

City partnership will pay for free lead filters for PWSA customers

Mayor announces a new plan to provide free lead filters to Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority customers.

March 8, 2017 11:23 AM

Don Hopy and Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

City residents concerned about lead levels in their drinking water soon will be able to get a free filter and also some help paying for replacement of lead-containing service lines.

Mayor Bill Peduto announced Wednesday the establishment of a \$1 million "Safe Water Plan" aimed at providing free lead filters to every Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority and Pennsylvania American Water Co. customer in the city.

"This is a stopgap. This is a Band-Aid on a solution that's going to be over a decade in solving," the mayor said. "Decades of inadequate maintenance of our infrastructure has led to a situation where our pipes are breaking.

"The system itself is in disrepair. And hundreds of millions of dollars will be needed to solve it over the course of the next decade or more. But in the meantime, we want to make sure children, parents and grandparents all have safe drinking water."

Thursday, the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh will vote on implementation of a \$500,000 Replace Old Lead Line Program, which will offer low-income property owners loans at 3 percent interest to cover the costs of replacing their lead service lines. Line replacement costs run from \$3,000 to more than \$10,000.

PWSA's treated water contains no detectable lead, but it can pick up lead in corroded service lines — the pipes that carry water from mains beneath the street into residences, and from soldered pipe joints and interior plumbing. It's a concern because lead exposure can cause serious health problems, especially for children and pregnant women.

PWSA estimates that 25 percent of its 80,000 customers get their water through lead service lines. It doesn't know where many of those lines are located but is conducting research to find out.

Priority in issuing the water filters will be given to residents whose lines test at or above 10 parts per billion for lead, those in areas where the PWSA will be doing its own lead service line replacements starting this spring, and to low-income residents, the city said.

Many details remain to be worked out, including when the program will begin, but it will be administered by the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority and Pennsylvania American, the city's two public water providers.

Plans are to give homeowners and renters "point of use" filters to be installed at the tap. The city will also offer to install "point of entry" filters on water service lines going into schools, community and senior centers and other public buildings.

Peoples Natural Gas has volunteered to pay for half of the initial \$1 million program cost, with the city and PWSA each paying a quarter of the cost.

"Peoples Gas is once again proving itself as one of Pittsburgh's greatest corporate citizens," Mr. Peduto said in a news release, noting that the company offers grants to customers in need of assistance in replacing home appliances.

"PWSA customers are also Peoples Gas customers, and Peoples is proud to partner with the City and PWSA to address the most immediate and pressing need to assure safe drinking water," said Morgan O'Brien, Peoples president and chief executive officer.

The mayor's announcement comes after calls by Councilwoman Deb Gross, a PWSA board member, to provide filters to water users facing high rates of lead in their water.

"I'm incredibly grateful to the city and Peoples Natural Gas and PWSA for committing the monies," Ms. Gross said. "Last week, we were really prioritizing households with children. And today, a week later, we're talking about all households in the City of Pittsburgh."

Aly Shaw, organizer for the Our Water Campaign, a coalition of organizations working on water issues, issued a statement supporting the free filter program.

"These filters are a critical first step as we work to make sure our water system remains a reliable public resource that provides everyone access to clean, lead-free water," Ms. Shaw said. "We look forward to getting these filters into homes, schools and community centers as fast as possible, and making sure that residents have a seat at the table as we develop longer-term plans for meeting our city's water needs."

The URA loan program, if approved, will offer loans up to \$10,000, with repayment schedules up to 10 years. The program would be offered to borrowers with incomes below 120 percent of the area median income.

According to a URA report on the proposed loan program, the PWSA must annually replace about 1,450 lead water service lines it owns in the public right of way. The program would provide financial assistance to homeowners for replacement of privately owned lead lines leading into their homes.

Although Allegheny County Controller Chelsa Wagner was “encouraged” by the mayor’s free filter program, she said in a release that the proposed low interest loan program for service line replacement would be burdensome for low-income families and doesn’t adequately address what she termed the city’s “public health drinking water crisis.”

She said the PWSA is better suited to take on the expense of replacing the private water lines, and she noted that many Urban Redevelopment Authority loan programs are zero interest or provide grant money that doesn’t have to be repaid.


“With water and sewer rates rapidly increasing as it is, it is shocking that the city proposes to place an additional burden on homeowners,” she said.

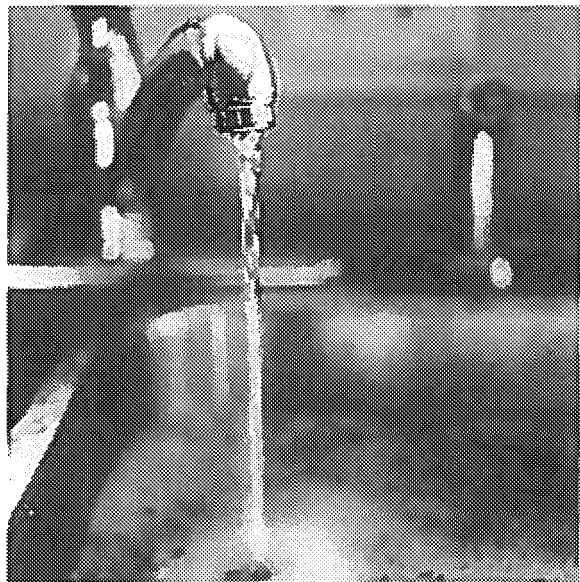
Don Hopey: dhopey@post-gazette.com, 412-263-1983, or on Twitter @donhopey.

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<http://triblive.com/local/allegheeny/12042133-74/lead-filters-lines>

Pittsburgh unveils \$1M plan to address lead in drinking water

BOB BAUDER  (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Wednesday, March 8, 2017, 1:30 p.m.



Pittsburgh is placing a large "Band-aid" on the city's lead-contaminated drinking water problem with a \$1 million plan to supply every home, school and public building with filters, the mayor said Wednesday.

People's Gas is kicking in \$500,000 and the city and the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority are supplying \$250,000 apiece to pay for the filters, which will be distributed in coming weeks. Mayor Bill Peduto said distribution details have yet to be worked out.

"Forty-eight hours ago, the president of People's Gas, Morgan O'Brien, made a phone call to our chief of staff, Kevin Acklin, saying we want to be able to help to get people water filters," Peduto said. "We were able to round up a quarter-million (dollars) out of the city's budget and a quarter-million out of PWSA's budget. This will supply all water customers in the city with filters."

Peduto called the filters a stopgap in solving a widespread problem of lead waterlines. Officials believe at least 20,000 homes have lead water lines that must be replaced.

