

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY
WATER QUALITY PROTECTION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
Hybrid - Zoom
December 3, 2024

Members Present

Patrick Johnson, Chair
Brie MacLaurin
Ryan Leland
Jeff Ryan
Adele Johnson

Members Absent

Diana Hammer
Ed Kerins, Vice Chair
Comm. Candace Payne

Staff

Jennifer McBroom, Gary Burton, Kegan McClanahan, Natalie Emerson
Laurel Riek, Beth Norberg, Sandy Whittington

Patrick Johnson, Chair, called the 280th meeting of the Lewis and Clark County Water Quality Protection District (WQPD) Board of Directors (Board) to order at 5:34 p.m. A quorum was not established. Introductions of Board members and WQPD staff were made.

REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were made to the agenda.

MINUTES

The minutes were not approved as there was no quorum established. Minutes to be reviewed in January.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBER

Ms. McBroom introduced Adele Johnson, who is taking over John Staldine's term. It was clarified that this term would not count as her first term, as she would be fulfilling the previous term which ends in 2026. In the meeting, Adel shared her background in Environmental Engineering and her experience as the Environmental Program Manager at Fort Harrison with the Montana Army National Guard. She discussed the issue of PFAS contamination at Fort Harrison and her work on this issue at the national level.

GW101 & WASTEWATER PROGRAM

Kegan McClanahan explained the concept of groundwater, emphasizing that it is water that fully saturates all the pores and cracks in the soils and rocks. He differentiated between porosity, which refers to the pore spaces in the ground, and permeability, which refers to how interconnected those pore spaces are. He further explained that groundwater follows topography and flows horizontally and explained groundwater flow rates.,. Kegan wrapped up his presentation with the concept of cone of depression. It forms when water is pumped out of a well faster than it can be replenished, and the importance of considering the permeability of the aquifer when assessing well production. Kegan offered additional education if the Board was interested.

WASTEWATER PROGRAM

Beth Norberg, Public Health Sanitarian, discussed the role of the Environmental Division in managing wastewater systems. She explained the local septic system permitting process and the difference between local and state regulations. Beth also touched on the importance of proper installation, maintenance, and care of septic systems to ensure their longevity. She emphasized the need for homeowners to treat their septic systems like a mini wastewater treatment plant, avoiding the disposal of fats, grease, and non-flushable wipes. WQPD also highlighted the significance of water usage and regular well testing. The discussion moved to the challenges of regulating RV parks and outdoor campers, particularly in relation to wastewater discharge and septic systems. Beth explained that RVs cannot be connected to existing septic systems without proper permits, and that enforcement can be difficult due to the need to prove violations in court. The conversation also touched on the issue of urban sprawl and the previous DEQ requirement for one-acre minimums in subdivisions. The importance of connecting to municipal facilities was emphasized, particularly in areas near city limits. Lastly, the topic of exempt wells was briefly mentioned, indicating that it is a separate issue with its own set of challenges.

UPDATE ON HELENA WATER

Director Leland reported that the City of Helena is facing issues with taste and odor in the water because of the turnover in its only current source, the regulating reservoir. Although the Eureka well project was postponed, it is expected to be finalized by the end of the year. Meanwhile, work is underway to upgrade the Tenmile Treatment plant filters, with a completion goal set for April. To manage increasing costs, the city has enacted modest raises in water and wastewater rates; however, these rates still rank among the lowest in the state. Additionally, there was an incident where a tire shop dumped 200 gallons of diesel and used oil into the wastewater system, but this was quickly identified and remedied. Mr. Leland has invited board members for a tour of the treatment facilities.

BOARD MEMBER DISCUSSION

Mr. Ryan proposed that volunteers assist with transplanting willows and vertical staking at the Grizzly Gulch reclamation site. The last topic discussed was the possibility of replacing the January Board meeting with a tour. It was agreed that a brief meeting will take place at the Tenmile Water Treatment Plant, during which the Board can review financials, approve minutes, and then continue with a tour of the facility.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

Next meeting will be January 28, 2025, at the new time of 4:00 pm.

There being no public comment, the meeting adjourned at 6:50pm.