Sewer and Water Utilities Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 1:00 P.M.
Via Video Conference
(Approved Version)

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chairperson Denise Bhirdo called the Sewer and Water Utilities meeting to order on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at 1:00 PM.

2. Roll Call

A roll call was conducted, with the following members present: Chairperson Denise Bhirdo and members Nate Bell, and Kurt Harff

Staff present: Utilities Director Megan Barnes, Village Administrator Ben Andrews, Utilities Clerk Kara Kroll

Others: Chad Olsen

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Bell, second by Harff to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried – all ayes.

4. Approval of Minutes of the February 10, 2026 Meeting, As Published

Motion by Bell, second by Harff to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2026 meeting as presented. Motion carried – all ayes.

5. Comments, Correspondence and Concerns from the Public

There were no members of the public present and no correspondence to report.

6. Discussion/Action Items

a. Facilities Study Discussion and Recommendation

Utilities Director Megan Barnes presented the three options from the facility study for addressing biosolids management: Option 1 - construct a sludge drying facility ($17.8 million), Option 2 - construct a reed bed system, and Option 3 - continue hauling to Sturgeon Bay with potential future requirements for onsite storage tanks.

Chair Bhirdo expressed support for exploring regional cooperation with other municipalities for the sludge drying facility, stating that if Sister Bay were to proceed alone, reed beds would make more sense, if multiple communities could participate, the dryer option would be preferable despite the higher cost.

Bell agreed that reed beds were the practical choice for Sister Bay alone, though he acknowledged the sludge dryer would be "cooler" if cost were no object. He expressed concern about the complexity of coordinating multiple municipalities but supported pursuing regional discussions with a defined timeline.

Administrator Andrews reported that he had reached out to administrators and operators in Ephraim, Fish Creek, and Baileys Harbor, with most indicating willingness to have conversations about regional cooperation. He noted that such an arrangement would require long-term commitments, typically 15-20 years, to cover expenses.

Barnes confirmed that Ephraim, Fish Creek, and Baileys Harbor had expressed interest in discussions. She noted these communities had received similar reed bed recommendations in their own facility studies, and Ephraim was particularly interested because they had not received principal and forgiveness for their planned upgrades and believed regional cooperation might improve their chances of receiving such funding.

The committee discussed setting a six-month timeline for regional discussions, after which they would proceed with reed beds if no agreement could be reached. Barnes confirmed she had been sharing cost estimates of approximately $15-17.8 million with the other communities.

Consultant Chad Olsen identified the West Central Wisconsin Biosolids Facility near River Falls as an example of regional sludge processing that has operated for at least a decade.

> *Motion by Bell, second by Harff to adopt the facility study. Motion carried – all ayes.*

The committee agreed to pursue regional discussions for the sludge drying facility while maintaining reed beds as the fallback option if Sister Bay proceeds alone. This item will be placed on the March board meeting agenda for discussion.

b. Non-Potable Reuse System - Expansion Tanks WWTP

Barnes reported that the expansion tanks for the non-potable reuse system have ruptured bladders that cannot be repaired because replacement parts are no longer manufactured. She presented a quote of $19,180 for complete replacement of both tanks, with a six-week lead time. The expense would come from replacement funds.

The committee discussed whether board approval was necessary given the lead time, with Andrews and Barnes concluding that while some emergency repairs could proceed without board approval, this repair could wait for formal approval.

> *Motion by Bhirdo, second by Harff to recommend the quotation for replacement of the two expansion tanks as presented to the Village Board for approval. Motion carried with Bell opposed.*

c. Wastewater Treatment Plant Operations Report

Barnes provided an update on the ongoing ice issues in the sludge storage tank, explaining that the plant has been battling thick ice accumulation for three weeks. The cold weather caused more ice formation than usual, and ice formed over aeration spots, increasing pressure and apparently breaking a coupling between the main diffuser line and diffuser arms.

She explained that this is a periodic issue due to the uncovered sludge tank, though this year's accumulation was more severe. The plant is currently using the sludge loadout pump as a mixer and has had a company jet hot water into the empty storage tank to remove ice. The tank switch should occur early the following week once the remaining ice is cleared.

7. Matters to be placed on a future agenda or referred to a committee, official, or employee

The facility study discussion and regional cooperation efforts will be placed on the March Village Board meeting agenda.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Bhirdo, second by Bell to adjourn at 1:32 PM. Motion carried – all ayes.

The next meeting of the Sewer and Water Committee will be conducted at 1:00 P.M. on Tuesday April 14, 2026 via Video Conference.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kara Kroll
Utilities Clerk