Pittsburgh's Urban Redevelopment Authority board of directors on Thursday is expected to vote on a program that will offer 10-year loans of up to \$10,000 at a rate of 3 percent to help low-income residents replace water lines. Peduto said the city is seeking a change in state law that would permit PWSA to replace lines for homeowners.

"This is a Band-aid on a solution that's going to be over a decade in solving," Peduto said. "Hundreds of millions of dollars will be needed to solve it over the next decade or more, but in the meantime we want to be sure that children and parents and grandparents all have safe drinking water."

People's spokesman Barry Kukovich said the company contributed because the cause fits its criteria for making charitable donations to economic development and human health initiatives.

"All of these people are our customers," he said. "Nobody wants a Flint, Mich., here."

Flint's water supply in 2014 was found to be contaminated with lead.

City Councilwoman Deb Gross of Highland Park, who serves on the PWSA board, announced a fundraising campaign late last month to raise money for water filters. Gross said she was unsure whether publicity from her campaign prompted People's to act.

"I don't know how the conversation started," she said. "They didn't reach out to me, but I'm really grateful for this commitment."

PWSA announced in July that lead in the drinking water exceeded an EPA standard of 15 parts per billion. In January, the authority reported lead levels had decreased from 22 parts per billion to 18 parts per billion.

Residents will receive point-of-use filters, which attach to a tap. Schools and public buildings will be equipped with filters that attach to a main water pipe and filter water as it enters a building.

Peduto said residents with lead levels at 10 parts per billion or higher and low-income residents would have first preference in receiving the filters.

PWSA, separately, is addressing the problem by identifying and replacing lead service lines running from water mains to homeowners' property lines, studying possible sources of lead infiltration and identifying water treatment chemicals that can reduce corrosion from lead pipes.

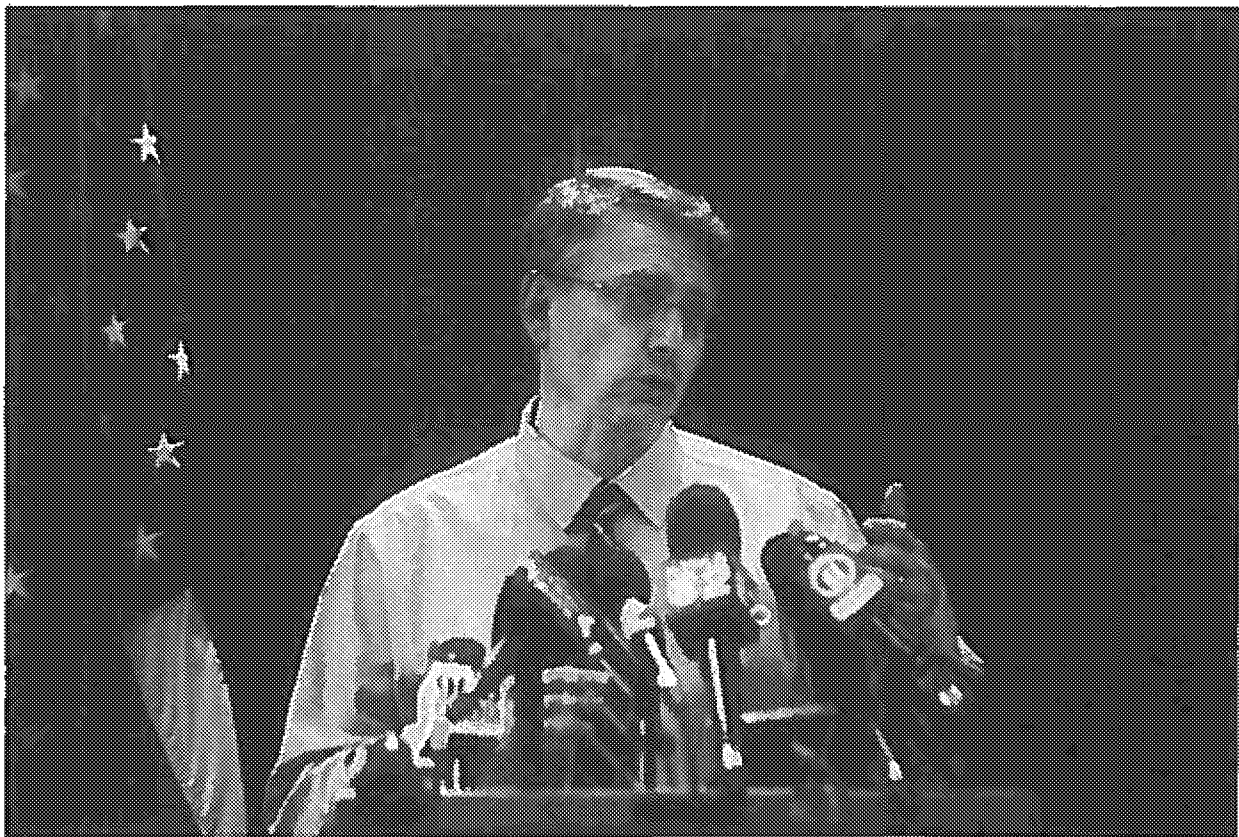
PWSA has awarded \$4 million in contracts to replace 1,000 to 1,500 lead lines by early July.

Property owners are responsible for the line to their house, business or other structure.

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com (<mailto:bbauder@tribweb.com>).

Peduto taps 'blue-ribbon' panel to restructure troubled PWSA

NATASHA LINDSTROM [🐦 \(https://twitter.com/NewsNatasha\)](https://twitter.com/NewsNatasha) | Friday, March 10, 2017, 3:15 p.m.



Nate Smallwood | Tribune-Review

Bernard R. Lindstrom, the director of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, speaks to the press regarding the boil order at the Allegheny County Emergency Operations Center on Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2017.

Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto has tapped seven influential government, nonprofit, academic and business executives to guide the first phase of restructuring the debt- and

controversy-laden Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, officials announced Friday.

The planned overhaul comes amid mounting uncertainty over the future of the authority and its ability to operate effectively.

PWSA Interim Executive Director Bernard L. Lindstrom's six-month agreement to work as an independent contractor expires on Sunday, and no one, as of late Friday, is set to replace him.

The authority's board is in talks with Lindstrom about renewing his contract, Peduto spokeswoman Katie O'Malley said.

Kevin Acklin, chief of staff to Peduto, said that Peduto would like Lindstrom to stay.

