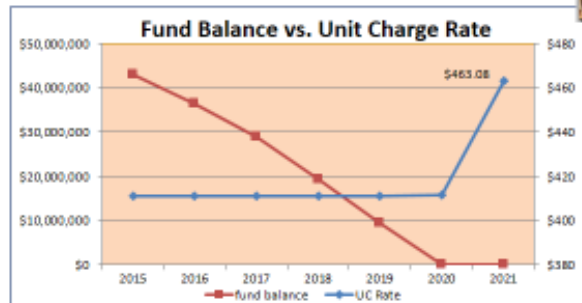


## Infrastructure – the Framework of our Economy

- To maintain affordability, we need to establish a long term plan to support the costs of aging infrastructure and ensure capacity for growth.

- gradual increases reduce impact to ratepayers.
- acceptable use of fund balance protects credit rating.

without an increase in rate:  
Reserves depleted by 2020 - Rate spike in 2021



**We cannot afford to keep the rate flat!!**

- A 2.5% increase in rate is only \$10.28 per year – less than \$1.00 per month!!



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KEY POINTS FOR THIS PRESENTATION

- Burning through reserves, setting ourselves up for a rate spike, increase less than \$1 per month, a critical public service

### Key 2017 Accomplishments Toward WEP's Strategic Goals

#### 1. Outreach and Communication – Open, effective communications with staff, stakeholders, and the public.

- Launched Block Litter campaign – June 2017.
- Distributed free rain barrels – organized rain barrel workshops throughout the community.
- Clean Water Fair 9/16/17 at Metro.



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2017 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Key 2017 Accomplishments Toward WEP's Strategic Goals

#### 2. Staff Development – Promote and develop the best team possible.

- Provided licensing courses for WEP's 35 NYSDEC Certified Licensed Operators.
- Implemented "Leadership Academy" to train and assist new managers.
- Held on-site Complicity software training for 21 employees.



WEP TEAMWORK in ACTION

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2017 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Over 60 different job titles, many highly specific skillsets required only for sanitary sewers, training critical to service and safety, developing team ongoing effort

## Key 2017 Accomplishments Toward WEP's Strategic Goals

## 3. Organizational Excellence – Do it safe, do it right, do it once.

- NACWA Peak Performance Awards for Baldwinsville-Seneca Knolls and Oak Orchard Treatment Plants.
- Added 7,661 manhole locations into GIS system.
- Published 2015 AMP Report: 53 fish species identified since 2000.
- 15 abundant species (population > 1,000).
- 2017 NYS ELAP Certification for Env. Laboratory.

## Do it safe!



Ensuring safety in confined spaces.

## Use of proper equipment

Doing it safe is doing it right!

## Do it right!



2015 NACWA awards for OO &amp; B'ville.



learning from others so you can

## Do it once!



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## 2017 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Key 2017 Accomplishments Toward WEP's Strategic Goals

## 4. Legacy Planning and Infrastructure Management – Share the information, document the knowledge, plan for the future.

- Participated in 2017 Honeywell Summer Science Week.
- Implemented "20 Assets a Day" asset management initiative.
- Completed State Street Green Corridor project – with WQIP grant assistance.
- Completed Oak Orchard Infrastructure Rehabilitation project.



Save the Rain



State Street Green Corridor



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## 2017 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Continue to improve safety record, reduces workers compensation costs; also committed to great service, many house calls
- Sanitary assets well over \$2 billion dollars, asset management tool used to apply scarce resources to our most critical assets, maintaining system now critical for next generation

## Key 2017 Accomplishments Toward WEP's Strategic Goals

## 5. Sustainability and Environmental Initiatives – Reduce and improve for environmental, social, and economic balance.

- The remarkable recovery of Onondaga Lake is nationally recognized in several technical and general publications.
- It is recognized by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies with performance awards earned by our treatment plants annually.
- Most importantly, it is recognized by the community where we live and work, that is able to celebrate and enjoy our remarkable resource.



Celebrating our remarkable resource!



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## 2017 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Oak Orchard Wastewater Treatment Plant

\$12 million Asset Renewal Project  
– completed on time and under budget.



- Energy efficient HVAC systems installed.
- Upgraded sludge loading station.
- Construction of additional primary tanks.
- Pump replacement & pipe restoration.

CONNECT  
dROPS

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## 2017 COMPLETED PROJECTS

## Metro 002 Bypass Improvements

\$25 million project to maintain and meet new SPDES compliance.  
Achieved schedule milestone on time and under budget!

- Upgraded disinfection system
- Constructed new tankage
- Improvements made to flow monitoring system
- Improvements made to chlorination feed system
- Increases made to bypass tank volume
- Meets new stringent coliform limits
- Meets new residual chlorine limits

CONNECT  
dROPS

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## 2017 COMPLETED PROJECTS

## 2017 Construction Projects

## 2017 Construction Starts:

## Oneida Lake Pump Stations Rehabilitation

Project budget: \$8,120,000

- 7 pump stations – all circa 1975
  - Harbor Village – Long Point
  - Maple Bay – Muskrat Bay
  - Polar Beach – South Bay
  - Shepard Point
- Replacement of all mechanical, electrical, and many structural components.



## Westside Pump Station Rehabilitation

Project budget: \$18,120,000

- Replacement of mechanical, structural components.
- Installation of odor control system.
- Increasing capacity:
  - eliminate overflows
  - provide for future economic growth.



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## 2017 Construction Projects



- Metro highly complex project, railroad constraints immediately adjacent to plant, contaminated soils from old gas plant, difficult geotechnical conditions, complex process conditions to treat 0 to 120 million gallons of bypass flow during wet weather events; project on time and under budget
- Flow Control hard at work on capital projects: closing out Ley Creek Pump Station project, largest pump station in county system, Oneida Lake Pump Stations county owned in the Town of Cicero, Westside Pump Station serves parts of Camillus, Onondaga, Geddes, Van Buren and the Villages of Solvay and Camillus – all critical projects, rehabilitating infrastructure that is part of a vast aging system

## Performance Indicators



## Service

Wastewater Conveyed & Treated (2016)	31.7 billion gallons
Permitted Industries	55
Industrial User Inspections	55
Samples Collected	15,955
Analyses Performed	72,268
Number of Plants >99% Compliance	6 (ALL)



PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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## Performance Indicators

## Service

Miles of Sewer Maintained	2,087
Pump Stations Maintained	154
Pump Station Alarm Responses	1,451
Sewer Maintenance House Calls	3,270
Plumbing Inspections	6,631
Maintenance Work Orders	44,894
Fleet Work Orders	3,664



PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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- Measure all the work, treat 55,000 gallons per minute 24/7, 365
- Sewer maintenance distance from Syracuse to Nevada, 600 miles owned by the County, the rest is municipal sewers we maintain, also maintain 100 pump stations for towns, villages and city; sewer backs up into basement about 10 times per day, absolutely critical to have staff and equipment necessary to keep house call numbers from going in the wrong direction – don't want to be putting out fires, want to be ahead of this and preventing backups, already short staffed, need your support to avoid erosion in service

## Performance Indicators



The National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) awarded 2015 Peak Performance Awards to Baldwinsville-Seneca Knolls (Gold) and Oak Orchard (Silver) Wastewater Treatment Plants.

