

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
ENGLEWOOD WATER DISTRICT BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WESTCOAST CHURCH 240 PINE STREET, ENGLEWOOD, FL 34223
August 14, 2025, following the conclusion of the Public Rate Hearing

Board of Supervisors:

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

Staff:

Keith R. Ledford, Jr., P.E., 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
3. **PUBLIC INPUT** – None
4. **PRESENTATIONS** – Mr. Ledford stated that, due to the change in location and uncertainty about when the Public Hearing would conclude, it was best to postpone the presentations originally scheduled for today until the September meeting.
5. **CONSENT SECTION** – Chair Gaver called for a motion to approve. Mr. Meals moved, “to approve the consent agenda presented,” seconded by Ms. Crampton.
 - 5a. Minutes of the Regular Meeting dated July 11, 2025
Recommended Action: Approve the meeting minutes.
 - 5b. Big W Law Invoice dated August 1, 2025.
Recommended Action: Approve the attorney’s invoice in the amount of \$3,150.00.
 - 5c. Oertel, Fernandez, Bryant & Atkinson Invoice dated July 31, 2025
Recommended Action: Approve the attorney’s invoice in the amount of \$3,085.00.

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6. **DISCUSSION** – None
7. **ACTION ITEMS** –
 - 7a. FY 2026 Budget Approval – Mr. Ledford introduced the item and referred it to Finance Director, Lisa Hawkins. The total proposed budget is \$22.78 million, which includes both operating expenses and capital outlay. This represents a \$2.4 million increase over the FY25 forecast and is approximately 8% higher than the previous budget. Base charge revenues are forecasted at \$14.94 million, with a proposed budget of \$17.34 million, reflecting a 16% variance driven by a 15% adopted rate

increase and 1% projected growth. Usage charges are forecasted at \$7.35 million, with proposed usage charges totaling \$8.53 million, also representing a 16% increase. On the expense side, legal expenses are forecasted at \$90.5 thousand, with a proposed amount of \$155 thousand—a 71% increase—due to an ongoing legal dispute. General insurance is forecasted at \$439.3 thousand, with a proposed budget of \$650 thousand, reflecting a 48% increase resulting from a property value appraisal conducted by the insurance company. This appraisal was completed last year, and no further appraisals are anticipated for the next five years, limiting future insurance increases. Grounds repair and maintenance expenses are forecasted at \$95.7 thousand, with a proposed budget of \$246 thousand, representing a \$150 thousand increase to support the planned clearing of easements and wellfields. This work was included in the prior year's budget but was not completed and has been carried forward to the current year. New meter account expenses are forecasted at \$202 thousand, with a proposed budget of \$290.9 thousand, based on projected growth in service demand. The proposed budget also includes three major capital projects: \$3 million for the RO expansion design, \$5 million for the South WRF upgrade design, and \$1.5 million for the North booster pump station design. Projected year-end reserves are estimated at \$16.46 million. Overall, the proposed budget aligns with Board priorities by investing in infrastructure to support system growth while preserving long-term financial stability.

Ms. Crampton moved, **“to approve,”** seconded by Mr. Babington.

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25-08-14 A

Full motion read: “To approve the FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program totaling \$25,001,989 and adopt the 5-year CIP. To approve the FY 2026 Operating Budget totaling \$22,782,852, Operating Budget funds are annual and will expire on September 30, 2026. To approve the EWD Organization Chart of 85 full-time employees.”

7b. Afton Pump Repair – Mr. Ledford introduced the item, staff submitted a requisition for the repair of an Afton 7 Stage Pump (C Train), previously sent to Hudson Pump & Equipment for evaluation. The vendor provided a repair estimate of \$67,009.00 with a lead time of 27 weeks. Return freight costs will be additional. The pump is considered critical equipment, and Hudson was selected based on their prior success repairing a similar unit. Using a different vendor would add time and cost due to the need for a new evaluation. Although this repair qualifies as an exception to competitive procurement, staff will evaluate other qualified vendors for future Afton pump repairs.

Mr. Meals moved, **“to approve,”** seconded by Mr. Babington.

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25-08-14 B

Full motion read: “To authorize the repair of the Afton 7 Stage Pump (C Train) by Hudson Pump & Equipment in the amount of \$67,009.00, as outlined in the attached quote.”

