

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' RETREAT

MARCH 20, 2026

SEWERAGE & WATER BOARD OF NEW ORLEANS

On Friday, March 20, 2026, the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans hosted a Board and Leadership Retreat at the Greater New Orleans Foundation – Chevron Conference Room.

The following members were present: Designee for Honorable Mayor Moreno, City of New Orleans CAO of Infrastructure, Stephen Nelson, Director Joseph Psychaud, Director Chadrick Kennedy, Director Tyler Antrup, Director Kimberly Thomas, Director Ariane Greenidge, Hon. Jason Hughes, Director H. Davis Cole, Director Courtney Scrubbs, Esq.

The following member(s) were absent: Director Janet Howard.

Incoming Board Member:

Jonathan Stewart were present.

Staff present were Randy Hayman, Executive Director; Jamie Parker, Chief of Staff; Grey Lewis, Chief Financial Officer; Darryl Harrison, Interim Special Counsel and Mary Beth Arcenaux, Deputy Special Counsel; Kaitlin Tymrak, Interim General Superintendent; Ceara Labat, Chief of Communications; David Callahan, Chief Administration Officer; Steven Giang and Rebecca Johnsey, Deputy General Superintendents; Ed Sutherland, Chief Auditor; Renelle Brown, Interim Chief Customer Service Officer; Brionne Lindsey and Breanna Johnson, Board Relations.

Opening Remarks and Board Perspectives

Director Kennedy opened today's retreat with a reflection on the makeup of the SWBNO Board. The collaboration of elected officials, each community Director, and those who advocate for the residents of New Orleans is a "very big deal."

Directors and leadership were instructed to introduce themselves to retreat participants. Each Director shared a brief introduction, and one word or phrase of what board leadership looks like.

Phrases that were shared by Directors were:

"Discipline"
"Communication"
"Solution-Based"
"Motivation"

"Facilitation"
"Creative"
"Commitment"
"Coordinate"

"People First"

Water System Overview: From Source to Tap

Chad Lavoie, SWBNO Water Purification Superintendent, presented on the City's two water treatment plants. Both Algiers (Westbank) and Carrollton (Eastbank) water treatment plants operate 24/7 with intake beginning at the Mississippi River. From intake and filtration to consumption, improvements to the utility's water treatment facilities are needed. While SWBNO is currently compliant with EPA lead and copper rules, new regulations or a change in water dynamics may require changes to SWBNO's treatment process. The utility is eager to bring awareness, maintain compliance, and improve infrastructure as funds become available.

Additional details regarding the improvements needed at the water treatment plants will be forthcoming and included in the Water Quality Master Plan. Based on the information shared, Directors requested a summary for each district on water distribution and impacts.

Infrastructure Conditions and System Reliability

Chris Bergeron, P.E., Chief of Engineering, discussed the utility's aging infrastructure challenges and how deferred maintenance has frustrated residents. Mr. Bergeron also shared that even with sufficient funding it would be difficult to address all repairs and replacements at once due to the supply and demand of the labor force, and having repairs conducted throughout city neighborhoods at the same time.

The discussion continued to evaluate how post-Katrina FEMA dollars were spent. It was determined that FEMA approved funds for particular projects, not necessarily those that were identified by SWBNO at the time. Directors asked for a presentation and comparison of pre-Katrina operation and pipe replacement, messaging that can be shared with residents, and a plan on how the utility will move forward on improving infrastructure. Mr. Bergeron confirmed that he is exploring new technology for leak protection and determining the most proactive approach to combat the City's aging infrastructure.

Utility Financing and Capital Planning

Patrick Gaetjens, Infrastructure Finance Lead, shared an outline of the utility's financial profile. Currently, SWBNO has three funding sources that include water rates, sewer rates, and drainage millages. Funding for the utility is insufficient. Mr. Gaetjens went on to discuss how SWBNO obtains bonds, loans, and grants to help fulfill capital and operating demands. SWBNO's borrowing capacity has a rating of A- across all three major utility credit rating agencies (S&P Global, Fitch, and Moody's). This produces indirect cost savings to consumers based on low interest rates and pursuing loans that are forgiven to improve aging infrastructure and drainage overtime.

Statutory and Ethical Responsibilities of Board Members

Chanelle Collins, with the Office of Special Counsel, shared a presentation on the history and responsibilities of the Board of Directors. Ms. Collins provided an overview of pertinent governing provisions for the Board, including state statutes, public meetings laws, ethics standards, and the Board's bylaws.

Directors asked for guidance on disclosing conflicts of interest and whether Directors may be removed from the Board. Special Counsel encouraged the use of meeting minutes to express disapproval of action items during board meetings. At the request of the directors, staff provided information on the current reporting requirements to the City Council and other entities. Staff also confirmed that all attendance and report submissions are up to date for City Council compliance.

Governance Framework and Oversight Role of the Board

Director Kennedy reiterated the importance of the Board and the unique opportunity it presents to have citizen members, the City's administration, and the City Council serving together for a singular purpose. He encouraged board members to identify opportunities to directly connect with the community and key stakeholders. He also focused his remarks on continuing training and learning opportunities for the directors.

Director Kennedy also briefly revisited the topic of utility financing and how bond ratings can often be based on subjective information. He recommended being more proactive in sharing our progress and successes to ensure these are included in the public narrative.

Utility Operations and Strategies from a Federal Perspective

Andrew Sawyers, Ph.D., Director for Office of Wastewater Management (OWM), shared insight on SWBNO's water distribution action plan, as it tackles the aging infrastructure crisis throughout the City. He agreed with leadership's direction, that initial stabilization of the utility was the best approach in addressing recent water main breaks. He encouraged the Board and leadership to "think of the glass half full" while approaching chronic failure points. Sawyer also acknowledged the sentiment of century-old infrastructure as a nation-wide issue.

Mr. Sawyer, Ph.D.'s laid out the following recommendations: 1) fix what fails most and fix it soon 2) implement data-driven targets to inform priorities, 3) create affordability by design, 4) be transparent and create tangible outcomes to create trust, 5) leverage partnerships and relationships and 6) have repeatable programs of scale.

Board Governance Sessions: Roles, Responsibilities, and Effectiveness

Guest Speaker Deborah Grant spoke on the role(s), authority, and boundaries of the Board of Directors and leadership team. Directors' fiduciary duties were described with high regard to providing direction and oversight for the utility. While leadership functions were executed for operation and daily decisions by executive staff.

Directors discussed how personal values, constituent priorities, and other district services may not be equally aligned across the City. Speaker Grant encouraged Directors to focus on the City as a whole and being a Board with "One Voice." Directors were recommended not to "check out," and were encouraged to utilize public meeting minutes to convey viewpoints and priorities. In addition, Directors asked for processes on how to engage subject-matter experts to relay proper messaging to residents on their own.

Board Discussion and Reflections

Board Directors were asked to complete a self-reflection exercise on their engagement, collaboration, and plans to move forward as an effective body. Additional discussion on committee and board content was discussed to determine if there were opportunities for Q&A before action items are proposed at board meetings. All opportunities for change are being looked at by Board Relations to ensure effective board meetings and work efficiency.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:15 p.m.