

MINUTES of the Lower Township MUA
Meeting Date: August 6, 2025

Call to order: A meeting of the Lower Township MUA, was held at 2900 Bayshore Road, Villas, NJ, 08251. The meeting convened at 5:00pm.

ROLL CALL OF THE MEMBERS

Jacqueline Henderson	Present
James P. Ridgway	Present
Harrison Bitting	Present
Karen Rechner	Present
Bryan Steere	Present

STAFF / PROFESSIONALS

Steven A. Morris, Esq., The Morris Law Firm, MUA Solicitor
Ronald N. Curcio, PE, Polistina & Associates, MUA Engineer
Stephen Testa, RHT & K, MUA Financial Consultant
Stephen Blankenship, Executive Director
Melissa Jasinski, Board Secretary

- Call to Order
- Determination of Quorum
- Sunshine Law
- Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence
- Comments or Questions from the Public on Agenda Items – There were none.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes: July 2, 2025 Regular Minutes
2. Approval of Bills
 - a. **Resolution No. 98-2025 \$49,992.60** Operating Account (Authorizes payment of operating expenses up to \$50,000)
 - b. **Resolution No. 99-2025 \$521,677.69** Excess operating account (Authorizes payment of operating expenses in excess of \$50,000)
3. **Resolution No. 100-2025** Authorizing Transfer from the Sturdy Capital Improvement Fund Account to Sturdy Operating Account. For Payment of Sewer Capital items in the amount of **\$25,476.82**
4. **Resolution No. 101-2025** Authorizing Transfer from the Sturdy Capital Improvement Fund Account to Sturdy Operating Account. For Payment of Water Capital items in the amount of **\$15,788.94**
5. **Resolution No. 102-2025** Customer Change Resolution Approving Reductions to Accounts
Motion was made by Mr. Bitting for the approval of the Business Consent Agenda and seconded by Mrs. Rechner
Roll call vote: Mr. Bitting- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye
The Chair asked the public if there were any questions on the Regular Agenda: There were none.

REGULAR AGENDA

6. This item was deleted from the agenda.
7. **Rotary Park Update:** The Township received grant funding for Phase II, which will include a new bathroom facility and the installation of water and sewer services. Discussion ensued on how the services would be provided. It was suggested that a small grinder pump station and force main be installed to service the facility. The Authority would assist the Township in maintaining the pump station. The Chair inquired about the potential for installing a security camera(s) as part of the project. The Authority previously agreed to

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fund \$150,000 toward this phase of the project and requested that a paving bid alternate be included for the entrance road and parking area. Further discussion will continue as the project progresses.

8. **Water Service for Lower Township's New Public Works Complex:** Gary Douglass, Township Public Works Superintendent, provided the Board with information on the proposed new multi-purpose building for the Public Works complex. The Township is requesting assistance in installing a new water main along Seashore Road to provide water service to the complex, which is presently served by a well with poor water quality. The estimated cost is approximately \$300,000 and the Township is requesting that the Authority split the cost with them. There are approximately 14-15 homes along the route that the Authority could connect to help offset the project's cost. The Board indicated informal support for the project to formalize an agreement at a future meeting.

9. **GIS Recommendation Report (DeBlasio & Associates)**

DeBlasio & Associates, LLC. reviewed the current Authority GIS system as approved by the Board in November 2024. A draft report of findings was then provided to MUA staff for comment, which was then incorporated into the final report presented to the Board tonight. Mr. DeBlasio's presentation provided background and historical context on the current GIS data. He noted the following areas of concern:

- Spatial Errors- Valves, hydrants, etc. not connected to water mains.
- Schematic Deficiencies- Undefined field mains, inconsistent attributes, missing features (manholes, sewer laterals, cleanouts, etc. not shown).
- Graphical Issues: Features and annotations overlapping, etc.

The Executive Director inquired if this was an issue that only the LTMUA was facing, to which Mr. DeBlasio noted that this is common and not a unique problem, but one that many surrounding facilities are also facing.

