

**MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
ENGLEWOOD WATER DISTRICT BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
201 SELMA AVENUE, ENGLEWOOD, FL 34223  
MARCH 13, 2025 @ 8:30 A.M.**

**Board of Supervisors:**

Lani Gaver, Chair  
Taylor Meals, Vice-Chair  
Robert C. Stern, Jr.  
Sydney B. Crampton  
Tony Babington

**Staff:**

Keith R. Ledford, Jr., P.E., Interim Administrator  
Robert H. Berntsson, District Counsel  
Dewey Futch, Water Operations Manager  
David Larson, Wastewater Operations Manager  
Lisa Hawkins, Finance Director  
Ashley Aguiar, Executive Assistant

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & ROLL CALL

2. **ANNOUNCEMENTS** – Additions or Deletions – None

3. **PUBLIC INPUT** –

**3a.** Delores Sharp, residing at 23 Quails Run Blvd Unit #3, Englewood, FL 34223, inquired about the product being sprayed in the vicinity and whether it would affect rainwater flowing into nearby water sources. She provided photographs of the area and noted that the drains were clogged, asking if EWD would be cleaning this area out before the hurricane season. In response, Mr. Ledford confirmed that EWD personnel were in the area spraying for weeds to prevent overgrowth. He clarified that the pipes and drainage in question are maintained by Sarasota County and recommended that Ms. Sharp contact them directly for further assistance.

**3b.** Jane Hunter, residing at 180 Stratford Road, Englewood, Florida 34223, inquired about updates regarding the sewage system, particularly in light of the extended disruptions experienced during Hurricane Ian and Hurricane Milton. She sought detailed information on the measures the EWD has implemented or plans to in order to prevent similar issues from occurring in the future.

4. **PRESENTATIONS** - None

5. **CONSENT SECTION** - Chair Gaver called for a motion to approve. Mr. Stern moved, “to approve the consent agenda presented,” seconded by Mr. Meals.

**5a.** Minutes of the Regular Meeting dated February 13, 2025

**Recommended Action:** Approve the meeting minutes.

**5b.** Big W Law Invoice dated March 3, 2025.

**Recommended Action:** Approve the attorney's invoice in the amount of \$2,700.00.

**5c.** Oertel, Fernandez, Bryant & Atkinson Invoice dated February 28, 2025

**Recommended Action:** Approve the attorney's invoice in the amount of \$1,450.00.

**5d.** Employee Handbook

**Recommended Action:** Approve the Employee Handbook

**UNANIMOUS**

**CS 25-03-13 A-D**

6. **DISCUSSION**

**6a. Administrator's Position** – Chair Gaver led the discussion, highlighting the necessity of promptly filling the Administrator position. Ms. Crampton proposed initiating a formal search for a qualified candidate; however, Chair Gaver expressed a preference for Mr. Ledford to assume the role, stating his confidence in Mr. Ledford's ability to effectuate the required changes at EWD and facilitate a seamless transition. While Ms. Crampton was uncertain of Mr. Ledford's interest in the position, she concurred that, should he express interest, he would be a highly qualified candidate. Mr. Stern directly asked Mr. Ledford regarding his interest in the position, to which Mr. Ledford confirmed his interest in the role. Mr. Stern further suggested the potential hiring of a Technical Engineer should Mr. Ledford be appointed as Administrator. Mr. Babington endorsed Mr. Ledford's qualifications, affirming his suitability for the position. Mr. Meals articulated his thorough consideration of the matter, emphasizing the need for substantial change in various operational aspects due to the district's growth and shifting demands. He further noted the inherent challenges and time requirements associated with the external hiring process. Mr. Meals stressed the critical importance of expeditiously filling the position to avoid the potential loss of timely opportunities, recognizing the urgency facing EWD. In light of these constraints and Mr. Ledford's qualifications, Mr. Meals asserted that Mr. Ledford would be an appropriate and capable candidate to fulfill the role. The board members, in consensus, acknowledged Mr. Ledford's qualifications to assume the Administrator position and expressed understanding that, given the scope of the role, he may require external consultants for specialized areas outside his expertise. Ms. Crampton emphasized the need for the establishment of clear objectives and goals going forward, as well as the identification of support mechanisms for the Administrator. The board unanimously agreed to support Mr. Ledford, should he choose to accept the position, recognizing his understanding of EWD's needs, his problem-solving abilities, and his respect for EWD's policies and staff. Mr. Ledford requested the opportunity to meet individually with each board member prior to making a final decision, in order to ensure alignment with EWD's strategic objectives. He expressed his appreciation for the board's confidence in his abilities. It was agreed that this matter would be revisited at the April meeting.