Congratulations team!

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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## SECTION 2: 2018 BUDGET OVERVIEW

## VISION

To be a respected leader in wastewater treatment, stormwater management, and the protection of our environment using state-of-the-art, innovative technologies and sound scientific principles as our guide.



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## Strategic Priorities For 2018

### Department Goals

#### Outreach & Communication

*Open, effective communications with staff, stakeholders, and the public.*

- Emphasize the importance of litter reduction with Connect the Drops/Block Litter messaging.
- Continue to provide education at community events – local street festivals, Earth Day, Clean Water Fair.
- Educate the public about critical need for investment in infrastructure.

#### Staff Development

*Promote and develop the best team possible.*

- Encourage skill development at all levels by providing necessary resources and access to training materials.
- Develop a workforce that reflects diversity and embraces inclusion.

#### Organizational Excellence

*Do it safe, do it right, do it once.*

- Communicate daily: safety for self, safety for coworkers, safety for public.
- Commit to Asset Management Program for predictive and preventative maintenance.
- Seek to maintain >99% SPDES compliance at all WWTPs.

#### Legacy Planning and Infrastructure Management

*Share the information, document the knowledge, plan for the future.*



- Offer leadership and expertise in stormwater management for I-81 viaduct replacement project.
- Ensure Save the Rain is part of whichever alternative is chosen.
- Advance use of GIS mapping of County infrastructure for use in planning and development of capital projects.
- Expand use of asset management program to focus on capital spending needs.

#### Sustainability and Environmental Initiatives

*Reduce and improve for environmental, social, and economic balance.*

- Continue implementation of Save the Rain green initiatives to remove extraneous flows.
- Implement system-wide ESCO projects to reduce energy use.
- Apply for grants and low-cost financing of infrastructure improvements.



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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES For 2018

## 2018 WEP Revenues

- WEP is self-supporting and funded entirely through fees and charges to users. Repeat – no sales tax or property tax support.
- WEP's main source of revenue is derived from the sanitary unit charge.
- The Unit Charge is billed to all users in "units"; requesting rate of \$421.39/unit (2.5% increase).
- Towns & villages are billed based upon services provided.
- Requesting increase in plumbing-related fees (permits, inspections, plan reviews, et al.)

Revenue	2018 Projected	% budget
Sanitary Unit Charge	\$78, 593,935	85.5%
Industrial WW Surcharge	\$ 3,750,000	4.0%
Charges for Services (towns & villages)	\$ 1,760,000	1.9%
Interdepartment	\$ 1,643,405	1.7%
Fund Balance	\$ 6,390,401	6.9%



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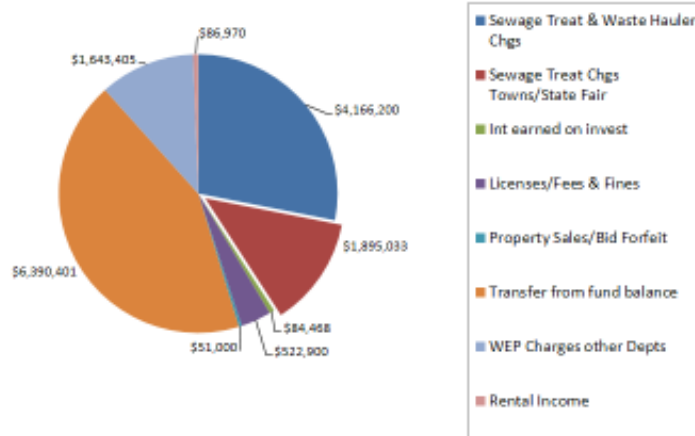
2018 WEP REVENUES

- No taxes support the Sanitary District, unit charge billed to all users in the system – fee for service

### 2018 WEP Revenues

- WEP is self-supporting and funded entirely through fees and charges to users. Repeat – no sales tax or property tax support.

2018 WEP Revenues  
(excluding unit charge)



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2018 WEP REVENUES

- No small thing – budget proposed to use over \$6 million dollars in fund balance; slight adjustment to the plumbing fees, even with proposed increase, fees will be well below comparable fees in Buffalo, Albany and Rochester

### 2018 Sanitary Unit Charge

The Annual Sanitary Unit Charge is a better value for ratepayers compared with every other utility.



- A small increase of \$10.28 still provides the best value for a non-discretionary service!

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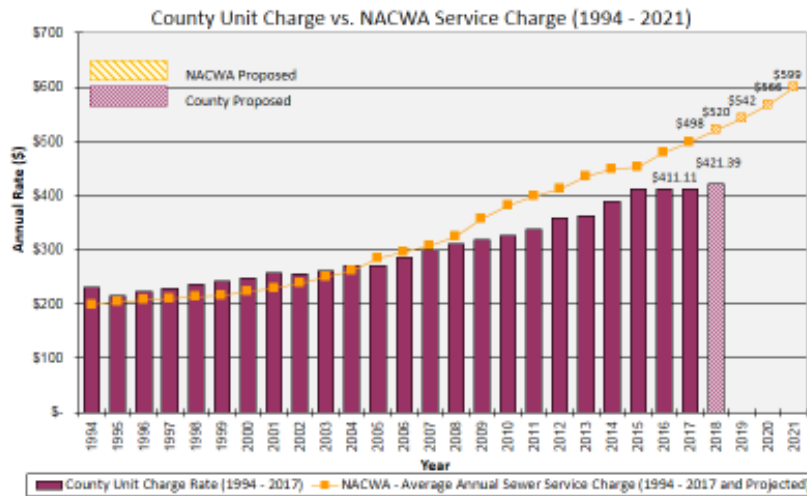
2018 SANITARY UNIT CHARGE

- Critical slide, compare utility value each year, shows what people are paying for utilities in the Syracuse metropolitan area



## 2018 Sanitary Unit Charge

- The County rate has been consistently lower than National Average since 2005.



