

MEETING MINUTES

LINN SANITARY DISTRICT

January 27, 2026 1:30 p.m.

Walworth County Land Use and Resource Management Office
100 W. Walworth St., Elkhorn, WI 53121

Present: Ted Peters - LSD, Jim Livingston - LSD, Rob Eppley - LSD, Noah Wishau - LSD, Michael Cotter - LURM, Rick Dorgay - LURM, Mandy Bonneville - LURM, Holly Baseman – GLEA.

Definitions: LSD = Linn Sanitary District. LURM = Walworth County Land Use and Resource Management. GLEA = Geneva Lake Environmental Agency. POWTS = private onsite waste treatment system.

1. Ted Peters called the January 27, 2026, Linn Sanitary District / Walworth County Land Use and Resource Management meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.
2. Each of the attendees introduced themselves and gave their occupation. Ted read an introduction that is attached at the end of these minutes.
3. Ted explained that the Town of Linn's Master Plan is to support low density growth. To follow that plan means there will be no centralized waste treatment systems, including localized systems, connections to existing large systems, or construction of new waste treatment systems.
4. Ted presented a list of the 12 properties, with inspection reports and site maps, where no action has been taken to correct noted deficiencies. These properties have been inspected twice since the District started the inspection program in the early 2000's.
5. Holly spoke about the Geneva Lake Environmental Agency study of the Hillside Creek and its entrance to Geneva Lake. She presented a map of the creek and the 11 inspection points that were used continually during the summer of 2025. The creek water was tested where there were high bacteria counts. The testing confirmed that the bacteria is from human waste. Holly is looking for a correlation between the high bacteria counts and the failing cesspools in the area.
6. Ted initiated a discussion about how to determine the number of holding tanks in the district. The county representatives were not sure how to get a count. There is no way with the current software used and many holding tanks were installed before software was available. Mandy offered to look into possible ways to determine a count.
7. Ted asked Rick for his definition of a cesspool. Per Rick, a cesspool is a pipe that goes straight into an excavation. A cesspool is illegal by statute. If found, the county would issue and order to condemn and replace. Jim read from state statutes SPS 381.01(53) that defines a cesspool as Rick stated. Also, SPS383.32 (d), that states the use of a cesspool is prohibited.
8. Discussion centered on the checklist that would be used to determine a cesspool. Rick stated that there is no specific checklist, that a lot of factors have to be considered as a whole before a condemnation order is issued. Mandy said it would be hard to give an exact checklist. Holly asked if there is a list of what should be present to condemn a cesspool.

9. Mike stated the county's charge – to maintain the health, safety, and environment in Walworth County. He suggested the county work on the data presented for a couple of the properties on the list of 12 and see what that county can determine with the information presented in the District's inspection reports.
10. Next Steps. For three to four of the parcels that were listed, Rick Dorgay will dig deeper and let the District know what is missing, if anything, on the inspection reports and supporting information. With that information the District can move forward with additional re-inspection if needed. Ted suggested that the District would be willing to fund additional inspection activity, if required, to complete the data needed to support the condemnation of a POWTS suspected to be a cesspool.
11. **Motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 p.m. J. Livingston, R. Eppley, C.U.**

Comments for 1/27/26 Cod/LSD meeting. Twp.

Thank everyone for being here.

I am hoping that we can resolve some issues of how to best carry out the Linn Sanitary District's Sanitary Waste Management effort within the District. The Linn Sanitary District encompasses most of the lands that surround Geneva Lake's shoreline.

As we all know, Geneva Lake is one of the most valuable natural resources within Walworth County. Lands around Geneva Lake represent a significant portion of the County's total equalized value.

The Linn Sanitary District is committed to sanitary waste management within its borders. This includes lands within Town of Linn on both the north and south shore of Geneva Lake. It also includes some lands on the west in of the lake in the Town of Walworth.

Back in the early 2000's the District conducted a facilities study to identify the best sanitary waste management plan.

We explored centralized and de-centralized approaches including

building our own large plant,

Hooking into existing plants

Building small scale package treatment units,

Building collection systems with disposal at large soil absorption fields,

For many reasons, be they economic, environmental, social acceptability or political, and after polling our resident, the overall preference was to stay with a decentralized approach, using on-site treatment or holding of sanitary waste.

The one condition of that approach being successful was that we had to assure that the on-site systems were working and not contaminating the groundwater. That groundwater is the source of potable water for the districts 1500+ residents and a significant source of water to the prized Geneva Lake.

It is within that context that we initiated a district wide POWTS inspection program and an aggressive approach to identify and replacing "ineffective" or poorly operating systems that are a threat to the groundwater.

Through our inspections we have seen all kinds of approaches that are meant to serve as an on-site wastewater treatment system. Some that are properly engineered to fit the waste load and the soil's ability to not only move the wastewater away but to treat it before it reaches the groundwater or surface water. We have seen many old outdated systems that are nothing more than a hole in the ground that may move the wastewater away but does little if any wastewater treatment. It is the latter of these that the Linn Sanitary District is concerned about and asks for the County's assistance in upgrading or replacing.

Although the District feels that a majority of its constituents are still in favor of staying with the decentralized approach, there are many out there that would love to see sewers around this lake. They will use “the contamination of the groundwater by the many old septic systems that surround the lake” as a reason for “sewerage the lake”.

The LSD commissioners feel that a centralized system, including a collection system and treatment at a neighboring wastewater treatment plant would be the worst thing for Geneva Lake and its watershed, resulting in lake quality degradation. Why? rezoning, doubling of potential development density. R1=40,000 ft sq.-- R2=20,000 ft.sq.-- more impervious area, more runoff and more people. Contrary to Town's Master Plan of low-density development around the lake.

-in previous discussion with neighboring communities, annexation would be the only way the LSD can access their wastewater treatment collection and treatment systems. This is a deal stopper from the Town's, District's and many of our residents' perspective.

-the daily export of hundreds of thousand of gallons of water out of Geneva Lake's groundwater shed

-environmental impacts of construction, lake front oaks, shore path disruption, torn-up roads, construction of lift stations on the lakefront.

At a time when a new Lake Management Plan has been developed and soon to be implemented, the Linn Sanitary District feels that a solid and effective decentralized sanitary waste management plan is vital to the success of long-term sanitary waste management and ultimately Geneva Lake's management. We met today to ask the Walworth County Land Use and Resource Management office and specifically the Sanitation Department for your help in achieving this goal.