7. **ACTION ITEMS**

**7a. Purchase of Replacement Collections Department Truck** – Emergency Procurement Memorandum - Mr. Ledford led the discussion. The 2022 Ford F-250, a vital asset to the EWD Collections Department, was totaled, significantly impacting the department's ability to perform essential field operations. While EWD had previously identified an alternative vehicle, it sold quickly, emphasizing the urgency of securing a replacement. The 2024 Chevrolet 3500HD was selected for its immediate availability and enhanced towing capacity. In light of this, an emergency memorandum was issued to ensure the vehicle would be secured before it was no longer available. The insurance payout of \$45,975 for the totaled vehicle will be returned to the general fund, and a budget amendment is requested to allocate this amount to cover the cost of the replacement. The remaining funds required for the purchase will be reallocated within the department's existing budget, ensuring no impact on other financial commitments or the overall budget.

Chair Gaver called for a motion to ratify the purchase, Mr. Stern moved, **“to approve,”** seconded by Mr. Babington.

**UNANIMOUS**

**25-03-13 A**

*Full motion read:* To ratify the purchase of a replacement truck for the Collections Department, as outlined in the Emergency Procurement Memorandum signed by Chair Gaver on March 5, 2025.

**8. INTERIM ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT – Keith R. Ledford, Jr., P.E.**

- Mr. Ledford reported that he and Human Resources Manager, Heather Bagshaw, have been collaborating on the development of an EWD Declaration Policy. They have reviewed local policies and structured this policy based on the guidelines established by Charlotte County, specifically clarifying how pay will be managed during this period.
- Since the February meeting, a total of three employees have been hired: a Project Manager for the Technical Support Group, one staff member for the WRF department, and one staff member for the Collections department. Mr. Ledford sought clarification regarding the approval to hire two additional employees for the Collections department. After brief discussion, all Board members agreed that hiring the two additional employees was necessary.
- EWD's lobbyist informed us of a new bill that would allow special districts to apply directly for grants, like FEMA, instead of going through Charlotte or Sarasota County. If passed, EWD could apply independently. The bill also proposes changing grant language so special districts could receive direct payments for approved expenses, rather than having to spend upfront and get reimbursed. This bill is to be determined and will remain on EWD's radar.

Chair Gaver called for a motion to authorize hiring 2 additional Collections employees, Mr. Stern moved, **“to make the motion,”** seconded by Ms. Crampton.

**UNANIMOUS**

**25-03-13 B**

*Full motion read: “To hire two additional Collections Department employees.”*

**8a. WATER OPERATIONS MANAGER – Dewey Futch**

**Production**

- Total send out for February 2025 was 87.58 mg / for 2024 it was 90.03 mg
- The avg. send out was 3.12 mgd, and 2024 avg. send out was 3.10 mgd
- The High send out was 3.43 mgd, and 2024 High send out was 3.94 mgd
- Rain fall for 2025 was 1.87” / Rain fall for 2024 was 2.44”
- Operators were doing maintenance and normal operations, nothing major to report.

**Distribution**

- Distribution had 2 incidents to report;
  1. 2/2/25, the distribution team installed an 8-inch gate valve at the entrance to Shores of Stillwater. This work impacted one customer on Medical Blvd, the YMCA. A two-day bacteriological test was conducted and rescinded on 2/4/25.
  2. 2/12/25, a contractor working at Shores of Stillwater accidentally damaged the 16-inch water main. Repairs were made using a repair clamp, and no boil water notice was issued.
- Additional Projects
  - 2/11/25, a 2" gate valve was replaced on Massachusetts Ave.
  - 2/13/25, a hydrant was replaced on Illinois Ave.
  - 2/19/25, a hydrant was replaced on Keyway Rd.
- A total of 141 new meter sets were installed, including 141 single-family meters and 141 ERCs. Of these, 113 were in Coco Bay, with the remaining 28 located in Boca Royale and Beach Walk.
- 53 radio heads were replaced

- Mr. Ledford provided an update on the RO switchgear project, which was embarked upon to resolve issues with the proper transfer to the generator. While several items have been addressed in stages, there are still additional items to resolve, and the final FPL shutdown is scheduled for the end of the month. The total cost for this last scope of work is \$95,769.00, which is within the Administrator's task order authority of \$100,000. However, since the overall project cost exceeds this amount, Mr. Ledford is requesting board approval to proceed.

Chair Gaver called for a motion to approve this amount to complete this project, Mr. Stern moved, “to make the motion,” seconded by Ms. Crampton.

**UNANIMOUS**

**25-03-13 C**

*Full motion read: “To approve this amount to complete this project”*

**8b. WASTEWATER OPERATIONS MANAGER – David Larson**

**WRF:**

- February 2025 MADF 1.640 MGD
- February 2024 1.977 MGD
- Peak Flow 1.946 MG
- After 1.5” the plant flows went up by 250,000 to 300,000 gallons a day for the next two days.
- US Submergent has begun the process of cleaning out the grease from the surge basin on Plant #3
- Operations and maintenance have been running as usual.

**Collections:**

- Collections staff rehabbed half of L/S # 205
- Staff replaced the standpipe in L/S # 208
- Staff installed a new vacuum pit as part of a service extension.
- Staff have been jetting out sand and capping off service lines for homes destroyed by the hurricanes.
- Staff continue to repair broken clean outs and vents.

