

**LITTLE ROCK WATER RECLAMATION COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of the Meeting Held**  
**May 7, 2025**

The Little Rock Water Reclamation Commission (“LRWRC”) met at 4:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 7, 2025 at the LRWRA Conference Room and via livestream.

**Little Rock Water Reclamation Commission**

Jonathan Semans, Chair  
Daryl Brown, Vice Chair  
Prentice O’Guinn, Secretary  
Schawnee Hightower, Commissioner  
Chris Marsh, Commissioner  
Christina Clark, Commissioner  
Director Lance Hines, Ex Officio Member

**Little Rock Water Reclamation Authority Personnel**

Jean Block, Chief Executive Officer  
Michael Rhoda, Chief Financial Officer  
Ryan Benefield, P.E., Chief Operating Officer  
Deanna Ray, Chief Legal Officer  
Walter Collins, P.E., Director of Operations  
Rebecca Burkman, Director of Environmental Affairs  
Harold Hounwanou, P.E., Director of Collection System Maintenance  
Les Price, P.E., Director of Engineering Services  
Doug Roe, Director of Accounting & Finance  
Kenetta Ridgell, Director of Communications and Community Engagement  
Angela Brooks, Director of Human Resources

Attendees included: Commissioners Hightower, Brown, Semans and Director Hines appeared in person. Commissioners O’Guinn, Clark, and Marsh appeared via livestream. Senior Staff Members: Jean Block, Michael Rhoda, Ryan Benefield, Deanna Ray, Walter Collins, Harold Hounwanou, Rebecca Burkman, Angela Brooks, Les Price, Doug Roe and Kenetta Ridgell appeared in person.

Chair Semans brought the meeting to order and called for Mr. Roe to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Semans then asked if there were any public comments, and there were none.

Next, Chair Semans asked the Commissioners if they had reviewed the minutes of the April 2, 2025, meeting. Being that there were no revisions, Chair Semans asked if there were any objections to approving minutes. Hearing none, Chair Semans asked if there

was a motion to approve the minutes. A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Jean Block, CEO, presented a NACWA Award to Director Lance Hines for Public Service – Individual Achievement. She noted Director Hines has been LRWRA's liaison since 2013 and that he's been a strong advocate for public infrastructure, economic development, and a strong ally for the utility. She noted other recipients of this award this year were a U.S. Senator, a U.S. District Judge, and a Virginia House Delegate.

Les Price, Director of Engineering Services, presented a Change Order for Emergency Sewer Rehabilitation. He explained that a sinkhole had damaged our sewer pipe around 65<sup>th</sup> Street and that it was necessary to begin work immediately to rehabilitate the 332 feet of 24-inch concrete sewer main.

Staff requested the Commission to authorize CEO Jean Block to execute a change order to the construction contract with SAK Construction, LLC for the 65th Street Sewer Rehabilitation Project in the amount of \$197,416.60.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Mr. Price then presented a Recommendation of Award for Professional Services for the FCWRF Headworks Gate and Concrete Improvements. He noted the need for these repairs were identified in the 2024 Rapid Assessment and are part of the 2025 Asset Renewal Plan. He noted the various repairs were combined into one project.

Staff requested the Commission to authorize CEO Jean Block to execute the professional services work order with Mead & Hunt for the Design, Bid, and Construction Phases of the FCWRF Headworks Gate & Concrete and Final Clarifier Concrete Rehabilitation project in the amount of \$286,906.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Mr. Price also presented a Recommendation of Award for Construction for the FCWRF Outfall Jetty Repairs. He gave a brief overview of the role of the Jetty and the damage it sustained during the 2019 Arkansas River Flood. This project would restore the Jetty to its original condition. Commissioner Hightower asked about the sole bidder, the Pine Bluff Sand and Gravel Company. Mr. Price said that this company does a lot of work on the Arkansas River and this work is very specialized.

Staff requested the Commission to authorize CEO Jean Block to enter into a construction contract with Pine Bluff Sand and Gravel Company for the FCWRF Arkansas River Outfall Revetment in an amount not to exceed \$1,072,500.00.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Rebecca Burkman, Director of Environmental Affairs, presented a Purchase Authorization for the AFWRF 2025 Contracted Asset Renewal Project. She noted that this would include the replacement of two headworks bar screen transpactors, and replacing/retrofitting of nine gate actuators.