"We appreciate the leadership of interim Executive Director Lindstrom," Acklin told the Trib, "and have invited him to extend his engagement with PWSA to help oversee the reorganization."

Lindstrom did not return a request for comment. Neither did several PWSA board members.

The authority is going on more than a year without a permanent leader.

When Lindstrom was hired in September, PWSA board Chair Alex Thomson told the Trib (<http://triblive.com/news/alleggheny/11064286-74/director-lindstrom-army>) the board intended to do a "robust and full search" to hire a permanent director by April.

When asked about the delay, Acklin emphasized that city officials are focusing on a long-term restructuring plan.

Acklin will be on Peduto's new "blue ribbon panel," which is charged with making progress "toward improving and optimizing the publicly owned water and sewer asset."

Specifically, the eight-member panel will evaluate submissions from legal and technical firms seeking to devise long-term strategies to improve PWSA's operations, customer service and value.

The city in January issued a request seeking proposals from professional service firms. The city received 18 submissions by the Feb. 24 (<http://triblive.com/local/alleggheny/11941789-74/lines-lead-pittsburgh>) deadline, O'Malley said.

The panel will narrow the field to four and interview the finalists.

Panel members include: Kenya Boswell, president of BNY Mellon Foundation of Southwestern Pennsylvania; Fred Brown, president/CEO of Homewood Children's Village; Jared Cohon, director of Scott Institute for Energy Innovation and former president of Carnegie Mellon University; Jen Presutti, director of the city's Office of Management and Budget; Lourdes Sanchez Ridge, the city's solicitor and chief legal officer; Sharene Shealey, environmental manager for NRG Energy; and Mark Stulga, vice president of WesBanco.

The panel met for an hour Friday in the mayor's office, Acklin said. He did not elaborate on the discussion.

Under the existing model, the city's drinking water and storm systems are owned by the city and leased to PWSA, an independent authority with mayoral-appointed board members. PWSA has the option to buy the assets from the city for \$1 in 2025.

Peduto has said he does not want to privatize the system completely. He called for a "full financial and operations partner" willing to pump money into improving the city's water infrastructure without outright owning it (<http://triblive.com/local/allegheeny/11941789-74/lines-lead-pittsburgh>) .

The authority's debt service tops \$750 million, with 50 cents of every ratepayer dollar going toward paying down debt.

The mayor wants to find ways to grow revenue by expanding PWSA's drinking water delivery to more customers outside city limits.

In the past year, PWSA has grappled with multiple public relations crises, from overbilling customers to chlorine treatment deficiencies that spurred a flush and boil order (<http://triblive.com/news/adminpage/11883888-74/drinking-pwsa-authority>) affecting one-third of the city last month.

At the Feb. 2 news conference held to declare the boil order had been lifted, Lindstrom said the authority was at an "all-time low" in terms of not only staff and customer morale but also capabilities.

Lindstrom, a 28-year Army Corps of Engineers veteran from Upper St. Clair, assumed the temporary post overseeing PWSA on Sept. 12.

His independent contractor agreement approved unanimously by PWSA's board of directors included a salary of \$16,667 per month, for a total of \$100,000 over six months.

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Chelsa Wagner: Fix the water system now

Pittsburgh can and must replace all lead service lines

March 13, 2017 12:00 AM

By Chelsa Wagner

I was encouraged to finally see Mayor Bill Peduto take a step in the right direction in response to our drinking water crisis. The provision of filters to all residents is a necessity, one for which community members have been calling for months. I greatly commend Morgan O'Brien of Peoples Gas for his great continued leadership in our region by stepping up to fulfill this need.

But the larger problem remains: an estimated one in every four homes in Pittsburgh has lead service lines that will continue to poison their water. The refusal to address this problem head-on is not the Pittsburgh that I know. Our legacy rests on Pittsburgh's bold and courageous civic leadership that eradicated the smog that once blanketed this city. Pittsburgh's leaders took on that problem directly, accepted the political risks, and eliminated residential coal furnaces within a few years. The larger problem, in my view, rests in the core role, responsibility and ability of government to fix such problems.

In December, my office issued an audit of the Allegheny County Health Department, reviewing its supervisory role over public drinking water systems, including the PWSA. What we found was a disturbing pattern of unwillingness to gather data and to define openly and publicly the risk posed by lead lines in many of the older homes in Allegheny County.

We know that lead can be a silent and dangerous poison, adversely impacting many systems in the body. It is widely acknowledged that, in children, lead leads to diminished IQ scores, impulsivity, anxiety and depression — lifelong, irreversible damage. In the elderly, lead is linked to memory loss, and for pregnant women, lead can cause miscarriages and stillbirths. In adults, lead is linked to increased blood pressure, kidney disease and risk of stroke.

But the crisis here is eminently fixable. Other cities have proved that lead pipes can be replaced efficiently, relatively quickly and in a manner that is not cost prohibitive. Pittsburgh can and must replace all lead service lines, including the private side that belongs to the homeowner.

The city and PWSA have thus far provided misleading, "doom and gloom" contentions that an adequate remediation plan would cost hundreds of millions of dollars. This is simply not borne out by the

experiences of other cities around the country, and even in Pennsylvania, which have taken action to protect their residents. The risk to our community's health by such thinking is unacceptable.


This is the reason we have governments: to create efficiencies of scale as compared to individuals acting on their own. Programs undertaken in Lansing, Mich., and York, Pa. have reduced the cost of replacing the private portion of the service line to an average of \$1,200, which is far below what local homeowners are paying when left to their own devices.

