

BISHOP AREA WASTEWATER AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 16, 2025

1) CALL TO ORDER

Chair Carr called the Bishop Area Wastewater Authority Board of Directors Meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. in City Hall, 377 West Line Street, Bishop, California in-person and via Zoom.

2) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice Chair Schwartz.

3) ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Chair Carr

Vice Chair Schwartz

Board Member Muchovej

Board Member Pachucki

Others Present:

Nora Gamino, Authority Administrator

Jessica Ortiz, Authority Secretary

Eastern Sierra Community Service District Staff

Bishop Paiute Tribal Council Members / Staff

- 4) PUBLIC COMMENT: NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC: See modified public comment procedure above. Under California law the Board of Directors is prohibited from generally discussing or taking action on items not included in the agenda; however, the Board of Directors may briefly respond to comments or questions received from members of the public. Therefore, the Board of Directors will be provided with all public comments but will not generally discuss the matter or take action on it.

No public comments were received.

5) CONSENT CALENDAR NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC: All matters under the Consent Calendar are considered routine by the Authority and will be acted on by one motion.

5a.) Ratification of Audit Engagement Letter

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Audit Engagement Letter

No public comments were made.

Motion/Board Member Muchovej

Seconded/Board Member Pachucki

Board Member Muchovej made a motion to approve the consent calendar.

Motion passed 4-0

Ayes: Board Member Pachucki, Board Member Muchovej, Vice Chair Schwartz, Chair Carr

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

6) NEW BUSINESS

6a.) Regional Septage Disposal Discussion

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Administrator Gamino reviewed item with Board.

Inyo County Sunland Reservation has exceeded their permit septic waste capacity. Lahontan District has reached out to the city and district regarding taking on septage waste. If so, it is necessary to look at long-term and short-term solutions. Does BAWA board want to take on septage waste as a long-term solution?

Inyo County Public Works supervisor, Mike Errante, Jan Zimmerman and Ben Letton from Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board attended via Zoom. Also, in attendance via Zoom is Noah Campbell, design consultant for Inyo County's new sewer ponds.

Mike Errante provided an update on Inyo County septage ponds, stating, the ponds are being redesigned and relocated; the proposed location is being presented to Lahontan. Noah Campbell states ponds are old and at capacity. Maintenance and operations, in general, are difficult.

Chair Schwartz asked for County clarification whether they want to move their septage to the new wastewater treatment plant or is the County asking the Board to assist in taking some of the load.

Board Member Muchovej asked for clarification on “septage” and what type of waste it consists of. Mike Errante provided a description of septage. Indicating it is black water collected from port-a-potties and vaults. The waste is disposed of in an evaporative pond, liquids evaporate and the remaining solid waste is disposed of in a landfill.

Administrator Gamino indicated materials such as sludge and grease to be disposed of at land fill. These materials cannot be disposed of at the wastewater plant. The wastewater treatment cannot accommodate these materials. Although materials are screened at the treatment plant, they will cause problems.

Mike Errante states the county’s goal is to continue accepting septage waste once their plant is up and running. However, he realizes a backup may be a good option. He proposes a contingency between Inyo County and BAWA board, if possible.

Administrator Gamino states BAWA would look at providing a long-term solution. If a short-term solution is required, the City of Bishop and ESCSD would evaluate independently. The current plant is currently not set up to accept septic waste. Administrator Gamino states that operations would need to be modified. It would require additional staffing and a receiving station. With these requirements, a long-term solution is the most viable option.

Board Member Muchovej joined in, adding that Inyo County is seeking a short-term solution rather than long-term. Mike Errante added that Inyo County was not seeking assistance. Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board contacted the city seeking assistance on the county’s behalf. Inyo County is on track to open their board with plans to break ground within a year.

Chair Carr asked if Inyo County is increasing their capacity or meeting current standards. Mike Errante indicated they are increasing their capacity. Noah Cambell added that ponds will double in capacity and will be built to meet Title 27 requirements.

Jan Zimmerman states they would like to see a long-term solution. The landfill is overloaded, which can lead to the community having to travel long distances to safely dispose of waste or worse, illegal dumping in the desert. Board Member Muchovej asked if Lahontan would be able to provide funding to the BAWA board to assist in this problem. He does not want to see BAWA’s assistance affect taxpayers. Jan will look for state funding, perhaps from Prop 4. Funding could be available if qualifications are met as a disadvantage community.

Board Member Muchovej asked if Inyo County would remain as the principal party for this project, will BAWA be backup? As the party in need, will Inyo County provide the

necessary staff to make this happen? He reiterates that BAWA's involvement should not fall onto taxpayers.

Vice Chair Schwartz asked for clarification regarding BAWA being utilized as a backup. Administrator Gamino responded, stating the design would be modified to accept septage waste from tanks, port-a-potties and vault toilets. Absolutely NO GREASE.