Staff requested the Commission to approve the purchase authorization for Adam's Field Water Reclamation Facility 2025 Contracted Asset Renewal Project in an amount not to

exceed \$1,083,267.42, and to authorize CEO Jean Block to enter into a contract with AmerInd Contracting.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Michael Rhoda, Chief Financial Officer, introduced Tom Beckley of Raftelis to present the “Wastewater Rate Study” results. Beckley explained the rate study outlines a 10-year financial plan to support \$558 million in capital improvements through 2035, focusing on infrastructure upgrades and system expansion.

Despite no rate increases since 2021, thanks to strong financial management, the utility remains in a healthy position with solid revenue, debt coverage, and reserves. To fund future needs, the financial plan includes drawing down reserves, leveraging \$40 million annually in State Revolving Fund loans, and increasing cash contributions to capital to \$15 million per year.

The proposed rate adjustments are 7.25% annually from 2026–2030. Current rates are considered reasonable since affordability metrics remain below the 1.5–2% threshold. Minor surcharge increases are planned for a small group of industrial users. The Capital plan and recommended Rate Adjustments emphasize proactive infrastructure investment to avoid infrastructure issues seen in other cities. LRWRA leadership aims to maintain the system’s \$2.5 billion value through consistent reinvestment, and the rate adjustments are intended to account for LRWRA’s infrastructure needs while being as low as possible.

Jean Block, Chief Executive Officer, noted the utility’s financial planning is anchored in guiding principles that prioritize sustaining LRWRA’s capital improvement plan, preserving its Aa3 bond rating, increasing cash contributions to capital projects, and minimizing financial burden on Little Rock residents. She explained that Little Rock’s sewer system is valued at over \$2.5 billion and requires ongoing investment to maintain its infrastructure.

Over the next decade, the planned rate increase will support both asset management - particularly for vertical assets in corrosive environments like pump stations and treatment facilities - and system expansion. Expansion will include the Fourche Creek WRF to support growth in the Port of Little Rock and the Little Maumelle WRF to accommodate residential growth in western Little Rock.

Kyle Elmore of FORVIS/MAZARS presented a Summary of the 2024 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report Audit. Mr. Elmore explained that FORVIS/MAZARS had issued a clean/unmodified opinion on LRWRA’s financial statements for 2024. Chair Semans requested a motion to accept the 2024 Financial Audit Report. A motion was made, seconded, and accepted unanimously.

Ryan Benefield, COO, provided an update on the Cooling Water Study Project. He noted the utility is evaluating its capacity to accept large volumes of low-strength cooling water, primarily for high-demand users like data centers, at the Fourche Creek WRF. This approach is considered innovative for the utility and aims to support industrial growth while safeguarding plant operations and capacity for other users. He noted that the cost for the study was covered by the interested entity.

Doug Roe, Director of Finance & Accounting, presented a summary of the April Financial Report. He noted this is a preliminary report due to it being early in the month. He explained in April that there was total revenue of \$5.4 million more than budget by \$41k. Operating expenses of \$2.6 million under budget by \$178k with Salaries on budget, Supplies are over budget by \$12k (4.5%), and Contract Services under budget by \$89k (-24%).

Deanna Ray, Chief Legal Officer, gave the Legal Update. She noted continued work on reviewing contracts; working with procurement; employee annual training, reviewing and updating policies; addressing personnel matters.

Jean Block, Chief Executive Officer, gave the CEO Highlights that included Severe Weather Event, Mobile City Hall, DC Fly-In, Girls of Promise, Floating the Fourche, Arkansas Water Conference, Community Garden, Earth Day, and Gibbs Elementary Test Kick-off with JoJo.

Chair Semans called for any old business, and there was none.

Chair Semans called for any new business, and there was none.

Chair Semans stated the next LRWRC meeting would be June 11 with the possibility of being moved up to June 4. He then asked if there were any objections to adjourning the meeting. Hearing none, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Prentice O'Guinn*

Prentice O'Guinn, Secretary