**8c. TECHNICAL SUPPORT MANAGER – Keith R. Ledford Jr., P.E.**

- **V-1 Station Rehab** – PCL is working on removing the temporary system and completing the final restoration of the site. Walk-throughs were conducted on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025, to develop the initial punch list for the project. Once the site work is completed, an additional walk through will be required.
- **Esplanade at Wellen Park** – Staff has approved the plans for the offsite work and has signed off on the FDEP applications. The plans for phases 1 & 2 are ready to be approved. A Developer’s Agreement has been completed and awaiting execution.
- **Charlotte County – CR775 Buck and Oyster Creek Bridge Improvements** – The project is currently out to bid with the bid opening scheduled for April 9, 2025.

**8d. FINANCE DIRECTOR – Lisa Hawkins**

**Financial Statements**

- February operating revenues were \$9.51m, which is approximately \$615k more than last February. The operating expenses of \$7.39m were about \$405k less than last year, which leaves an operating surplus of about \$2.12m.

**Investment Statements**

- February concluded with \$18.24m invested in RBC and \$2.95m at Centennial Bank, for a total of Cash and Investments of \$21.18m.

**FY24 Audit**

- The OPEB (Other Postemployment Benefits Program) report from the actuary, necessary for the audit, is still pending. The vendor, Foster & Foster, requires a few more weeks to complete the report, so the audit presentation will be scheduled for the April board meeting.

9. **ATTORNEY'S REPORT** – Robert H. Berntsson addressed Ms. Crampton's inquiry about whether he was in communication with the other law firm regarding other matters. The attorney confirmed that he is, but there is no additional information to report at this time.

10. **OLD BUSINESS**- None

11. **NEW BUSINESS** - None

**Recess – 15 minutes**

12. **PUBLIC WORKSHOP**

**12a. Winchester Ranch Development** – Attorney Bill Merrill of Icard Merrill Law Firm, alongside John Luczynski, Senior Vice President of Land Development at Wellen Park, led a lengthy and detailed discussion on EWD's provision of services for the Winchester Ranch Development, focusing specifically on the funding, timeline, and water source requirements for the project. The primary focus was to assess EWD's ability to meet the tentatively agreed-upon timeline for service delivery, with contingency plans in place to collaborate on a solution in the event of delays. Wellen Park confirmed that the City of North Port is able to provide the necessary services and utilities for the development, while EWD may also serve part of the area, depending on feasibility. Wellen Park has long anticipated that EWD would have a new plant operational to meet the required timeline. However, given the rapidly approaching deadline, it appears increasingly unlikely that a new plant will be completed in time to meet Wellen Park's deadlines. Wellen Park has expressed its desire to reach a mutually beneficial resolution, offering EWD an opportunity to participate where feasible, ensuring a solution is advantageous to all parties. While Wellen Park retains the option to proceed exclusively with the City of North Port, Wellen Park has indicated a preference to include EWD. Wellen Park emphasized the urgency of adhering to deadlines and has formally requested a definitive timeline from EWD for providing services for the Winchester Ranch Development. Wellen Park remains committed to advancing the project but requires clear, timely responses from EWD. EWD is currently evaluating its options, including potential annexation or the construction of a new plant, while considering both financial and deadline constraints. All parties acknowledge the delays caused by unforeseen events such as Hurricane Ian. However, EWD is also contemplating the potential need for compensation from Wellen Park should the annexation of EWD's service area to the City of North Port continue. Attorneys for both parties engaged in discussions regarding annexation and agreed that further research and clarification of relevant Florida Statutes are necessary to determine the appropriate procedural steps. The parties remain committed to finding a mutually agreeable resolution, though EWD must ensure that any decision is in the best interests of both EWD and its customers. Ongoing discussions will focus on the annexation statutes and reaching a resolution that satisfies all involved parties.

**13. PUBLIC COMMENT – ANY TOPIC**

**13a.** Jane Hunter, residing at 180 Stratford Road, Englewood, Florida 34223, requested information through the website or local newspapers regarding how the Winchester Ranch Development would impact on the issues already experienced by her and other residents, particularly concerning sewer outages following hurricanes.

**14. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS** - Ms. Crampton emphasized the need for proactive planning to maintain the state's best water quality and strengthen the district at this critical turning point. Mr. Meals expressed a strong interest in achieving a mutually beneficial outcome for all parties involved and extended his gratitude to the members of Wellen Park for their time. Mr. Babington thanked those who addressed his questions about Winchester Park and also sought a win-win solution. Chair Gaver thanked everyone for their time, expressing hope for a positive resolution, but stressed the need to define what constitutes a "win" for EWD, address legal issues regarding annexation, and assess the value of the service area, establishing a precedent for future resolutions.

**15. ADJOURNED @ 11:45am**

  
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**Taylor Meals - Vice Chair**  
APPROVED/aa