He recommended the following:

- Setting the current system up in the proper ESRI LGMI format, which is the industry standard.
- Converting the data correctly, gathering all the data and bringing it all together to connect the entire system properly and make sure the information is accurate. This will include coordination with MUA staff, cataloging all of the data, and verifying that the data is imported accurately.
- Developing a pilot project in a few small, specific areas (Del Haven for the water system, an area for the gravity sewer system, and an area with the Vacuum Sewer system). Once created and agreed upon, this becomes the standard for the entire water and wastewater systems and when any new assets are added to the systems in the future. This would establish a foundation for both the GIS system and the asset management system.

Staff recommended that DeBlasio & Associates provide a proposal for a pilot project, along with some high-level cost estimates to implement all the necessary recommendations and work. The Board concurred.

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10. North Cape May Water Main Replacement Project– Phase II

DeBlasio & Associates submitted a proposal, dated August 4, 2025, in the amount of \$400,000.00 to provide professional engineering services (survey and design) for Phase 2 of the NCM Water Main Replacement Project (Phase 2 Project).

If the Phase 2 Project is designed, bid and awarded within the State's next fiscal year, the Authority could be eligible for \$2 Million in principal forgiveness, along with a low-interest loan (75% at 0% and 25% at market rate) for the remainder of the amount borrowed, from the NJ IBank. The estimated construction cost is ~ \$8.24 Million.

If the Authority takes the lead on the project, the Township would be responsible for paying for items related to their work (i.e., paving, curbing, striping, etc.), which would allow the Authority to recognize additional savings in paving restoration costs. It would also avoid "double" disruption for the Authority customers and taxpayers.

Motion was made by Mrs. Rechner and seconded by Mr. Bitting for Resolution No. 103-2025 Awarding an Engineering Contract to DeBlasio & Associates, LLC for the NCM Water Main Replacement Project- Phase II

Roll call vote: Mr. Bitting- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Abstain, Mr. Steere- Aye

11. Resolution No. XX-2025 – Ratifying an Award of an Emergency Repair Contract with Perna Finnigan, Inc. for the Repair of a Collapsed Gravity Sewer Main on Town Bank Road

On July 15, 2025, the LTMUA received a call about a possible sewer main break on Townbank Road. The complexity of the required repair was determined to be out of the scope of the LTMUA. Perna Finnegan, Inc. was available to perform the emergency repair.

Motion was made by Mr. Ridgway and seconded by Mrs. Henderson for Resolution No. 104-2025 Ratifying an Award of an Emergency Repair Contract with Perna Finnegan, Inc. for the Repair of a Collapsed Gravity Sewer Main on Town Bank Road in the amount not to exceed \$53,000.

Roll call vote: Mr. Bitting- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye

12. Resolution No. XX-2025 – Awarding a Construction Contract to Garrison Enterprises, Inc. for the Diamond Beach Force Main Appurtenance Vaults Rehabilitation Project

On July 31, 2025, four (4) bids were received in connection with the Diamond Beach PS Force Main Appurtenance Vaults Rehabilitation Project, with the low bidder being Garrison Enterprises, Inc., in the amount of \$484,201.90. Staff and the Authority Engineer recommended awarding the contract to Garrison Enterprises.

Motion was made by Mr. Bitting and seconded by Mrs. Rechner for Resolution No. 105-2025 Awarding a Construction Contract to Garrison Enterprises, Inc. for the Diamond Beach Force Main Appurtenance Vaults Rehabilitation Project in the amount of \$484,201.90.

Roll call vote: Mr. Bitting- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye

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13. Resolution No. XX -2025 – Authorization to Advertise Bids for the Town Bank Road Interceptor Rehabilitation Project– Phase II

Following the second collapse of the gravity sewer main on Town Bank Road, staff and Polistina and Associates recommend fast-tracking Phase II of the rehabilitation project and paying for the project instead of waiting for NJ IBank funding. Bids would be received at the end of August if authorized.

Motion was made by Mrs. Rechner and seconded by Mrs. Henderson for Resolution No. 106-2025 Authorizing Advertisement of Bids for the Town Bank Road Interceptor Rehabilitation Project-Phase II.

Roll call vote: Mr. Bitting- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye

14. 2024 Sewerage Pump Station Rehabilitation Project

Polistina & Associates and staff propose adding the Racetrack Drive and Poplarwood Road pump stations to the 2024 Sewerage Pump Station Rehabilitation Project. This would bring the total pump stations to five (5). Polistina & Associates submitted a proposal, dated July 28, 2025, in the amount of \$33,600.00 to provide additional professional engineering services to incorporate the additional pump stations into the Authority's application to the NJ IBank. If approved, the change would increase Polistina & Associates' contract to \$254,600.00 (\$183,000 + \$38,000 + \$33,600).