7c. EWD Health Plans – Mr. Ledford introduced the items. Back in 2023, the Benefits Committee took a close look at our health benefits and recommended that we move all of our benefits administration over to PRM. As part of that, they suggested offering

three health plans: a PPO plan, an HMO plan, and a high-deductible health plan—or HDHP—that comes with a Health Savings Account, or HSA. To make the HDHP more appealing and competitive, the Committee recommended that EWD contribute \$1,500 into the HSA for employees who choose that plan. That amount matched the individual deductible at the time, and it still cost the District less than covering those employees under the PPO or HMO options. Then, during the FY25 renewal, the deductible on the HDHP went up to \$1,600 for individuals. The Committee reviewed that change and agreed to raise the HSA contribution to match—so we moved it up to \$1,600. After that decision, the Committee was dissolved. Now, for FY26, the deductible is increasing again—to \$1,650. Since the Committee’s no longer active, staff is bringing this to the Board and asking for approval to raise the HSA contribution to \$1,650 as well. Even with that increase, it’s still more cost-effective than the other two plans.

A brief discussion was held. Mr. Meals recommended that this be reviewed annually in the event of a substantial increase, noting that it may need to be reevaluated in the future. All board members were in agreement.

Ms. Crampton moved, “**to approve,**” seconded by Mr. Meals.

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Full motion read: “To approve an increase in the EWD contribution for employees selecting the HDHP plan, raising the amount from \$1,600 to \$1,650.”

8. ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT – Keith R. Ledford, Jr., P.E.

• **Pioneer Day Parade – September 1, 2025:**

EWD will participate in the upcoming Pioneer Day Parade. Most walking positions have been filled (approximately six individuals), and one vehicle has been confirmed. Board members interested in participating should contact Ms. Aguiar for additional details.

• **Meeting with Charlotte County Utility Director – July 25, 2025:**

Mr. Ledford met with Dave Watson, Charlotte County Utility Director. Charlotte County is pursuing a project that would transition their system away from EWD’s service. If implemented, the change could occur in FY27–FY28, returning additional capacity to EWD’s facilities.

• **Regional Emergency Operations Center Meeting – July 30, 2025:**

EWD participated in a disaster recovery meeting at the Sarasota County EOC, along with representatives from Sarasota, Manatee, North Port, Charlotte County, Venice, and Peace River utilities. The meeting reviewed the previous year’s events and preparedness for the current year. The session was considered productive and collaborative.

• **Charlotte County Legislative Delegation Meeting – August 11, 2025:**

Mr. Ledford attended the Delegation meeting on behalf of EWD. While EWD did not submit a formal request this year, the District’s lobbyist advised that a presence was important to maintain visibility.

- **Upcoming Meeting with Peace River – August 22, 2025:**
Mr. Ledford is scheduled to meet with Richard Anderson, Executive Director of Peace River, to discuss current projects and explore areas for potential collaboration between the two organizations.
- **Employee Appreciation Event – December 13, 2025:**
Planning is underway for an Employee Appreciation Party, the first in several years. Ms. Bagshaw and Mr. Ledford met with the manager of Ken & Barb's and have reserved the outdoor tiki area for Saturday, December 13. All Board members, employees, and their guests (+1) are invited. Hosting the event during the holiday season is intended to enhance its festive nature.
- **Upcoming Absence – Mr. Ledford:**
Mr. Ledford will be out of the country for an extended weekend following the September 11 meeting. A reminder will be provided in September. Any items requiring his attention should be addressed in advance.

8a. WATER OPERATIONS MANAGER – Dewey Futch

Production

- Total send-out for July 2025 was 86.78 million gallons (mg), up from 81.57 mg in 2024.
- Average daily send-out was 2.8 mgd, compared to 2.6 mgd in 2024.
- Peak daily send-out reached 3.35 mgd, versus 2.94 mgd last year.
- Rainfall measured 5.32 inches in 2025, up from 4.23 inches in 2024.
- Operators performed routine maintenance alongside normal operations.
- Crom is onsite repairing the #2 Clarifier tank floor and replacing the drain line.

Distribution

- No incidents reported.
- Valve and hydrant maintenance ongoing; residential meter accuracy tests completed.
- Six new single-family meter sets installed (6 ERCs).
- Replaced 108 radio heads.
- Completed 24 customer turn-off and 9 turn-on requests.