NACWA - the National Association of Clean Water Agencies  
<http://www.nacwa.org/>



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2018 SANITARY UNIT CHARGE

- Still about \$100 below the national index for other sewer utilities even with proposed increase; Oswego residents paying over \$800 per year for sewer service

## Unit Charge: A Question of Fairness

### Franklin Square



#### Franklin Square Apartments

- 460 N. Franklin Street
- 136 apts.
- 2017 Unit Charge:  
102 units - \$42,354.48
- Charge per apt:  
\$311.43

#### Franklin Square Lofts

- 101 Solar Street
- 52 apts.
- 2017 Unit Charge:  
17.12 units - \$7,108.91
- Charge per apt:  
\$136.71

#### Franklin Square Lofts

- 515 Plum Street
- 40 apts.
- 2017 Unit Charge:  
1 unit - \$415.24
- Charge per apt:  
\$10.38

Why is there a difference?? Resolution 46-17 adopted to restore equity.

- Let's stick with our April 2017 Resolution!

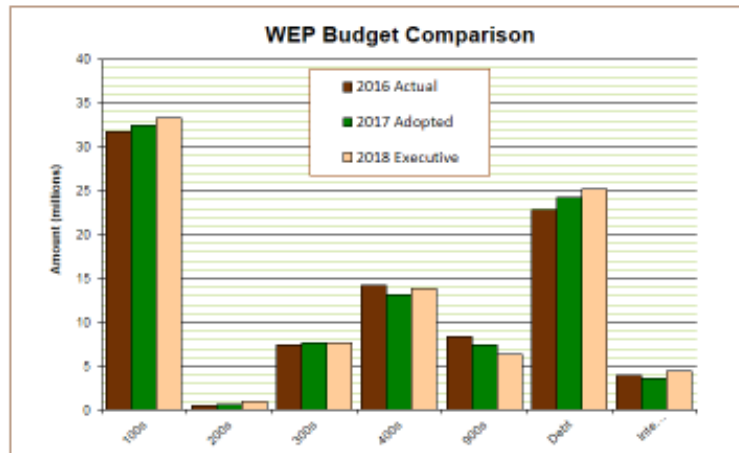


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UNIT CHARGE: A QUESTION OF FAIRNESS

- Ask for support to maintain the April 2017 resolution, slide compares some of the things going on in the City assessment system, only asking for fairness, since 1978 the sewer unit charge has been  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a unit per apartment
- City asked us for clarification, we simply restated that all apartments, including those in so called mixed use properties, should be standardized at  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a unit; slide shows same area, same property owners, 3 different assessments

## 2018 Expenditures – Budget Comparison



**Major Account Descriptions:** 101 Salaries, 102 Overtime, 103 Seasonal/Other, 120 Benefits, 205 Auto, 215 Furn/Equip, 300 Fuel & Chem/Supplies, 408 Prof Service, 410 All Other/Biosolids, 413 Utilities/Rent, 960 Provisions for Cap Proj, 972 Transfer to Grant, Debt Service, Interdepartmental Charges

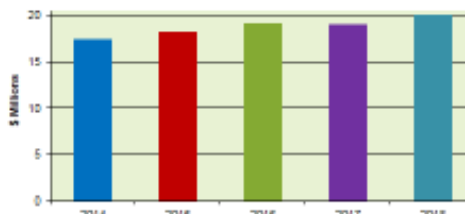


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2018 EXPENDITURES – BUDGET COMPARISON

- Level and composed budget

## 2018 Operating Accounts

101 Salaries - \$20,024,291**New Positions for 2018**

WEP is requesting 6 new funded positions ; unfunding 6 positions: (WWTP Operator, SM Crew Ldr, I/E Mtc Wkr (2), Mtc Helper, Public Info Specialist).

- **Net 0** increase in funded positions.

**Flow Control Division: (3)**

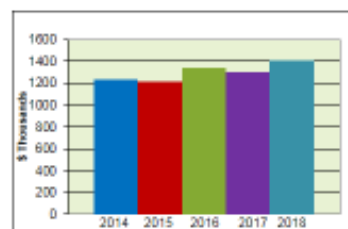
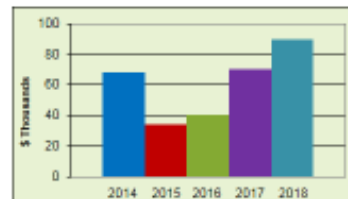
Positions will be additions to 2nd shift; reducing need for overtime, maximizing use of specialized vehicles, reducing potential sewer backups.

- Sewer Maintenance Worker I (2)
- Sewer Maintenance Worker II

**I/E Division (3)**

Continued automation of wastewater treatment requires personnel with advanced computer skills.

