



MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Thursday, September 25, 2025 – 10:30 AM
Warneck Pump Station
James W. Wright Conference Room
23557 NYS Rt. 37, Watertown, New York

The Development Authority of the North Country Board of Directors met in regular session in person and via Zoom Videoconference at the Warneck Pump Station, 23557 NYS Rt. 37, Watertown, New York on Thursday, September 25, 2025 at 10:30 AM.

Members Present

Voting

Margaret Murray, Chairperson
Mary Doheny*
Alex MacKinnon
Dennis Mastascusa*
Kenneth Bibbins *
Mark Hall
Thomas Hefferon
Eric Virkler

Non-Voting

Nancy Henry
Steve Hunt
Brian McGrath *

Members Absent

*Attended via videoconferencing.

Staff Present:

Carl Farone, Executive Director
Jennifer Staples, Chief Financial Officer
Carrie Tuttle, Chief Operating Officer
Stephen Bohmer, Director of Information Technology
Michelle Capone, Director of Regional Development
Thomas Haynes, Director of Engineering
Dawn Loudon, Comptroller
Laurie Marr, Director of Communications and Public Affairs
Brian Nutting, Director of Water Quality Management
Regina Rybka-Lagattuta, Director of Human Resources
Shawn Thornton, Director of Materials Management
David Wolf, Telecommunications Strategic Advisor
Brian Zuris, Director of Telecommunications
Angela Marra, Executive Assistant
Tonya Watson, Administrative Associate

Guests:

Jennifer Granzow, Counsel, Wladis Law Firm

1. Chairperson Murray called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM.
2. Chairperson Murray requested a roll call.
 - A quorum of voting and non-voting members was established.
3. Privilege of the Floor -
4. Upon a motion by M. Hall and seconded by E. Virkler, the minutes from the August 28, 2025 Board Meeting were unanimously approved.
5. Chairperson's Report
 - a. The next meeting will be October 23 at 10:30 AM at the Warneck Pump Station.
 - b. The last item on today's Agenda is the presentation of the Strategic Plan for fiscal year 2027. This is an opportunity for the Board to provide staff with input on the strategic priorities for the upcoming year.
6. Executive Director's Report
 - a. C. Farone shared images from the MMF Open House event on August 28th and stated that this event was a tremendous success with over 250 people attending. Guests started arriving early at 3:30 pm; the crowd was steady through 6:00 PM; and five full buses toured the facility. Staff did a great job engaging with and educating attendees on the many services we offer. The enthusiasm and interest shown at this event is a true testament to the important work done by the Authority.
 - b. C. Farone stated that ethics training used to be required every other year. A new requirement has been added that will require a "refresher" training during the years the formal training is not required. This training is required of all State employees, with state employees being defined as full-time, part-time, seasonal staff, officers and employees, staff of SUNY and CUNY campuses, and paid and unpaid board members. C. Farone will send an email including detailed instructions to the Board outlining how to access and successfully complete this training.
 - c. C. Farone shared this month's Authority staff update, that Water Quality Supervisor, Lucas Garrand, has earned his IIB, C and D Operator Licenses.
7. Finance –
 - a. Finance Report – Chief Financial Officer

J. Staples reviewed the highlights within the July year-to-date financials. The statement of net position shows the change between Assets and Total Liabilities, Deferred Outflows and Net Position increased by \$486,000. Three notable items within Assets are Loans Receivable, which increased over FYE 25 by \$1.7 million, with \$1 million being lent under the housing loan revolving fund and \$700,000 under the North Country Economic Development Fund in

FY26; Restricted Assets, which decreased to \$4.5 million due to several projects at Materials Management including the ongoing cell 14 construction, the landfill gas tie-in project, and the articulated hauler; and \$1.7 million made in loans for Regional Development resulting in this amount being moved from restricted assets to loans receivable. Capital Assets increased by \$2 million, and all was related to the Materials Management projects listed above, meaning they were taken out of restricted assets and moved to capital assets.