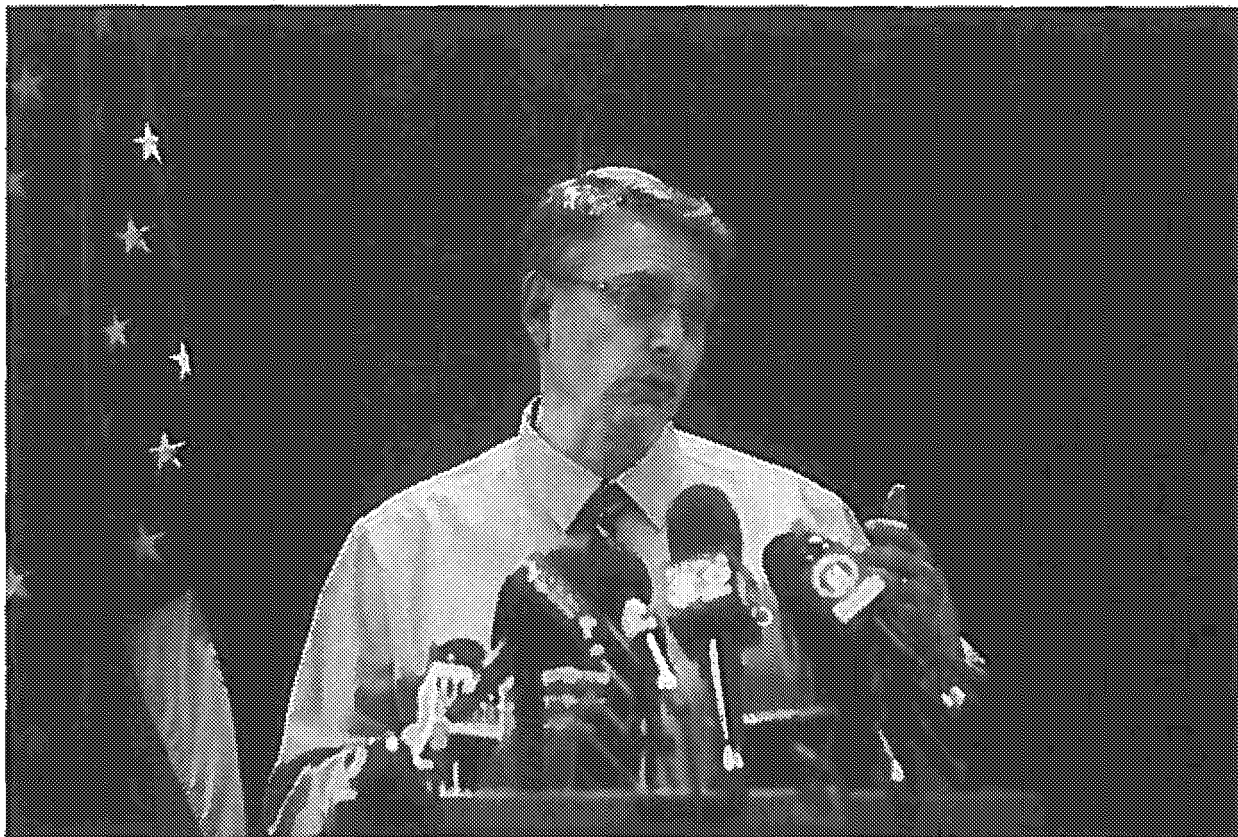
More important, a comprehensive replacement program would address the problem for all residents regardless of income, neighborhood, or homeowner or renter status. Otherwise, the problem is not solved. Partial line replacements, as are currently being conducted, can actually make the lead problem worse. To quote Marc Edwards of Virginia Tech, the lead investigator in Flint, "Frankly, doing nothing is preferable to doing a half-pipe replacement."

The bottom line is that we must recognize the crisis we face and act to fix it immediately, which means replacing all lead lines. The solution is absolutely within our grasp, and I and thousands of other Pittsburgh residents will accept nothing less.

Chelsa Wagner is the Allegheny County controller.

At PWSA, no clear leadership hierarchy

NATASHA LINDSTROM  (<https://twitter.com/NewsNatasha>) | Monday, March 13, 2017, 6:06 p.m.



Nate Smallwood | Tribune-Review

Bernard R. Lindstrom's contract to serve as interim director of the Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority expired Sunday, March 12, 2017.

By the close of business Monday, it remained unclear who was in charge of operations at the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority.

The six-month, \$100,000 contract for interim Director Bernard R. Lindstrom expired Sunday.

As of 5 p.m. Monday, officials from Mayor Bill Peduto's administration and PWSA's seven-member board told the Tribune-Review they still were in talks with Lindstrom about extending his contract.

"We remain in discussions with Col. Lindstrom and invited him to remain with PWSA as executive director," said Peduto's chief of staff, Kevin Acklin.

"Negotiations with Mr. Lindstrom continue," said PWSA spokesman Will Pickering. He would not say whether a person other than Lindstrom was serving as acting director during the negotiations.

Lindstrom, a 28-year Army Corps of Engineers veteran from Upper St. Clair, did not return several requests for comment. Neither did PWSA board Chair Alex Thomson.

Acklin told the Trib (<http://triblive.com/local/alleggheny/12053196-74/pwsa-authority-panel>) on Friday that Peduto has valued Lindstrom's leadership and wants him to stay. The mayor said he would like Lindstrom to oversee PWSA while his administration explores a major restructuring of the debt- and controversy-laden authority.

PWSA has been without a permanent leader since Jim Good resigned last March.

Directors voted in late July to appoint K. Charles Griffin, a county administrator in Virginia, as executive director, but he withdrew after questions surfaced about his termination from a similar position in South Carolina.

David Donahoe, former director of the Allegheny County Regional Asset District, was interim director before Lindstrom assumed the post Sept. 12.

Meanwhile, PWSA has confronted multiple public relations crises, from customer complaints over overbilling to a two-and-a-half-day flush and boil order that affected one-third of the city last month.

At a Feb. 2 news conference to declare the boil order had been lifted (<http://triblive.com/news/adminpage/11883888-74/drinking-pwsa-authority>), Lindstrom said the authority was at an "all-time low" in terms of not only staff and customer morale but also capabilities.

When Lindstrom was hired, Thomson told the Trib (<http://triblive.com/news/alleggheny/11064286-74/director-lindstrom-army>) the board intended to do a "robust and full search" to hire a permanent director by April.


Natasha Lindstrom is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach her at 412-380-8514 or nlindstrom@tribweb.com.

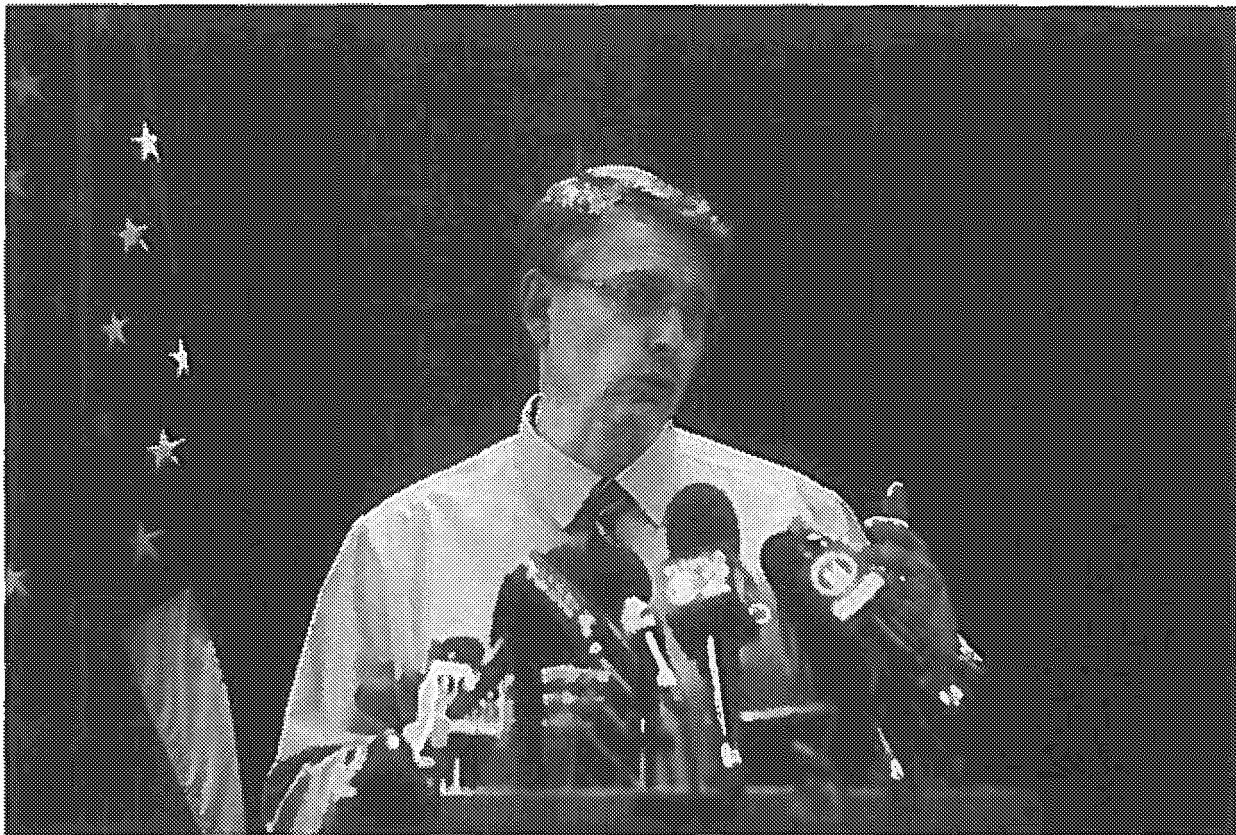
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PWSA lands temporary fix to finding permanent director

BOB BAUDER  (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Wednesday, March 15, 2017, 1:56 p.m.



Nate Smallwood | Tribune-Review

Bernard R. Lindstrom, the director of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, speaks to the press regarding the boil order at the Allegheny County Emergency Operations Center on Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2017.

Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority's interim director of engineering has been placed in charge of authority operations while the board seeks a new executive director, an official

said Wednesday.

PWSA officials gave conflicting accounts about the status of former acting Executive Director Bernard R. Lindstrom, whose contract expired Sunday.

Authority spokesman Will Pickering said PWSA continues to negotiate with the retired Army colonel in an attempt to persuade him to remain at the helm of the troubled agency.

But City Councilwoman Deb Gross of Highland Park, who serves on the PWSA board of directors, said Lindstrom turned down the offer. She said Lindstrom, who previously told the Tribune-Review that he applied for the full-time executive director's position, preferred to settle into retirement.

"They did everything they could to get him to stay. He said, 'No,'" Gross said.

She said Robert Weimar, the interim director of engineering, has been placed in charge of authority operations until a replacement is found.

Lindstrom of Upper St. Clair could not be reached for comment.

Gross said a board committee consisting of Chairman Alex Thomson, Paul Leger and Caren Glotfelty was pursuing Lindstrom's potential replacement, but she declined to name the person.

Lindstrom, a 28-year Army Corps of Engineers veteran, has dealt with one crisis after another since accepting the position in September that paid him \$100,000. Troubles included lead-tainted water, a boil-water order for 100,000 city residents and a water main rupture that was draining the authority's largest reservoirs.

The authority has had five executive directors — interim and permanent — since 2011 and one candidate for the position who accepted the job but withdrew after questions surfaced about his firing from a similar job in South Carolina.

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com (<mailto:bbauder@tribweb.com>).

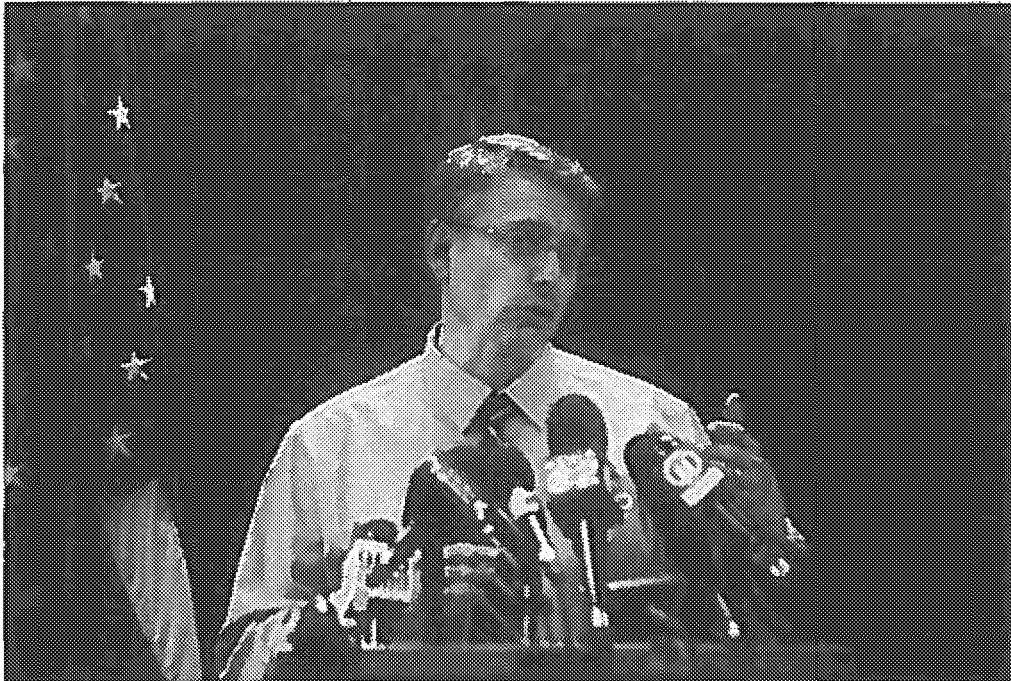
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<http://triblive.com/local/allegheeny/12086029-74/bernard-lindstrom-received-an-offer-he-could-not-refuse/lindstrom-the-interim-executive>

Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority executive agrees to stay for \$225K a year

BOB BAUDER [@BobBauder](https://twitter.com/BobBauder) | Friday, March 17, 2017, 1:57 p.m.