Chair Carr asked if BAWA were to support these efforts, would engineers accept the design changes to the new plant. Administrator Gamino responded that it would be possible. She added that during a tour of Fort Bragg's Wastewater treatment plant, staff was able to see the Sequox Aero-Mod system and septage receiving station at work. Both systems are automated with a capital cost of \$200,000 and staffing requirements of 2-6 hours a month. Low maintenance and cost, however, it is limited to residential waste.

If changes are to be made, PER grant will not cover cost. Changes will need to be added to the scope of work when RFQs are sent out to design consultants.

Vice Chair Schwartz would like to know if new land developments in the area would have septage tanks and how those would be addressed in accordance with the new plant. Administrator Gamino added that studies were conducted to determine the size of the plant. If assistance is provided to Inyo County, boundaries would need to be set.

Mike Errante wanted to add that tourism plays a big part in generating waste.

Chair Carr states that the Forest Service and BLM are also experiencing issues with their waste disposal. Board Member Muchovej asked for clarification on how those agencies dispose of their waste. Administrator Gamino added that the agencies have facilities that are pumped by trucks that dispose of the waste at the Sunland landfill.

Board Member Muchovej asked if the PER Grant, issued through the State Revolving Fund, could be amended to include this project, could Lahontan advocate to the State Water Board to match potential funds. Administrator Gamino states the grant is locked. But money may be moved around with funds already approved.

Administrator Gamino would like direction from the BAWA board before finalizing the design phase. Should a septage receiving station be incorporated into the design at this time? Board Member Muchovej would like to see it incorporated into the design now but states this should not be a commitment for BAWA.

Vice Chair Schwartz and Board Member Muchovej agreed an economic analysis should be conducted.

Administrator Gamino states the taxpayers will not absorb the burden. Rate fees and charges can be implemented. Attorney Simmons states a cost study could be done

followed by adoption of a resolution or ordinance.

Board Member Muchovej expressed concern over infrastructure costs and how it would be paid for.

Mike Errante states he cannot guarantee financial assistance will be provided from the county but suggests BAWA serving as a backup is beneficial to the community.

Board Member Pachucki is concerned about operations and how this will run.

Administrator Gamino added perspective on operations based on Fort Bragg tour. Steve from ESCSD provided his perspective, having worked at a plant with a septic receiving station. From experience an issue with the septic receiving station is a truck collecting both sewage and grease waste may lead to the residual grease building up and affecting operations.

Chair Carr suggests further research needs to be done to answer questions.

Administrator Gamino will reach out to Lumos and get reporting done on operations and cost.

Public Works Lead Maintenance worker Hector Martinez discussed Fort Bragg experience. The receiving station was clean and is user friendly, overall, it was a positive experience.

No public comment was made.

6b.) Wastewater Treatment Plant Tours Debrief – Fort Bragg and Quincy

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Administrator Gamino shared her experience visiting Fort Bragg and Quincy wastewater plants. Both plants run on the Sequox Aero-Mod system. Staff gained feedback on what the plants needed or changes that were wanted once up and running.

City and District representatives visited the Quincy and Fort Bragg treatment plants for comparison. Staff were impressed with plant operations.

Board Member Muchovej asked about the electricity needed for plant operation.

Administrator Gamino stated that these plants have high power consumption. Board solar arrays will not generate sufficient energy to maintain the plant. Additional solar or electrical power will be needed. Board Member Muchovej discussed an agreement for land purchase from DWP. Its intended use was for nitrate sampling; however, it may be possible to acquire the land and use it for a potential solar farm.

Public comment was made by Coral Taylor from Carollo Engineers, a wastewater engineering firm. Coral has expressed interest in submitting for a future RFP and is happy to address any questions or concerns regarding wastewater plants.

7) STAFF AND BOARD REPORTS

Administrator Gamino provided an update on the State Revolving fund; agreements will be ready by the end of the year. PER is eligible for reimbursement January 1, 2025.

Administrator Gamino will work with Matt Bullis on developing the language for an RFQ. The RFQ is expected to be released in January 2026 once the agreements are signed.

The JPA ad hoc committee representatives are Karen Schwartz, Russ Adams from ESCSD, Steven Orihuela from the Bishop Paiute Tribe. A date will be set for early October to set first meeting.

Administrator Gamino shared that a land acquisition from DWP is on hold. The size of the parcel will be determined based on the needs of waste disposal. Board Member Pachucki asked if direction from the Board was required for moving forward with an Aero-Mod system. Administrator Gamino stated it is not necessary as it was included in the PER.

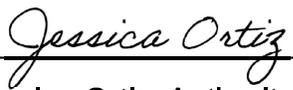
8) FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- 9) ADJOURNMENT: The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Bishop Area Wastewater Authority will be December 16, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. in the Bishop City Council Chambers, 301 West Line Street, Bishop.

Chair Carr adjourned the meeting at 9:14 a.m. to the next regularly scheduled meeting on December 16, 2025.


Seth Carr (Feb 19, 2026 17:11:44 PST)

Seth Carr, Chair


Jessica Ortiz, Authority Secretary