Under the Change in Net Position for All Units, Total Operating Revenue is lower than the year-to-date budget by \$620,000 and is all associated with the grant revenue and is associated with the timing of draws for the NTIA grant project at Telecom. An NTIA draw was completed in August for just under \$944,000 and funds have been received year-to-date and will be reflected within the August financials. MMF is the main reason for Customer Billings being over budget at the end of July as the tons received were over budget by 22,036 tons, mostly in asbestos as there are a number of special waste projects going on at this time. One project is being estimated at 28,000 tons of material hauled into the landfill alone. Overall Operating Expenses are under budget by \$553,000, with no other items requiring attention under Operating Expenses.

Non-Operating Revenue and Expense total is over budget by \$643,000 mainly associated with interest income. There is a notable decrease in interest for investments. In looking at what we were getting in April versus in September, it is about 50 basis points lower.

In summarizing the Change In Net Position, there was a year-to-date gain of \$1.9 million versus a year-to-date budgeted gain of \$1.3 million.

M. Hall asked how this interest rate decrease is going to affect our budget for year end, and further asked if we would be coming up short on what was estimated for interest. J. Staples responded that she doesn't think so, and that we're not going to be reinvesting in many of the items because we are spending money within the projects right now, and those items we are already invested in what we should see throughout the year. She feels that we are going to see market adjustments begin to move down from a positive to a negative soon, and will certainly affect FYE27.

Upon a motion by A. MacKinnon, and seconded by E. Virkler, financials ending July 31, 2025, were unanimously approved.

8. Technical Services Summary Report –

a. Non-Lewis County Contracts –

- I. Town of Clifton, TSA, Amendment 2 Newton Falls Wastewater Disinfection System Improvement Project, Total Agreement Amount of \$33,000.00, 3/11/22 – 7/1/26, St. Lawrence County
- II. Town of Diana, SSA, Amendment 1 SCADA Services Agreement for Water System Improvements Project, Total Agreement Amount of \$64,00.00, 6/2/22 – 12/31/25, Lewis County

- III. Village of Waddington, TSA, NBRC Grant Admin (AP-NBRC-350) Downtown Water System Improvement Project, Total Agreement Amount \$15,860.00, 10/1/25 – 12/31/26, St. Lawrence County

Upon a motion by E. Virkler, and seconded by M. Hall, Board Contract Summary Table items numbered I through III for the month of September were unanimously approved.

b. Lewis County Contracts –

- IV. Lewis County, TSA, Comprehensive Plan, Total Agreement Amount \$4,000.00, 9/25/25 – 12/31/25, Lewis County

Upon a motion by M. Hall, and seconded by A. MacKinnon, Board Contract Summary Table item numbered IV for the month of September was approved. E. Virkler abstained.

9. Materials Management –

- a. Resolution No. 2025-09-54, authorizes the Executive Director, or his assigned designee, is hereby authorized to act as the project's "Authorized Representative", and to enter into any necessary contracts to administer said grant.

Upon a motion by A. McKinnon, and seconded by M. Hall, Resolution No. 2025-09-54, Leachate Pre-Treatment Study, Materials Management Facility, Authorization Resolution, was unanimously approved.

10. Regional Development –

a. Loan Report –

M. Capone stated there is nothing new to report regarding the loan programs.

- b. Resolution No. 2025-09-55, extends the term of the Clayton Improvement Association Economic Development Fund loan for an additional 6 months subject to the Term Sheet attached to the resolution.

Upon a motion by T. Hefferon and seconded by A. MacKinnon, Resolution No. 2025-09-55, Economic Development Fund, Clayton Improvement Association, Loan Extension, was unanimously approved.

11. Strategic Planning – PowerPoint Presentation

C. Farone introduced the review of the 2027 Strategic Plan, stating that each year we create this strategic plan to reflect priorities, challenges, and opportunities foreseen for the upcoming fiscal year. The strategy being presented today incorporates elements the staff believes to be critical to maintaining and enhancing our service delivery, annual review, and input. This is an opportunity for the Board to review the plan, ask questions, offer ideas or make suggestions today or over the upcoming week. We will integrate this information into the plan to be utilized as

a guiding document by all Authority staff for the upcoming fiscal year and during budget preparation. C. Farone further stated the only thing not seen today will be the efforts that it takes to maintain ongoing operations. Division directors will present on each of their strategic initiatives as a glimpse of what is provided as part of our core services and internal support.