Nate Smallwood | Tribune-Review

Bernard R. Lindstrom, the director of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, speaks to the press regarding the boil order at the Allegheny County Emergency Operations Center on Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2017.

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority made its interim Executive Director Bernard Lindstrom the highest paid employee in city government Friday with a \$225,000 contract offer that can extend through 2019.

Lindstrom, 48, whose six-month contract expired last week, has agreed to remain on the job, according to Mayor Bill Peduto's office.

The retired Army colonel will be paid \$225,000 annually under a contract extension through March 13, 2019. His salary higher than any executive working for the city of Pittsburgh or its authorities, according to salary data provided by the city.

Caster Binion, executive director of the city's Housing Authority, earns the next highest amount at \$187,959 per year.

Peduto, for comparison's sake, makes \$109,650 per year, which isn't enough to put him among the top 10 highest earners among the city and its authorities.

Salary Rank	Name	Title	Employer	Salary
1	Bernard Lindstrom	Executive Director	Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority	\$225,000
2	Caster Binion	Executive Director	Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh	\$187,959
3	Kent Lindsay	Director of Finance	Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority	\$178,602
4	Christopher Carew	Director of Field Services	Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority	\$163,199
5	Michelle Sandidge	Chief Community Affairs Officer	Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh	\$154,817
6	Robert Rubinstein	Executive Director	Urban Redevelopment Authority	\$150,000
7	David Weber	Chief Operations Officer	Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh	\$137,917
8	James Harris	General Counsel	Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh	\$136,590
9	Bernard McGinley	Chief Financial Officer	Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh	\$128,750
10	David Onorato	Executive Director	Pittsburgh Parking Authority	\$124,980

Source: City of Pittsburgh

Lindstrom was unavailable for comment Friday, according to PWSA spokesman Will Pickering.

PWSA can terminate the contract with 30 days' notice if it chooses a permanent executive director.

City Councilwoman Deb Gross, who serves on the PWSA board of directors, reported earlier this week that Lindstrom had turned down a contract extension.

City and authority officials continued to negotiate with him.

The contract provides leadership continuity while a panel appointed by Peduto evaluates PWSA and determines steps to resolve "systemic problems challenging the authority," the mayor's office said.

PWSA has contended with multiple problems in recent months, including lead-tainted water, a boil-water order for 100,000 city residents and a water main rupture that was draining the authority's largest reservoirs.

Lindstrom, a 28-year Army Corps of Engineers veteran, has dealt with one crisis after another since accepting the temporary position in September. His six-month contract paid him \$100,000.

"On behalf of the residents of the city, we thank Col. Lindstrom for his continued service and for allowing PWSA to keep benefitting from his expertise in this time of transition at the authority," Peduto said.

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com.

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PWSA says sulfur smell in East End water not harmful and flushing will fix the problem

March 17, 2017 5:10 PM

By Sean D. Hamill / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

After complaints Friday from East End neighborhood residents and building owners about a strong sulfur smell in their drinking water, the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority began flushing fire hydrants to bring fresh water into the system.

The city said the sulfur smell was not harmful and was the result of a temporary shutdown of the treatment plant earlier this week for about six hours. For reasons that the city is still exploring, that affected the portion of its distribution system, known as Highland 1, that serves the East End.

The city received 10 complaints from residents from Swisshelm Park, North Point Breeze and Squirrel Hill starting Friday morning that the water they were brushing their teeth with or showering in smelled like sulfur.

But many more residents in at least one of those neighborhoods, Swisshelm Park, posted complaints to a neighborhood Facebook page, and said they were contacting their city council representatives. The Facebook page charted the spread of the sulfur smell from their neighborhood, north to where some neighborhood children attended school at St. Bedes' Parish school, where the water there also smelled strongly of sulfur.

Bob Weimar, the PWSA's interim director of engineering and construction, said this is an example of a problem "that looks worse than it is."

The sulfur smell is the result of minute amounts of hydrogen sulfide in the water that are not harmful, he said, based on testing the city has already done.

"It's really an aesthetics issue," he said, but one the city is working to eliminate, he said. "It is not a health issue."

Mr. Weimar said plant workers noticed a slight sulfur smell at the treatment plant Friday, but it probably smells worse in homes because people tend to use water in the home at a higher temperature than at the

plant, which exacerbates the smell.

The sulfur smell was the result of a decision earlier this week to do some repairs at the treatment plant, which required shutting it down for about six hours.

That does not mean water is not treated, but it did mean the city would draw more water that had already been treated from its water basins without refilling the basins during those six hours.

The city is not sure exactly why the sulfur smell was so strong, but Mr. Weimar said a working theory is that because the water basins were drawn down lower than normal, that sediments at the bottom were stirred up more than they are typically, which pushed more hydrogen sulfide into the water that went into the system.

To counter that, the city began flushing fire hydrants in East End neighborhoods on Friday, and will continue to do so until the smell is gone.

Mr. Weimar said the city is first concentrating on “dead ends” where other sediments and hydrogen sulfide can accumulate, to try to get rid of the smell as quickly as possible.

That sediment accumulation can be seen at those hydrants, which can run brown for awhile after they are opened, but eventually turn clearer.

Mr. Weimar said one longer term solution to the sulfur smell problem is that the city has to restore the basins, which it has not done in about 25 years. Last year the city restored its filter system for the first time in 28 years.

But for now, he said: “We’re expecting that flushing for a couple of days in remote areas of the system will take care of it.”

Sean D. Hamill: shamill@post-gazette.com or 412-263-2579 or Twitter: @SeanDHamill.

Making water safe from street to tap

Pittsburgh's lead filter program must be a coordinated community process

March 22, 2017 12:00 AM

By Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis and Ann M. McGuinn

The city of Pittsburgh, Peoples Gas and the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority should be commended for their collaborative effort to bring water filters to Pittsburgh residents and develop long-term strategies to protect them from lead exposure in water. The science is clear; lead is a neurotoxin that negatively affects human organs and systems and especially harms fetuses and young children. As strategies are being developed to tackle this lead crisis, that science must drive decision-making. Thoughtful planning and implementation of these programs are critical to ensure the utmost protection of public health.

Under the Lead and Copper Rule, water authorities are required to act when their systemwide sampling exceeds 15 parts per billion of lead in more than 10 percent of the small number of homes in their sampling pool. The Environmental Protection Agency-recommended, nonenforceable action level for schools and child care centers is 20 ppb. The city just announced it would give priority to residents whose single-draw sample indicates a level higher than 10 ppb. These differing numbers are confusing to the public. It is important to know that these numbers are not linked to any health protection standard.

If a resident's lead testing indicates 8 ppb or 12 ppb, they should not, and must not, conclude that they are "safe" from lead in water. In fact, no amount of lead exposure is safe. There is great variability with testing; a first draw (filling a 1-liter bottle first thing in the morning) may indicate 5 ppb one morning and 50 ppb the next day. The best way to determine whether you have lead in your water is to find out if you have lead pipes or interior lead plumbing (including solder and fixtures) present.

Women for a Healthy Environment works to protect immediately those most at risk. Our organization has been working in schools and early learning centers for the last year, helping personnel test for lead in water. WHE has been working with community partners to develop a thoughtful filter program to protect those most vulnerable — pregnant women and children (especially those being bottle-fed). Recently, several hundred filters were delivered to our office for distribution to family programs in the city. We thought it would be useful to share a few insights and lessons learned in our own work and through conversations with colleagues in Flint, Mich., Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and elsewhere.

Developing a faucet filter program for Pittsburgh must be a coordinated process and involve the entire community. Every sector's voice must have a seat at the table — health professionals, government

personnel, nonprofits, community groups, faith-based leaders, children advocates and school officials, just to name a few.

City officials indicated they will have personnel assigned to ensure proper installation of the filters in homes. This is essential to minimize the confusion that homeowners are finding with the installation instructions. Most homeowners are not professionally trained plumbers, and directions are often not followed. For instance, running hot water through a faucet filter damages the unit.

If the city purchases a filter system that costs \$35, the \$1 million initiative will reach 28,571 households, give or take a few. With approximately 80,000 PWSA customers in the city, there will be a filter shortfall. Pregnant women and children are most at risk from lead in water exposure, and priority must be given to these households first.

A point-of-use water treatment system is essential, regardless of whether the building is a home, school or child care center, because these systems are installed to reduce contaminants in the drinking water at one tap. Lead plumbing fixtures and fittings made of brass were often as much as 20 percent lead by weight, and until 2014 brass faucets advertised as lead-free could contain up to 8 percent lead by weight. There is the potential of lead present all along the water's path, from street to faucet. Depending on the level of lead present, a filter cartridge could last a week, several weeks or several months. It would be shortsighted for this filter program to be a "one-time use" initiative. Rather, Pittsburgh residents who simply cannot afford replacement cartridges must be assisted.

A reminder system for residents to change their filters would be helpful. An educational program to help residents properly learn how to use the system is essential. These appliances work just like your furnace; if you don't change the filter cartridge, it will not perform its function.

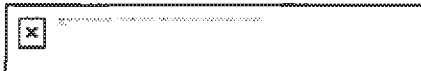
More testing must occur quickly, be coordinated with community groups and be practical in ease of use and access. Approximately 6,000 residents have requested lead testing kits from the PWSA. Some kits haven't been processed, but many of those kits haven't been returned to the lab. We encourage all residents to request and submit a kit. A result of 1 ppb or greater indicates a presence of lead, and a filter should be requested. Once filters are in place, residents should request additional testing to ensure their effectiveness.

We are encouraged by the communications we have had with all those involved in the lead crisis. These first steps are important, but just the beginning of a long process to fix problems that have been with us since the late 1800s. We look forward to the continued collaboration and long-term solutions of removing the lead service lines within our city limits and beyond.

Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis (michelle@womenforahealthyenvironment.org) is executive director and Ann M. McGuinn (amuldoonmcguinn@gmail.com) is board chair of Women for a Healthy Environment, based in East Liberty.

From: allegheny institute for public policy <allegheny_institute_for_public_p@mail.vresp.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2017 9:07 AM
To: Michael Turzai
Subject: [MARKETING] PWSA Infrastructure Problems are Getting Worse

Policy Brief (Volume 17, Number 14)



PWSA Infrastructure Problems are Getting Worse

(March 22, 2017)—**Summary:** The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) has a host of problems that will require large amounts of capital—both monetary and political—to solve. The century old system is in dire need of replacement but the PWSA is deeply in debt and will have great difficulty raising the revenue and capital necessary to complete such a large project.

The PWSA has been beset by problems this year continuing a trend dating back several years. This year alone the PWSA issued a boil water advisory, had a problem at a pumping station, and then a break in a water main that leaked 10,000 gallons a minute before it was diagnosed and stopped. Repairing the break will cost an estimated \$1.7 million. This break is very worrisome as it may just be the beginning for a water system with pipes dating to the early twentieth century.

Pittsburgh's Mayor has suggested looking to outside sources for help and has convened a panel to look into the issue. The plan would be for the City to retain ownership of the system and have an outside firm come in that would not only manage the system, but foot the bill for replacing it. In return this firm would be allowed to keep any revenues. However, there are four major obstacles to this plan being successful. First, the cost of replacing the entire system (water and sewers) has been estimated to be above \$2.5 billion. Second, the system is very old—well past its design life—and as such is subject to an unknowable failure rate (and unpredictable future year capital and repair costs). Third, the PWSA has a very heavy debt load—\$763 million according to their 2015 audited financial statements. Fourth, the PWSA has had negative net income with operating costs and debt service payments exceeding revenue in both 2015 and 2016. Not exactly a resume that will have suitors beating down the door. Who would contemplate pouring billions into an economic entity that is losing money and whose maintenance and repair costs could swell losses for years to come and long before the infrastructure replacement can be completed?

Bear in mind that the system's oldest reservoir, Highland Park #1, was constructed in 1879 and that the system's oldest pipes and valves date back to 1887. It has been

estimated, by an engineering firm who completed a study of the system that most of the cast iron pipes are over 70 years old—about the life expectancy of such pipes. The water system's inventory includes four in-ground reservoirs, twelve above ground storage tanks, the Aspinwall filtration plant, a membrane filtration plant (Highland Park # 1) and 1,012 miles of water lines ranging from one to 120 inches in diameter. There are also 25,330 valves and 7,558 hydrants. This inventory was compiled as part of the engineering firm report's 40-year plan released by the PWSA in 2012. The estimated cost to replace the entire water system (at 2011 prices) was \$1.25 billion.