- Computer Repair Specialist
- LAN Technical Support Specialist
- I/E Engineer

102 Overtime - \$1,408,000103 Seasonal - \$90,000

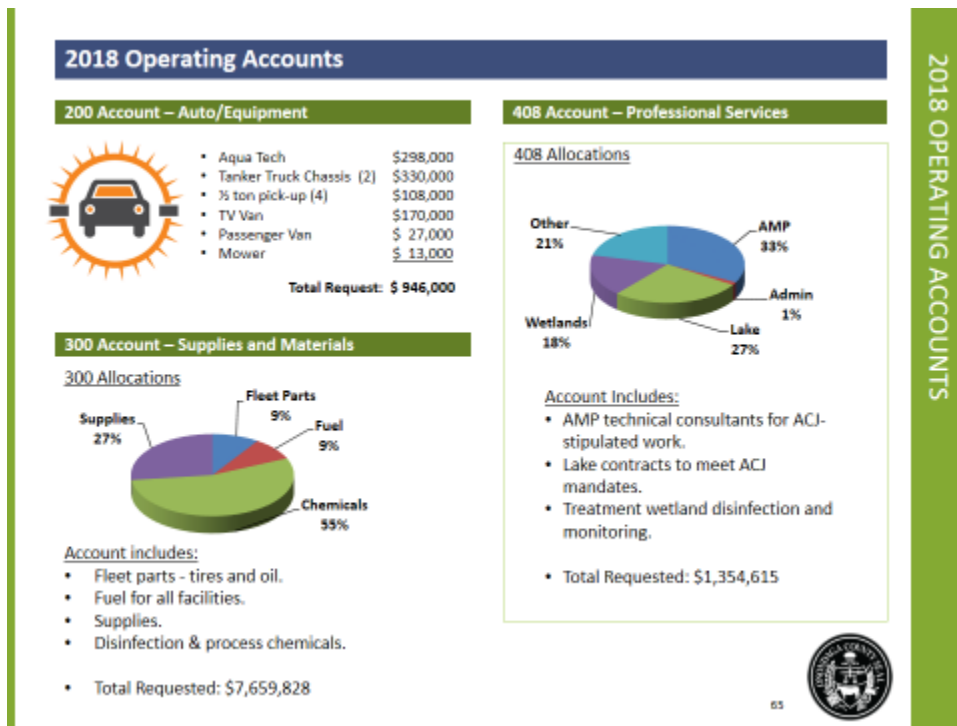
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2018 OPERATING ACCOUNTS

Mr. Ohstrom:

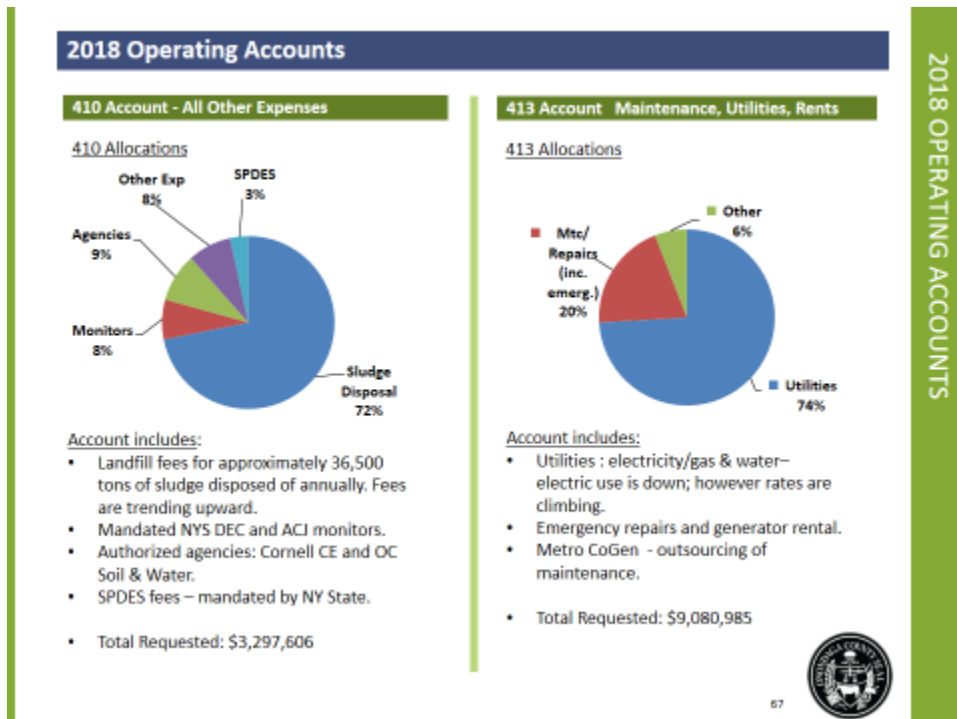
- 101: increase largely a reflection of union pay rates coming into effect 2018, also funding and unfunding positions, great opportunity to add personnel to impact Flow Control operations, many house calls come in the evening, 2<sup>nd</sup> shift would be able to respond and make better use of specialized equipment, work into evening hours for annual maintenance, routine maintenance and house calls; additional integrated electrical (I/E) personnel to be shared to benefit IT and I/E, lines blurred, group would have skill sets in both
- 102: small incremental increase, largely reflection of retirements, transition changes for personnel where additional coverage is needed and anticipated weather impacts that continue to increase

- 103: had successful opportunities as folks transition, line used to cover critical skills on a short term bases, also had very successful summer internship program, targeted students with technical background, able to bring several on as full time employees



Mr. Rhoads:

- 200: 3<sup>rd</sup> year asking for Aqua Tech, necessary specialized equipment to keep sewers moving – highest priority vehicle, tanker trucks chassis only – needed to haul sludge to Metro and for emergency repairs
- 300: increase less than 4/10's of 1%; reminder handle the fleet for all county vehicles except DOT
- 408: mandated work required by SPDES or ACJ, almost all related to the lake

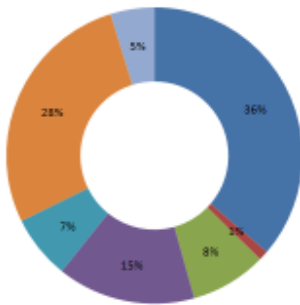


- 410: 7% increase primarily driven by landfill fees
- 413: 3% increase driven almost exclusively by increases in electricity and natural gas – use down, rates climbing



**2018 WEP Expenses and Debt Service**

2018 Expenses - \$91,973,326



100 Wages & Benefits	\$ 33,361,610
200 Auto/Equipment	\$ 982,431
300 Supplies/Materials	\$ 7,659,828
400 Trav/Svcs./Mtc./Other	\$ 13,875,656
900 Capital Projects	\$ 6,405,000
Debt	\$ 25,274,144
Interdepart	\$ 4,414,657

**Debt Service**

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*
\$15,951,562	\$21,705,512	\$22,873,660	\$24,303,091	\$25,274,144

\*Includes \$1,816,259 RBD contribution

SECTION 3: 2018 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN &amp; 960 CASH PROJECTS



- Debt service up 4% - Oak Orchard, Ley Creek Pump Station and Metro 002 projects all EFC financed projects, financed at half the AAA interest rate; note \$25.2 million remains in debt service after the use of \$1.8 million dollars in reserves for bonded debt