M. Capone handed out Next Move NY pins to all Board members and continued with a presentation of Next Move NY's ongoing implementation of strategic priorities. C. Farone commented that a presentation of the Next Move NY job portal will be made to the Board once it is operational.

S. Hunt shared from the state's perspective that this has been a real success. They recently presented to a committee of commissioners for state agencies where they were all familiar with this program and are excited by it. He further shared that there is another program called "Move In New York" that seems inspired by Next Move NY. M. Capone shared that she is excited to be presenting on this next week to the Division of Budget.

M. Capone continued with a review of the ongoing implementation of current initiatives, the proposed staffing plan to add another project development specialist, and the Authorities role in implementing strategic initiatives and assisting municipalities. C. Farone commented the staffing plan is a priority to help free up time for M. Capone so she can focus on strategic development in the three-county region.

E. Virkler shared that he has worked with Michelle and Matt for a couple years, and their services and support are always incredibly helpful. In the economic development world, there is always room for assistance. If we have the resources to provide that to the communities it is a good thing.

T. Haynes presented his Engineering review of implementing strategic internal Authority initiatives and assisting in implementing strategic initiatives for municipal partners.

A. MacKinnon asked what the picture displayed during the PowerPoint was. T. Haynes responded it is the Deferiet Paper Mill during demolition, and is being sprayed with water for dust mitigation and control because asbestos was present.

M. Hall asked in reference to our focus being shifted to more internal, does this hurt the external part of our work. T. Haynes replied it does not as we have increased staff because both internal and external portions are critical.

K. Bibbins expanded on this because he share's M. Hall's concern, but he also applauded the initiative of trying to help ourselves where we can. He also expressed concern because these sectors are diverse and specialized and he asked if we have industry association memberships or partners to work with to ensure we're near the landing edge of the industry regarding innovative techniques. T. Haynes responded that we attend several conferences each year to ensure we are up to date. We also still involve consultants on some of our larger capital projects. C. Tuttle added that our larger capital projects do still require outside support. Our staff are continually learning with consultants as we work through

these projects, which will also allow us to do a better job going forward. This acts as a buffer on specialized projects by protecting our liability on regulatory issues.

S. Thornton presented about Materials Management maximizing existing resources through internal process improvements, staff development, and waste diversion strategies.

A. MacKinnon commented that he has been involved in materials management longer than he has been part of the Development Authority, and trash is something that every person in the tri-county area is impacted by every day. The Authority has other activities, but the landfill still impacts each of us every day. We could go look at the way it is being done or we hear reports back from people analyzing it confirming it is being run as one of the best in the state and at some of the cheapest prices. It is to him that this facility is well managed and staff is constantly looking for ways to improve it. He feels strongly that every man, woman, and child should visit the landfill at least once in their life, stand on top of that pile, and understand what it means.

C. Farone added that the facility is managed so well that we are able to hold meetings on site, and decisions this Board has made have extended the life of the original landfill by two years.

B. Zuris reviewed Telecom's plan to maximize the network value by taking proactive measures to expand the network utilization and increasing operational efficiencies by implementing initiatives to maximize operational efficiencies.

A. MacKinnon commented that St. Lawrence County has 3,000 square miles, 150,000 people, and many miles of roadway still in need of the internet. Today internet is very important and without the public-private partnership that the Authority offers, and lets the private sector take care of, the final part, Verizon may not come up here to spend millions of dollars to service a few people. It is so important for the Authority to provide this, and stay abreast of everything going on. He further stated it is important to have more people thinking about this and possibly moving projects forward, and he is excited to see this as he makes the move from private sector. B. Zuris stated it is nice to see the perspective changing to help as many people as possible rather than just focusing on the dollars and cents.

M. Hall asked in reference to future needs and demands, how we estimate what the demand of AI is going to put on everything. B. Zuris responded that the goal is to create the best plan with the information we have today and as demand grows, we plan to have the proper assets in place to handle it.

B. Nutting reviewed Water Quality's plan to provide support to municipal partners and customers, prioritizing the positioning of trained and licensed staff to meet municipal demand, and increasing efficiencies to support service delivery.