Motion was made by Mrs. Rechner and seconded by Mr. Bitting for Resolution No. 107-2025 Modifying Polistina & Associates Professional Engineering Contract for the 2024 Sewerage Pump Station Rehabilitation Project in the Amount of \$33,600.00.

Roll call vote: Mr. Bitting- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye

15. Resolution No. XX -2025 – Authorizing Disposal of Surplus Property

Staff recommended disposing of a 2014 Chevrolet Tahoe and a 2019 Chevrolet Tahoe that is no longer needed by the Authority.

Motion was made by Mr. Bitting and seconded by Mrs. Henderson for Resolution No. 108-2025 Authorizing Disposal of Surplus Property.

Roll call vote: Mr. Bitting- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye

16. Interagency Requests to Acquire Surplus Vehicles from the LTMUA

As noted in the above item, the Township is interested in acquiring the 2014 Chevrolet Tahoe and a local fire district is interested in acquiring the 2019 Chevrolet Tahoe. Staff recommends approving the transfer of ownership of the 2014 Chevrolet Tahoe to the township at this time.

Motion was made by Mrs. Henderson and seconded by Mrs. Rechner for Resolution No. 109-2025 Authorizing the Sale of Surplus Vehicle (2014 Chevy Tahoe) to Lower Township in the amount of \$1.00.

Roll call vote: Mr. Bitting- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye

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17. Resolution No. XX -2025 – Renewal of Membership in the New Jersey Utility Authorities Joint Insurance Fund

The NJ Utility Authorities JIF requires a membership renewal every three (3) years, with the current membership coming to expiration at the end of this year.

Motion was made by Mrs. Rechner and seconded by Mr. Bitting for Resolution No. 110-2025 Authorizing Renewal of Membership in the New Jersey Utility Authorities Joint Insurance Fund.
Roll call vote: Mr. Bitting- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye

18. Personnel Issue- Executive Session

Motion was made by Mrs. Rechner and seconded by Mr. Bitting for Resolution No. 111-2025 Authorizing a Closed Session to Discuss a Personnel Matter.
Roll call vote: Mr. Bitting- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye

The Board entered into closed session at 6:18 pm and returned to regular session afterwards.
Closed session meeting minutes attached.

Administrative Reports

Solicitor-

- The Authority received notice from a property owner on Rosehill Parkway in North Cape May with concerns about a sewer main on their property, with questions about possible easements. Drafted an issue of correspondence to the affected and the adjacent property owners. Further discussion regarding the issue to continue.

Engineer- Nothing to report.

Financial Consultant:

- The auditors completed a draft of the 2023 Audit report, which was reviewed, and comments have been provided. An exit conference was held today with Authority staff and a letter of legal representative was sent to the solicitor for signature. There were no findings or recommendations.
- Revenue and expenses for the current year are all in line.

Executive Director

- USDA requested documents to be filled out by the board members and staff as part of their compliance process.
- Will be out of the office August 7- 25, 2025.

Public Comments- There were none.

Comments from the Board– There were none.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:26pm was made by Mrs. Henderson and seconded by Mrs. Rechner.

Roll call vote: Mr. Bitting- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye

**MINUTES of the Lower Township MUA
Executive (Closed) Session
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Board Members Present

Jacqueline Henderson
James P. Ridgway
Harrison Bitting
Karen Rechner
Bryan Steere

Staff/Professionals Present

Steven Morris, Esq., The Morris Law Firm, MUA Solicitor
Stephen Blankenship, Executive Director
Melissa Jasinski, Board Secretary

The LTMUA received correspondence from DCA regarding an ethics complaint filed against the Executive Director. The complaint revolves around the hiring of two temporary employees who are related to the Executive Director. The DCA correspondence was forwarded to the Solicitor for review and response. At this time, the matter is still ongoing.

Motion was made by Mrs. Henderson and seconded by Mrs. Rechner to move out of Executive Session at 6:26pm.

Roll call vote: Mr. Bitting- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye