

DISTRICT DIGEST

Vol. 11 / Issue 1 / Feb-Mar 2022

BRUNSWICK SEWER DISTRICT *Protecting Maine's Environment*

ROBERT PONTAU APPOINTED AS NEW GENERAL MANAGER

At the December 16, 2021 meeting of the Brunswick Sewer District Board of Trustees, Robert A. Pontau Jr. was appointed as the new General Manager effective January 1, 2022. Rob had previously served as the Assistant General Manager since his hire in 2011. He will be the ninth General Manager of the District that was founded in 1947.

Here are a few questions posed to him at the beginning of his stewardship:

You have served the District as Assistant GM for the past 10 yrs. This new career chapter is now as General Manager. What has been the biggest change for you in this new capacity?

I didn't think it was possible to be in more meetings, but I was wrong. The first few weeks have been nothing but meetings! I expect it to level off a bit once I get some time in this new role, but with all the projects I want to get rolling and the different people and organizations I am interacting with, my days are pretty full. I enjoy being busy so that is good, but fewer meetings would be nice. Otherwise, the biggest change has been interacting with staff. Many of us are or will be adjusting to new roles, so we are learning and changing every day. This requires much more communication and effort so we can ensure these changes have a positive outcome.

What are your initial goals as General Manager of the District?

I want to institute lean business practices and increase our user base. It's a difficult task because we have certain requirements and laws that must be met as a quasi-municipal entity, but I think we can still apply the principles and practices to improve our efficiency and ultimately provide better value to our customers. As a utility most of our costs are fixed. Chemical and energy costs fluctuate some, but most of our expenses are locked in. Our facility has excess capacity, so the best way to help our existing customers, and our community, is to bring more customers into the system and spread the fixed costs among a greater number of customers.

The rapid changes in our world, science, technology, and business have produced significant challenges to our lives. What up-coming challenges do you see affecting the District and how will you help address them?

Great question. Obviously COVID-19 presented us with a wealth of new challenges over the past couple years and it has persisted. We have learned a lot from the pandemic. I can't imagine any new challenges will be more difficult than that, but if so, we'll be prepared. I've always noted that if we have a willing attitude, great work ethic, and flexibility, then we can adapt to any challenges we face. Beyond the pandemic, our biggest challenge is always finances. Everything we do requires funding and it's difficult to balance our rates with the need to maintain our assets. Utilizing lean business practices and increasing our customer base is how I plan to approach the financial challenge.

GENERAL MANAGER RECEIVES VOLUNTEERISM AWARD

At the February 2, 2022 meeting of the Maine Water Utilities Association (MWUA) the District's General Manager, Rob Pontau, was presented with the 2021 Jim Doherty Excellence in Volunteerism award. The plaque reads "In recognition of outstanding service, contribution or assistance to a Maine water utility, the utility's employees or staff, and the water works profession. Going well above and beyond normal customer service to simply provide a helping hand." The recognition was mostly related to the "Waters Up?" podcast that Rob pioneered in 2021 (<https://youtube.com/watersup>). Congrats, Rob! We are proud of you.



*Rob Pontau, General Manager,
Brunswick Sewer District*

Recognition

Congratulations to our employees celebrating an anniversary in the 1st quarter:

Jennifer Nicholson	<i>Operations & Compliance Manager</i>	28 years
Bonnie Shippen	<i>Administrative Assistant</i>	10 years
Erik Walling	<i>Collection/Pumping Operator</i>	7 years

We thank you Jen, Bonnie, and Erik for your years of service to the District!

RATE INCREASE & NEW SERVICE CHARGE EFFECTIVE 01/01/2022

Effective January 1, 2022 rates for metered customers will be a minimum charge of \$42.20 for the first 500 cubic feet, and a \$8.48 for each 100 cubic feet thereafter. Rates have also increased for roof drain, catch basin and flat rate fixture customers. In addition, all accounts will be charged a \$6 service fee per quarter. Please go to our website www.brunswicksewer.org for details.

REMINDERS

2022 OUTSIDE WATERING CREDITS

Do you do substantial watering of a lawn or garden? Do you have a pool or hot tub to fill? Do you flood an ice rink in the winter? You may be eligible for an outside watering credit. **TO REQUEST THIS ADJUSTMENT, PLEASE E-MAIL info@brunswicksewer.org or CALL 729-0148 in the spring of 2022 when you begin watering outside** to be placed on the list for the entire 2022 season. **Your e-mail or call to us must be received before bills are processed. The district will NOT process any late notifications.**

POLICY AMENDMENTS EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2020

These two amendments require the installation of a sub-meter to receive an adjustment for outside water use. You may view the "Sewer Use Billing Adjustment Policy" which can be found on our webpage (www.brunswicksewer.org) under the "POLICY" tab.

New Construction/Connections: All new residential and commercial connections to the public sewer system who wish to receive a billing adjustment for water not entering the public sewer **MUST use a sub-meter** per the requirements noted in the "SUB-METERED use" section.

Property Ownership Transfers: All new owners of public sewer connected residential and commercial properties who wish to receive a billing adjustment for water not entering the public sewer **MUST use a**

sub-meter per the requirements noted in the "SUB-METERED use" section.

Please contact us should you have questions concerning these policy amendments.

OTHER REMINDERS

When experiencing a sewer system problem, please contact the district **FIRST**. The 24-hour emergency number is **207-729-0148**. Make sure your plumber calls Maine Natural Gas before any tools are placed in your line.

Thinking of doing some yard work?

Before your contractor digs, call DIG SAFE (1-888-344-7233). It's free and it's the law.

Sewer bills may be paid by:

- Credit card or by e-check online, with a fee charged. (Fee is 2.75% of transaction amount with a \$1.95 minimum. Fee for e-check \$1.) Please visit our website www.brunswicksewer.org for instructions.
- Automatic deduction from your checking or savings account (no fee charged). Go to our website and select the "I Want To" tab, then "Set Up Direct Payment." Complete the form and mail it to us at 10 Pine Tree Road, Brunswick, ME 04011 to complete the set up. Do not send in paperwork as a form of payment for your **current** bill; we need to process the set up with the banking institution **prior** to the billing.

Please like us on Facebook. Follow us @brunswicksewer on Twitter and Instagram.



FUN FACTS FROM THE SEWER GUY

SANITARY MAINTENANCE HOLE (SMH)

Formerly referred to as a manhole, (utility hole, maintenance hole or sewer hole) an SMH is an opening to a confined space such as a shaft, utility vault, or large vessel. Manholes give personnel and equipment access to sewer lines for inspection, testing, and cleaning. They are built in areas where there is a change in the sewer line direction, slope, elevation, pipe size, or junctions. The circular, usually cast iron, plates seen on the roads cover underground confined spaces that serve a functional role in the making and success of a sewer system.

SMH COVERS

The standard SMH cover weighs more than 205 pounds (113 kilograms). SMH covers need to strike the correct balance between being heavy enough to not get rattled or dislodged when busy traffic drives over them, but not being so heavy that service workers can't reasonably lift them with a manhole hook.