**2018 Capital Projects****2018 Cash Capital (960-Provisions for Capital Projects)**

Project	Budget
Arc Flash Compliance	\$100,000
Chemical Tank Replacements	\$350,000
Concrete Repairs	\$150,000
Confined Space	\$50,000
Davis Road Pump Station/Force Main Improvements	\$625,000
Fire Alarm and Suppression	\$130,000
Force Main Air Relief and Cathodic Protection	\$150,000
Force Main & Metro 002 Outfall Improvements	\$250,000
Hoist/Crane Rehabilitation/Replacement	\$75,000
Manhole Repair and Upgrades	\$250,000
MCC and Substation Repair	\$70,000
Metro WWTP Site Improvements	\$100,000
Metro WWTP Improvements	\$800,000
Miscellaneous Engineering Services	\$250,000
Miscellaneous Sewer Rehabilitation	\$450,000
Pump Station Header Rehabilitation	\$65,000
Replacement Pumps & Controls	\$635,000
Safety Projects	\$200,000
SCADA (supervisor control and data acquisition)	\$350,000
Site and IT Security	\$85,000
Trunk Sewers and Forcemain Repairs	\$1,000,000
VFD Project	\$100,000
<b>total requested</b>	<b>\$6,235,000</b>

**2018 Bonded Capital Improvement Program**

Project	Total
➤ Camillus Force Main Replacement, Phase II	\$1,500,000
➤ Ley Creek Force Main Upgrade (design)	\$2,300,000
➤ Oak Orchard Disinfection & Lagoon Cleaning	\$11,540,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$15,340,000</b>

- Ley Creek and Camillus Force Main projects will rehabilitate/replace aging assets which had significant recent failures.
- Oak Orchard Disinfection project is a regulatory requirement.
- All bonded projects are included in 2018-2023 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).



2018 CAPITAL PROJECTS

- 3% increase in cash capital, bonded projects down significantly from the \$37.8 million requested in 2017; cash capital funds are used for significant replacements and repairs throughout the system, also use 960 funds to begin evaluations and designs for larger projects

## SECTION 4: 2018 FLOOD CONTROL BUDGET (Drainage Districts)

## 2018 Drainage Districts – Flood Control

- Special real property taxing districts
- Manage drainage of stormwater in areas prone to flooding

Responsible for maintenance of over 40 miles of streams.



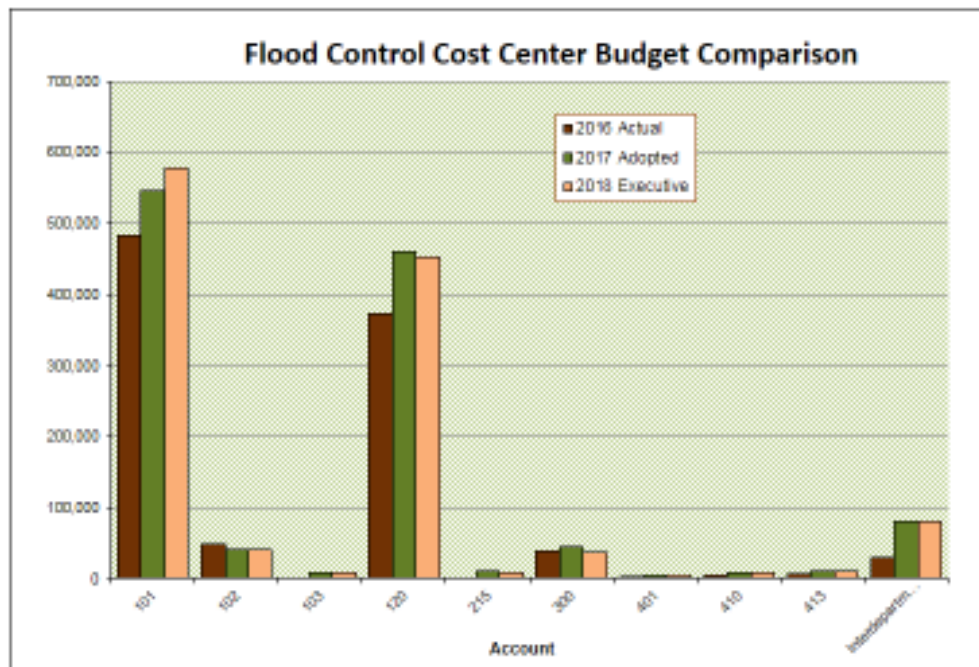
- Management of Four Drainage Districts:

- Harbor Brook
- Bear Trap/Ley Creek
- Meadowbrook
- Bloody Brook

Save the Rain

- Flood Districts mitigate the impacts of flooding due to legacy poor planning and development practices in the Syracuse area and urban ring communities

## 2018 Flood Control Expenses



- The tax levy for Bear Trap/Ley Creek, Bloody Brook, Harbor Brook, and Meadowbrook drainage districts will remain the same.



- No notable increase, all attributable to contractual salaries

### Three Main Points of Today's Presentation

1. **Save The Rain** - With the addition of Connect the Drops and Block Litter, Save the Rain is increasing awareness to the benefits and sustainability of green infrastructure.
2. **Inflow and infiltration** is an increasing problem and limits the community's capacity for growth.
3. **Economic Growth:** Infrastructure drives our economy. It is the reason businesses come here and stay here. Investing today will impact our economy long into the future!



Let's all enjoy our remarkable resource!

Save the Rain  
CONNECT  
the DROPS



THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION AND SUPPORT

### Questions?

#### The Sanitary Unit Charge?

- worth every Penny!



Nightmare scenario:  
Not funding infrastructure critical for our economic growth!

Thank you for your support.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION AND SUPPORT

- Save the Rain highly successful in the use of green and innovative practices, prevents pollution and improves our neighborhoods; I&I increases operating costs, all capital projects and is robbing our capacity for future growth; our Sanitary District is the critical foundation of our economy
- Invest in the sanitary system and avoid the nightmare of not having capacity for economic growth

Chairman McMahon:

- Are we assuming any revenue from the April 2017 resolution in this budget?

Mr. Rhoads:

- Yes – identified roughly 1,600 units associated with the apartment portion and approximately 600 units associated with the flow portion

Chairman McMahon said that the Syracuse mayor sent a love letter to many property owners saying we are imposing this new tax. I understand you may be trying to be politically correct in how this all went down but I would appreciate it if you were not and just tell us what happened. We passed the resolution before us, and were told there wouldn't be any large spikes and that the City of Syracuse was on board. Shortly thereafter a letter from the Syracuse CEO goes out indicating that they aren't on board. Let's go through the process and exactly what happened to these three properties (**pg. 9, slide30**). I'm not so concerned about these three properties, I am more concerned about some of the smaller mixed use properties that \$2,000 or \$3,000 dollars' worth of new fees probably makes a difference to them.

Mr. Rhoads responded that in October of 2016 the officials from the City of Syracuse called a meeting to discuss, with the County, their concerns about how the sewer unit charges were applied by their assessment bureau for mixed use properties. The cities protocol for classifying these properties created an unfair situation in which similar types of properties, primarily mixed use, as shown on the slide, were actually charged differently. As a result, in April of 2017 the County Legislature adopted a resolution with a rate schedule to clarify and standardize the way in which sewer charges were applied. The change is meant to ensure that all apartment units, regardless of the type of property, are billed  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a unit per apartment as stipulated in the legislation adopted in 1978. Apartment only properties were not impacted. Only mixed and commercial residential properties may be effected, depending on the manner in which they were previously assessed by the local assessor. The assessors were creative, as you can see, in the number of units and the way they were assessed. The letter from the City was very disturbing. They sent letters to vacant lot properties and told the owner that they had 4 units and those units were now going to be assessed at 3 sewer district charges. Fundamentally a lot of properties were never property assessed. That created even more turmoil as rather than answer questions about their assessment issues, they just reflected that this was a thing the County did. They never bothered to check their records so we had property after property calling us and saying the building is now an office building with no apartments above, or the building is a restaurant now with only meeting and party rooms above, no apartments. They sent this letter out inflaming the public and blaming it all on the County. Then they further confused it with a change of the baseline for minimum use, trying to tell people that their rate was going up because they were using more. Frankly, it is a flat rate charge, every house and condominium pays one unit, and every apartment pays  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a unit. All we did was clarify exactly what we have had on the books since 1978.



In answer to Chairman McMahon, Mr. Rhoads reiterated the information on the slide in reference to the charges.

Chairman McMahon

- If assessment came to use in October of 2016, why wouldn't they correct their assessment

Mr. Rhoads:

- They don't let us see behind the curtain, only tell us how many units we get and don't tell us until October 1<sup>st</sup>; it is my information that the City installed a new assessment system, as part of that system they were able to start to define just how ragged their assessment records were, I would call it a "dog's breakfast" from the properties that were recorded in that letter

Chairman McMahon:

- We are dependent on the City's assessment records

Mr. Rhoads:

- Yes

Chairman McMahon:

- There is no equity when the City assessment records are so outdated that people are being unfairly charged; we are trying to set equity on the upside and here there are 3 glaring examples of inequity

Chairman McMahon said, "Rate payers here aren't paying what they should but at the same time, if the City doesn't have their act together and clearly, I am going to say for the record right now, I don't believe they do, then there are others who could be negatively impacted and, if we don't have the ability to fix it ourselves, I don't know how we can keep his resolution intact".

Mr. Rhoads responded that he understands the concern but there is also the fairness for all the people who are actually paying one unit for their house, they are actually supporting the 40 unit apartment that is only paying \$10 per apartment instead of \$311.00. It is unfair to the people who are being properly assessed, if the City doesn't go through their assessment records and actually bill people properly. The only thing we are doing is giving the City a platform to do it fairly. I hope you don't amend the April 2017 resolution. If you choose to, I am concerned that you don't have a way to give them better clarification or improvement. We are only trying to improve and make this fair because we have over 180,000 units in the system. Frankly, those not paying their fair share have been getting a free ride and we can't afford to pay for free riders. All we are asking is that everyone pays their fair share.

Chairman McMahon said I get it but you are trying to correct some wrongs and, at the same time, the process is creating additional wrongs. If we don't have the ability to correct those, I don't know how we can do it; speaking as one legislator. The City's system is clearly wrong, if they don't correct their system it is like picking winners and losers. We know we are fixing some things but we also know that other properties will be negatively impacted.

Mr. Rhoads responded that he would beg to differ that we are creating this unfairness. The fairness is found in the assessment system. Chairman McMahon said that this resolution tried to bring clarify to a process that we don't control. This resolution is premature, in my opinion, until the City says they are fixing the hiccups. Mr. Rhoads responded that the City doesn't actually has skin in the game. They came to us asking how to make it fair, we gave them the same information we've had since 1978. Chairman McMahon agreed, adding that they showed some schizophrenic behavior later on in 2017, if what you are saying is accurate and I believe it is, so that is the issue.

Ms. Primo said the administration's position is that the resolution from April 2017 clarifies the law set thirty years ago. The County can't arbitrarily and capriciously impose these fees. There is a law on the books, it says every apartment should be paying  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a unit. It is the City who is ineffectively assessing these properties and the way it is going to be fixed is by people grieving their assessment and the City realizing they have to fix this. For the County not to do its job because the City isn't doing its job correctly - two wrongs don't make a right. Chairman McMahon asked the administration's plan for letting every property owner understand what has happened to date and their right for appeal to get a situation fixed. Ms. Primo responded that she does not have a plan right now.

Chairman McMahon said that when we voted on this it wasn't an issue. Shortly after the Mayor sent out letters contrary to what her administration was doing with our team. If our position is the law is the law, I get it. That is a very simple position to take in these un-simple times but what is the plan. What is the administration going to do? Ms. Primo responded that obviously the number one plan is communication. The helpful thing to all of us is that there will be a change in administration in January and we know that some people in City Hall, who will probably still be there after January 1, recognize this is a problem. They are the people that called it to our attention. Perhaps working with them and the new administration we can get the correct word out and help people understand that the letter they received was inaccurate. I don't think ignoring what the law is and hoping the City does the right thing, without being pushed or pressured, is ever going to work.

Chairman McMahon said that this is where the administration comes in. Ms. Primo responded saying we will have to do something. Chairman McMahon said that if the administration needs a more proactive approach if they want to stay the course on this. Ms. Primo responded, which would be status quo prior to April. Chairman McMahon said no. If you want us to stay the course you should be reaching out to property owners and saying there may be a discrepancy, call assessment and tell them there are no apartments in your building, if there are no apartments. Ms. Primo responded that we can do that, but it is difficult for us to do a good job when the City isn't giving us the information we need. As Mr. Rhoads said, they do everything behind a curtain.

Chairman McMahon asked if we could foil the information. Ms. Tarolli responded that it depends on what the records say. Mr. Primo said it would be nice to work with the new administration to send a joint message that clarifies this whole thing. Chairman McMahon said that would be great.

