

**LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY
WATER QUALITY PROTECTION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING**

Hybrid – Zoom
August 26, 2025

Members Present:

Patrick Johnson, Chair, Ed Kerins, Vice Chair, Sheri Ohs-Mosely, Adel Johnson,
Commissioner Tom Rolfe

Staff & Guests Present:

Jennifer McBroom, Gary Burton, Fred Sargeson, Kegan McClanahan, Drenda Niemann,
Kierstin LaRoche, Sandy Whittington

Mr. Patrick Johnson, Chair, called the 285th meeting of the Lewis and Clark County Water Quality Protection District (WQPD) Board of Directors (Board) to order at 4:00 p.m. A quorum was established. Introductions of Board members and WQPD staff were made.

REVIEW OF AGENDA

The agenda was reviewed and approved with no changes.

MINUTES

Mr. Johnson prompted a review of the minutes, and no changes were requested.

BOARD ELECTIONS

Patrick Johnson announced that he had completed his maximum term as board chairman and opened the floor for nominations. As no nominations were heard, he nominated Ed Kerins for the position, and Adel Johnson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of Mr. Kerins. Mr. Johnson then called for nominations for Vice Chair, and again, hearing none, he nominated Ms. Johnson. Commissioner Rolfe seconded the nomination, and the vote was unanimously in support of Ms. Johnson becoming Vice Chair.

UPDATES

Jennifer McBroom led the review of the FY25 year-end reports starting with the underspent personnel allocations due to changes in staffing. As Ms. McBroom continued reviewing the total expenses, Mr. Johnson inquired as to why we only spent 40% of the sampling funds budgeted, prompting Ms. McBroom to explain the budgeting strategy, which includes planning for worst-case scenarios. Mr. Johnson expressed appreciation for the thoughtful approach. The discussion shifted to flood preparedness efforts, followed by Sheri Ohs-Mosley's inquiry into the Capital Transfer line item. Ms. Niemann clarified that it is designated for replacing capital assets like vehicles, and Commissioner Rolfe added context about county-wide requirements for such transfers. Ms. McBroom continued with

revenue updates, reporting that projected revenue reached 99.32% of expectations and that year-end cash reserves stood at \$319,920.32. This amount is well above the recommended 90-day reserve. She noted that this surplus will decline over the next two years due to a projected budget deficit. Ms. McBroom noted that an increase in revenue by the way of taxes might be necessary in the future. Niemann reinforced the need to consider future financial demands and the potential for additional fees.

Ms. McBroom presented the FY25 year-end review for Fund 140, which supports rewatering efforts and currently has a remaining balance of \$34,126. She noted that additional funding sources are available if needed. Commissioner Rolfe added that a \$100 per-owner tax payment contributes to flood remediation efforts for those that live in the flood district. Ms. McBroom noted that this is part of the Tenmile Flood Zone.

After a brief pause due to Zoom technical issues, Ms. McBroom resumed with a review of Fund 124, the Grizzly Gulch grant. Of the original \$292,611, \$23,812.50 remains, with most of the remaining funds earmarked for vegetation and fencing replenishment next year, pending one final invoice. She concluded with an update on the ARPA county funds used for water testing for arsenic and uranium, noting that the final \$10,000 must be spent by June 2026. Ms. McBroom noted that 353 tests have been administered so far. Strategies include encouraging more residents to test, offering system treatments, and potentially funding maintenance for those systems. Mr. Johnson inquired about the sample results for uranium and arsenic and whether the results were expected based off the wells inspected. Kegan McClanahan gave a brief overview of the sampling and the benefits for the community for identifying areas in need of improvement.

The Grizzly Gulch project review was started by Patrick Johnson and turned over to Jennifer McBroom. Ms. McBroom provided the background of the project where she laid out the timeline of when the application was submitted along with the design plans to DNRC for the 2021 legislative session on up to when construction took place. Ms. McBroom observed that the difficulties related to the willows arose because they were not included in the original contract. Ms. Ohs-Mosley asked if the willows were planted. Ms. McBroom discussed the willow harvesting process and how they were planted. She noted they will be reviewing the lessons learned and providing an after-action report. There was discussion regarding the project management aspects, getting everything documented, including reaching out to stakeholders in an effort to improve future projects.

There was further discussion on the need to recruit a required member from the Conservation District. There is interest in continuing the conversation even though everyone is spread pretty thin. The outreach done to maintain the relationship is appreciated since the relationship with the district is vital.

Ms. McBroom and Mr. Sargeson provided information pertaining to the Tenmile complaint. The new RV park ranch manager is diverting water from Tenmile Creek, causing the creek to

run dry downstream. The new manager switched from flood irrigation to a pivot system. The manager utilized equipment to divert Tenmile Creek water by creating a dam. Ms. McBroom noted local landowners would like to have the Lake Helena Watershed group facilitate a meeting with stakeholders including the RV Ranch management and affected landowners to ensure everyone has access to the water.

Mr. Sargeson noted that the initial diversion and the damming were both in violation of the property owners water rights. There are concerns above the dam that it could cause flooding in addition to the lack of water below the dam. The landowners will have to work on petitioning the courts in order to determine if they can have a water commissioner appointed to the area. There was some discussion regarding how water rights are determined and utilized as well as how notifications are posted.

The Watershed Update was provided by Kegan. Regarding the Helena RV park, there was a water main break compounded by additional issues due to an aging system and several renovations leading to low water pressure and water quality concerns. This is regulated by the state via DEQ. DEQ initially put them on a boil water advisory, which has been lifted and reduced to a health advisory to keep them on alert until they can reliably serve water. Question from Mr. Johnson regarding septic systems. There are old abandoned septic systems with old records that are not accurate. Ms. Niemann noted that Helena RV is a licensed establishment and is required to get this system fixed and provide potable water. There was discussion regarding how we can hold owners to their water obligation without shutting anyone down as this could prove disastrous for residents and how we can support infrastructure.

Regarding Timberworks Estates, Mr. McClanahan provided some background regarding the Estates. They have individual water, but shared wastewater. Maintenance issues have been leading to issues with the wastewater treatment plant. DEQ and county sanitarians working on a complaint with pumping issues leaving raw sewage on the ground due to being backed up and coming out of manhole covers.

More recently, their tank needed to be drained for maintenance but instead of hiring a septic truck they discharged the sewage onto the drain field as a cheaper option which is a public health hazard as it is not secured. DEQ enforcement is involved in getting them up to code for proper maintenance. The design is appropriate, but this is a maintenance issue. Bacteria samples show that it is in the soil. The monitoring wells have high nitrates and are above the level for drinking water. We are staying involved in case additional outreach needs to be done to talk to landowners in the path of the nitrates. The two businesses that are in the vicinity are regulated by DEQ.

MEMBER DISCUSSION

The Watershed Festival was nice, and it was a beautiful day.

Commissioner Rolfe commented that he is glad that problems are getting worked out.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

Next meeting will be September 23, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.

There being no public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 5:28.