M. Hall asked if we have looked at anything regarding cybersecurity for our water and wastewater plants. He further stated that he was recently on a call with the Health Department's Bureau of Water Supply and they are coming out with legislation that is going to be awful for smaller water plants to comply with. He also shared that he is facilitating a meeting tomorrow with local legislators who have

rural water to discuss the proposed legislation. He further stated that the people currently in these facilities are not capable of handling cybersecurity issues, and he wonders if this is something the Authority is looking at. B. Nutting responded that the Authority facilities are all set, but this may be an opportunity for the Authority to help with compliance of other plants as we move forward. We do have some plants that we remote into now to operate and Steve [Bohmer] is very diligent on making sure we have all the right updates so no one can get into our systems.

M. Hall stated he is very comfortable with the Authority's systems but it is the external systems that could be a problem. B. Nutting stated that there was a recent training about vulnerability and emergency response plans. M. Hall indicated that he also attended this training and it is what prompted him to facilitate the meeting he is holding tomorrow. C. Farone indicated that the cybersecurity issue will be added to the Strategic Plan and we anticipate communities coming to us with questions or asking how we can help them.

C. Tuttle reviewed the critical capital projects; specifically referring to the progress of critical Materials Management capital improvement projects, implementing grant-funded projects to improve last mile services within Telecom, and advancing Water Quality critical capital improvement projects supporting Fort Drum.

M. Hall asked if the make-ready projects are a way for the utilities to get the pole updates paid for. C. Tuttle replied that the Climate Leadership Community Protection Act (CLCPA) was requiring additional electrification for electric vehicles, along with several other requirements, and National Grid has indicated their transmission network is not where it needs to be to support these goals. They have major projects underway to increase transmission capability and meet these requirements. Historically make-ready has been handled much more informally, however today it is a much more scientific process requiring engineering analysis, strand analysis, and additional sag calculations due to the additional weight of the fiber. This doesn't mean the requirements have changed, but the enforcement of the requirements has. National Grid is subcontracting many of these evaluations and using outside engineering firms to prepare their estimates, but it can cause delays up to a year or more making it difficult to include accurate numbers in the grant application. C. Farone commented this process is increasing costs exponentially in rural areas. B. Zuris stated this results in more demand for pole space today as well. C. Tuttle said there are many factors playing into this resulting in the Authority operating the new portion of infrastructure that's been constructed and will become part of our network. The takeaway from these projects is almost all are behind schedule and over budget requiring us to change the original scope of work.

R. Rybka-Lagattuta continued by presenting on the investment in human resources to plan for succession planning in the future.

J. Staples reviewed the timeline of the financial system replacement process of the enterprise resource planning (ERP). C. Farone stated that we have an Authority with less than 100 people and we are trying to find a new system within our price range. Going through this process all the vendors recognize the complexities of what the Authority does from a financial perspective, in that we have 14 different operating companies with allocations and projects making it difficult to find a system

that can replace what we currently have. There are certain pieces we have to have, and we want to ensure we get this right.

M. Hall commented that there is quite a uniqueness to everything we do that makes this so hard. J. Staples commented that our accounting firm has indicated we are a complicated organization with critical needs when it comes to trying to put all the functions into the system for the different divisions. In the end, the system needs to function appropriately to provide us with a clean and clear audit.

S. Bohmer reviewed the Information Technology (IT) plan to enhance resiliency, with IT security being a primary focus of the Authority. C. Farone commented that we participate in 3rd party testing where S. Bohmer is the only person who knows it is happening, and every two years we rotate the 3rd party vendor so we do not recognize the testing each year and the new vendors look for different routes in.

C. Farone concluded the presentation by discussing streamlining administrative practices, specifically in becoming more efficient in the way we do business and increasing the presence of the Authority in the public to raise awareness of Authority initiatives.

M. Hall asked that we add the cybersecurity to the strategic plan, and further stated that he appreciates the forward thinking and project building capacity. He further stated that strategic plans typically are reviewed only once a year, but we look at it throughout the year. He appreciates the effort by everyone on staff for putting this together and closed by sharing a quote a boss shared with him at the beginning of his career, "Don't bring me problems, bring me solutions."

12. Adjourn -

Upon a motion by M. Hall and seconded by E. Virkler, the meeting was adjourned at 12:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Dennis Mastascusa
Board Secretary