Mr. Jordan said that he agrees those over assessed could grieve their assessment but the problem is that those under assessed aren't going to grieve their assessments and the cost to everyone else will end up going up. Is there a way the County could take over the assessment in terms of the sewer use unit charge, where WEP would assess instead of relying on the local city or assessor's office? They have no skin in the game so they will probably want to assess it as low as possible because it makes their town, village or the City look more attractive to property owners. Mr. Rhoads responded that the County Executive is in favor of shared services, but it doesn't make sense for WEP just to do shared services in the City. Other states have countywide assessment bureaus and I'm sure the County Executive would be comfortable moving in that direction. As a larger issue, WEP doesn't have the resources and property record tools for assessment, would have to start from scratch.

Mr. Jordan said he was talking about taking over just the sewer use unit charge, which is an entirely different process than the property value assessment. Mr. Rhoads responded that we don't have the fundamental information. A lot of these properties are conversions and fundamentally the City needs to do their job. We are only asking for the same fairness every other place has been doing since 1978. Chairman McMahon said that the problem is your asking the City to do their job and right now they are not doing it.

Chairman McMahon said the Law department could determine if there is anything saying that the Sewer District can't enact its own sewer unit charge based on the property. That is essentially what we are being asked to do because we don't have complete information. I don't know why we wouldn't look at WEP having the ability to do that. Mr. Rhoads responded that we offered to consolidate the City and the County. Chairman McMahon said that we can't control that. We can rescind the resolution or move forward and if we move forward we can try to look at ways to avoid this. The hope would be that we have a great partner going forward but that is out of our control.

**Chairman McMahon asked how many properties were impacted by the 2017 resolution.** Mr. Rhoads said that the city suggested they had roughly 1,800 units; will have to come back with the number of properties that entails. We anticipate that not all of the 1,800 units will make it to the 2018 roll because of these assessment changes, i.e. vacant lot is not going to pay for 4 apartments.

Chairman McMahon questioned why we wouldn't internally try to figure out an equitable solution; maybe it's not your department. It is troublesome to know that people are going to be hurt. Mr. Rhoads said that he doesn't disagree that this is troublesome. Reflect on the fact that we as a county continue to support this fairness and if we rescind that resolution would that create more opportunity for inequity and unfairness. Chairman McMahon

said it would create status quo. Mr. Rhoads responded, which is unfair. Chairman McMahon said the proposal is also unfair, we need something better.

Ms. Primo said that she agrees with Mr. Rhoads, if we don't do anything it will perpetuate this, i.e. heard from developer, if they convert a building into apartments and add one small room with vending machines it gets them assessed as a commercial entity, not a building with apartments. Developers understand this so this is a real problem that is going to grow. Chairman McMahon said that one way around that is for WEP or the County to identify the properties. They got the information on the slide from somewhere, they know there are 52 apartments at 101 Solar Street, go and enact the sewer use charge of  $\frac{3}{4}$  unit for 52 properties, but for the restaurant on North Salina Street, where the City of Syracuse is telling these people they are going to have 4 new sewer unit charges because of what might have been in 1960, figure out the same thing.

Mr. Rhoads questioned how we would know that the apartments did not exist when the City says the restaurant has 4 apartments. Chairman McMahon said that is why we should probably put a foil in for the properties impacted. It is a nice project for an admin intern and we have a bunch of them in the budget, why don't you get it done. You are asking us to stick to a very difficult resolution in which we did not have all the facts. I understand it wasn't on you but if we knew the Mayor of the City of Syracuse was going to send out a nasty letter saying she wanted nothing to do with this, I bet you would not have found nine votes and would probably have wanted more conversations. We need a better plan.

Mr. May:

- Talked about inequities, completely unfair, situation has existed for a long time; at this point does anyone have a sense for the financial impact, is there an instinct that we don't need a \$10 rate increase because there are dollars out there

Mr. Rhoads:

- Roughly 1,600 units in the proposed budget relate to these "additional units" x \$428 is the revenue impact

Chairman McMahon:

- That is already baked into the budget

Mr. May:

- Some are increments, already being paid on at some level

Mr. Rhoads:

- Yes

Mr. May:

- There is only upside if this were fixed

Mr. Rhoads:

- Yes, from a revenue and fairness statement

Mr. May:

- Forgone conclusion this is unfair, every aspect of it

Mr. Rhoads:

- Not proposed as a way to....

Mr. May:

- Interjected – not saying that, understand what you are saying completely; there is clearly incremental revenue that is not being realized from a pure operational standpoint

Mr. Rhoads:

- We are paying for those free riders

Chairman McMahon:

- How many total units in the system

Mr. Rhoads:

- This budget forecast 186,511, will get the information October 1<sup>st</sup> from the towns, villages, city and also based upon industry flows

Chairman McMahon:

- Roughly looking for \$1.86 million dollars in new revenue

Mr. Rhoads:

- Additional \$10 on the total unit charge, yes



Chairman McMahon:

- Talk about the industrial flow increases

Mr. Rhoads:

- Charge a plumbing fee for inspection services, based on commercial or institutional, the number of fixtures is the fee, changes are nominal, i.e. 20 fixture dwelling goes from \$175 dollar permit fee to \$225, more than 20 fixtures goes from \$200 to \$225, more than 100 commercial goes from \$800 to \$1,000
- Current permit structure for 20,000 square foot commercial with 20 plumbing fixtures and approximately \$20,000 in plumbing value would be \$230, proposed fee \$280, would cost \$625 in Buffalo, \$420 in Albany, \$282 in Utica and \$665 in Rochester; do plumbing wall to wall, have to get our fees covered

Chairman McMahon:

- Home owner doing repairs, needs a permit, what happens in that scenario

Mr. Rhoads:

- Depends on the nature of your remodel, remodeling 1-20 fixtures would be \$150 for the permit inspection; inspections performed as plumbing may not be connected correctly, found high-end properties where drain water has been allowed to go back into portable systems in households, makes sure plumbing is safe

Chairman McMahon:

- What's going on with industrial, certain revenue is going up

Mr. Rhoads:

- Up size in revenue related to high-strength industrial businesses doing well; not proposing any fee change, volume continues to grow, 55 industries with permits in the Sanitary District

Chairman McMahon:

- Great, thank you

Mr. Jordan:

- How did we arrive upon  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a unit for apartments

Mr. Rhoads:

- Believe the thought in 1978 was that apartments would use slightly less than a home

Mr. Jordan:

- An apartment with 10 people pays  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a unit and a house with 3 people would pay a full unit

Mr. Rhoads:

- Flat rate system, water use continues to decrease, per OCWA the amount used per average household now below 80,000, our unit is based upon 137,000 gallons, the rate structure was designed to be industry friendly, some mixed use properties are taking advantage of what is supposed to be an institutional and industrial rate structure

Mr. Jordan:

- Picked this number out of the air, no factual basis

Mr. Rhoads:

- Not inappropriate to suggest most single family homes are larger and have more fixtures than an apartment

Mr. Jordan:

- Sewer use is not a function of the number of fixtures, it is how many times the toilet is used

Mr. Rhoads:

- Correct, don't have a system that allows for water billing to be our basis for every structure – don't have individual water bills for apartments or people on wells; flat rate structure designed for fairness throughout the entire district, metered for commercial and industrial; not unusual for districts that cover urban, suburban and rural areas, sewer metering incredibly expensive and prone to fail, need much maintenance – no real way to measure individual household sewer use in any true equitable fashion; doing a good job of fairness by defining the rate

Mr. Jordan:

- Want new positions to create a 2<sup>nd</sup> shift, already done last year

Mr. Ohstrom:

- One only position was approved in last year's budget, don't have a 2<sup>nd</sup> shift at this point

Mr. Jordan:

- All ACJ debt service on line or more to come

Mr. Rhoads:

- Additional debt service is coming on line, all ACJ budgets are in our quarterly reports - doing additional work in Harbor Brook, Clinton and Midland, working within the budgets and have done a number of grant projects; budgets capped at authorized amount but will never borrow anything close to what is authorized because of the grants received, continue to have Save the Rain and green projects that eventually get into the debt service

Mr. Jordan:

- What is the deadline for the ACJ, end of 2018?

Mr. Rhoads:

- ACJ is a 2018 commitment to have 95% capture of stormwater, currently at 97%, also required to meet the ambient water quality standards of the state, number of water quality conditions both related to CSO and other contributing factors that are difficult to observe; continue to work with the state and federal government on the end of the ACJ, discussion already begun

Mr. Jordan:

- The deadline is the end of 2018 for the ACJ?

Mr. Rhoads:

- Required to accomplish milestones, whether or not that ends the ACJ is currently a significant negotiation item

Mr. Jordan:

- Presentation referenced charges for services to towns and villages – what services are those (**pg. 7, slide 26**)

Mr. Rhoads:

- Flow Control Division maintains over 100 town and village pump stations and about 1,500 miles of sewers owned by towns, villages and some work in the City – sewer cleaning, clean manholes, remove grease, blockages or roots in the sewer lines, respond to maintenance calls and all alarms on fee for service/hourly basis, bill towns and villages for truck and crew

Mr. Jordan:

- Rooster shows 45 vacant funded positions, planning to fill them all

Mr. Ohstrom:

- Yes, all necessary positions and in the process of being hired, have over 70 titles, vacancies usually occur on the higher end, i.e. early retirement, Grade 11 opens up, Grade 9 takes that position, all the way down to Grade 1; internal process for approvals, Civil Service process continues, recruitment and solution process takes time, all slotted to be filled

Mr. May:

- Thanks for everything so far, always interesting; in round numbers there is \$28 million in fund balance and \$7 million appropriated for 2017, both numbers are huge, are you going to use the \$7 million this year, how do things look for the finish line

Mr. Rhoads:

- Utility costs, 101, and 300 may be slightly under, hard to use crystal ball, probably land under budget on 2017 expenditures

Mr. May:

- Which ultimately impacts the fund balance

Mr. Rhoads:

- Goes back into fund balance

Chairman Knapp:

- Any suburban infrastructure projects as part of this budget

Mr. Rhoads:

- No

Chairman Knapp:

- At this point, can you say what will change as far as operations, if the ACJ winds down

Mr. Rhoads:

- Premature at this point, no change in 2018; January 2017 started kickoff meeting with the state, EPA and ASLF toward the process of “post -ACJ”

Chairman Knapp:

- Rental income (**pg. 5-20, Line A590051**) down significantly

Mr. Rhoads:

- Softness due to Clinton parking lot performing slightly better than 2016 but not at the 2017 expected rate; 3 cell tower rentals also part of this line and performing well

Chairman Knapp:

- What price are you using for fuel?

Ms. Venditti:

- \$2.17 used across the board

Chairman Knapp:

- Were you able to fill the training positions added earlier in the year, and if so, how is it going?

Mr. Ohstrom:

- Referring to mid-year changes, those positions are filled, reflect good opportunity to align people into more specialties as our business changes, successful thus far

Chairman Knapp:

- Regarding the Computer Repair Tech (**pg. 5-24**), do you work with the County IT department or have your own

Mr. Ohstrom:

- Both, have small internal IT department that services our division and does a lot of work with downtown in conjunction with that; service PC's, handle all communications as far as routers and landlines, setup new system for cellular phones at the pump station, saved a lot of money

Chairman Knapp:

- How will WEP ensure the right infrastructure is being used with the I-81 project to fix some of these I&I issues

Mr. Rhoads:

- Mr. Capozza is responsible for the conveyance side, directly involved whenever there is a major DOT project that impacts our buried utilities, coordinate with the state, i.e. installed significant amount of underground storage as part of Teal and Beech work for I-690, 10% decrease
- Goal is to get them to physically remove all stormwater from the I-81 project; federally funded, stormwater part of every highway project, need to ensure we are all together as a team to keep that stormwater out of our sanitary system

Chairman Knapp:

- Thank you very much, appreciate your time

The meeting adjourned at 10:53 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



KATHERINE M. FRENCH, Deputy Clerk  
Onondaga County Legislature



## ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **2018 BUDGET REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION COMMITTEE DEPARTMENTS**

DATE: **SEPTEMBER 25, 2017**

NAME

DEPARTMENT/AGENCY

PLEASE PRINT	
Nick Capozza	WEP
Bonnie Karasusko	WEP
Linda Marnell	Comptroller's office
Talley Popka	Personnel
Andrew Kauer	DMB
Tom Law	Thos. E. Law - private
Michael Lannon	WEP
Andrew Ohlstrom	WEP
TONY RAOSIS	WEP
MARK MATT	
Jim Matur	Comptroller