8b. WASTEWATER OPERATIONS MANAGER – David Larson

WRF:

- July 2025 MADF: 1.564 MGD
- July 2024 MADF: 1.396 MGD
- Peak flow recorded at 2.243 MG
- Following a rain event early in the month, plant flows increased by 700,000 gallons in one day
- Routine operations and maintenance performed

Collections:

- Completed 55 work orders
- Repaired 6 cleanouts and 4 vents
- Performed 8 cap-offs during the month
- Tested for leaks on the force main to Lift Station #210; replaced a saddle and an 8"

valve to facilitate replacement of a leaking 12" pipe due to corrosion

- Videoed and jetted the south end of Manasota Key
- Videoed and jetted the area near Lift Station #118
- Replaced two vacuum pit bottoms
- Replaced 60 feet of pipe on Langsner St due to a pipe belly

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

- **Hurricane Milton I&I** – The Hinterland Group has completed the majority of manhole repairs. Final work is anticipated to be completed within the next week.
- **RO Electrical Switchgear Repair** – All repairs have been completed; however, the original breaker is still out for repair. Once returned, it will serve as a spare in the event of future equipment failure.
- **Beachwalk by Manasota Key Phase 3** – Utility installation for Phase 3A has been completed. Testing is currently in progress. Once the lift station is operational, the system will be eligible for certification.
- **Shores at Stillwater** – The lift station for Phase 1A is now in service. Certification is pending receipt of passing bacteriological test results for the water main. Utility installation for Phase 1B remains ongoing.
- **Buchan's Landing** – Kimley Horn has submitted plans for a proposed elevated two-story restaurant and 20 paired villas. To accommodate the development, the existing vacuum main that bisects the property must be relocated, along with additional infrastructure improvements. Coordination with AirVac and Kimley Horn is underway to ensure no adverse impacts to existing customers.
- **Charlotte County Ainger Creek Boat Ramp Improvements** – Atwell has submitted plans for site improvements, including relocating the boat ramp, reconfiguring angled parking, and constructing a new restroom facility. The restroom will require new water and sewer connections. Plan review has been completed, and staff comments were returned on August 7, 2025.
- **Publix at Merchant's Crossing** – Demolition of the existing Publix is planned, with construction of a new standalone building to follow in the same vicinity. The engineering firm, Graef, has submitted plans for utility modifications, which are ready for approval. Preparation of the Developer's Agreement is currently in progress.

8d. FINANCE DIRECTOR – Lisa Hawkins

Financial Statements

As of July 31, operating revenues totaled \$19.1 million, reflecting an increase of \$683,000 compared to the same period in the prior year. Operating expenses were \$14.7 million, representing a year-over-year increase of \$404,000. This results in a net operating surplus of approximately \$4.4 million through the end of July.

Investment Summary

As of July 31, total cash and investments stood at \$23.5 million, comprising \$18.6 million held in RBC investment accounts and \$4.9 million maintained at Centennial Bank.

9. **ATTORNEY'S REPORT – Robert H. Berntsson** – A discussion was held with legal counsel regarding PFAS-related matters. EWD has submitted a portion of the requested data and documentation. A response from counsel is expected shortly to determine the preferred course of action moving forward. In the Winchester litigation, the opposing party has filed their answer. EWD is currently preparing its response for submission.
10. **OLD BUSINESS** - None
11. **NEW BUSINESS** - None
12. **PUBLIC COMMENT – ANY TOPIC**
13. **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS** - Ms. Crampton expressed her appreciation to Raftelis and District staff for their efforts and contributions throughout the process. Mr. Meals extended his thanks to the host church for providing the meeting space and to staff for coordinating and making the meeting possible. He also acknowledged Ms. Hawkins for her hard work, as well as the rate consultants. He noted that while the transition from being debt-free to assuming debt marks a significant shift, it represents the beginning of a new chapter focused on improvements that will ultimately enhance service to customers and contribute to a stronger future for EWD. Mr. Babington also thanked the church and EWD staff for facilitating the meeting, enabling the Board to make an informed and competent decision. He expressed gratitude to the Board for their confidence and unity in this effort. He acknowledged that while the coming months will be telling, the decision provides staff with the tools and support needed to implement changes essential for the facility's growth and long-term success. Chair Gaver stated that she continues to be impressed by the budget and echoed the appreciation shared by other members. She thanked everyone involved for their work and collaboration.
14. **ADJOURN @ 10:07am.**



Taylor Meals - Vice Chair

APPROVED/aa