The engineering firm recommended a timeline at which the work would be accomplished in eight, five year periods. Their report also recommended the PWSA embark on a program to spend \$14.8 million per year to rehabilitate and replace medium to high risk mains over the next 40 years. PWSA plans \$60 million in capital spending for 2017. To date however, the 40 year plan has not been implemented, with PWSA staff telling the City Controller that the 40 year plan was just a "wish list" and was not adopted as an actual plan.

While the PWSA does not process sewage, it does have conveyance lines to the ALCOSAN system. The sewage system comprises 1,211 miles of sewer lines, 29,084 manhole covers, 24,143 catch basins, 99 diversion structures, and four sewage pump stations. The cost of replacement for this system is another \$1.26 billion. The total bill for replacing the entire water and sewer system, as estimated in the 40-year plan, was pegged at about \$2.51 billion—again at 2011 prices.

The average age of the pipes and the recent pattern of large and expensive breaks cast doubt on the 2015 audit's \$583 million estimate of the value of PWSA's depreciated capital assets. To be blunt, with the rapidly deteriorating, very old pipe system, it is hard to believe that the PWSA's capital assets are worth \$583 million dollars and that the net negative balance sheet position is only \$36 million. The repair and replacement costs are likely to soar in the coming years making the system worth only what net income would justify and net income will likely be negative for a long time as spending rises sharply

Here is the key question: Would a water company (or any other firm) be interested in entering into an agreement to lease the PWSA with the requirement to replace the very old infrastructure in return for the right to operating revenues?

A prospective bidder would look at recent performance data as well as long term financial information. To wit, data from the PWSA's 2017 budget shows 2015 actual operating expense (\$122 million) and receipts (\$172 million) for net operating income of \$49.8 million. However, when debt service of \$52.6 million is included (principal and interest payments) it brings total expenses to \$174.8 million. Thus the net income for 2015 was a loss of \$2.8 million. The revised 2016 budget called for a decrease in operating costs (\$182.4 million, down from \$185.7 million) combined with a small revenue increase (\$184 million, up from \$180.8 million) that would reverse the loss and produce net income of \$1.65 million.

Even though small changes to costs and receipts made 2016 look better than 2015, the amount of debt service remains very high at \$53.7 million. The audited financial statements for 2015 show the PWSA with total debt (bonds and loans) of \$763.3

million.

The 2017 budget is even more optimistic about revenue thanks to an approved rate increase of 30 percent for water used and sewage conveyance. The flat rate charge for the first 1,000 gallons was raised only 15 percent to \$18.42 and the sewer flat rate was raised 34 percent to \$6.09. Significant further increases in both water and sewage conveyance rates are slated for 2018. Meanwhile, ALCOSAN has boosted its charge for sewage treatment by 11 percent in 2017, the fourth consecutive hike that has boosted the rate to \$6.90 per 1000 gallons of usage. A total monthly bill from PWSA for a residential customer using 3,000 gals of water per month and including Alcosan charges will exceed \$70, up about \$11 from 2016.

Total receipts are expected to increase to \$218.8 million in 2017 while expenses are scheduled to increase to \$151.4 million. Thus net operating income is forecast to be \$67.4 million. With debt service budgeted at \$53 million, net income will be about \$14.4 million. The PWSA plans to borrow \$60 million to spend on capital projects.

Projected net income at this level might be enough to entice bids to take over the PWSA, assuming the numbers come in close to budget projections and can be sustained in the face of greater expenditures in the future. Bear in mind however, that the company would pay taxes on any profits—the authority does not have to pay income taxes. And depending on the terms of the lease, the company might have to pay property taxes as well. Then too the new operator would have to pour in huge amounts of capital to rebuild the system and having already taken responsibility for nearly \$800 million in authority debt, might find borrowing more money difficult or expensive unless it has deep pockets and considerable income from other holdings.

Unless a firm is given the authority to enhance future revenue numbers substantially as needed and has the power to cut operating expenses through personnel and other changes, it is unlikely there will be serious bidders. Even a modest 20 year plan for completion will require outlays of \$125 million per year (not including inflation and/or major cost overruns) and no significant rise in other operating costs. If borrowed in tranches and paid for over 40 years, the full \$125 million per year would not have to be generated immediately but rates would have to rise sharply for several years to make the program viable wherein borrowing could occur and residential bills could double with comparable increases in commercial and industrial users' bills. And that is before the firm makes any profit.

The City Controller in his recent performance audit echoed the engineering firm's findings that the fix will be very costly and take many years. He also recommended the PWSA "establish a realistic and comprehensive line replacement plan of action for both the water and sewer lines."

In light of the severe problems and the probability of significant failures increasing with every passing year, dramatic actions are needed to keep Pittsburgh's crucial water and sewer systems capable of supplying the City's requirements.

One, the PWSA needs to complete interior inspection of all large pipes and then catalog the most likely to fail pipes and valves for immediate attention. They then need to create and implement a plan for replacement or upgrade for all system infrastructure

and equipment older than 70 years (the average life span of cast iron pipes) or with a high probability of failure in the next 15 years.

Two, to fund these capital projects, the PWSA should put in place scheduled water and sewer rate increases to build sufficient capital reserves to complete the necessary upgrades. Once those rate hikes has been authorized, they should look for large water and sewer firm (or other suitable management firm) to take over the PWSA.

By way of comparison, for a residential customer the Pittsburgh monthly charge for water and sewer for 4,000 gallons per month will be \$90. In Philadelphia that volume will cost just over \$59—with an add-on \$14 storm water fee. Seattle, DC, San Francisco are \$100 per month or higher, while Cincinnati, Cleveland, Charlotte and many other cities are at \$70 or lower. In sum, PWSA is not the highest cost among the bigger cities but is moving closer to that group. And that means the needed push to raise prices and revenues will be exceedingly difficult politically.

Given the current multitude of problems at the PWSA, it is unlikely a buyer or potential partner can be found who would be willing to absorb the risks posed by the aging system and the high water and sewer charges already in place. A new management firm, without the authority to make substantial personnel and operational changes and with no ability to increase revenues significantly through rate hikes will be unable to correct the major infrastructure problems at the PWSA.

In the worst case scenario wherein a firm to take over cannot be found, the City might have to take back ownership of the water and sewer system and find new sources of revenue or divert existing city funds to supplement usage charge revenue in order to have the funds necessary to begin the badly needed replacement.

Frank Gamrat, Ph.D., Sr. Research Associate
Jake Haulk, Ph.D., President

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3 PWSA board members resign in the same week

BOB BAUDER  (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Wednesday, March 22, 2017, 3:42 p.m.



Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto

The troubled Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority over the past week lost three board members whose terms expired in December amid a restructuring ordered by Mayor Bill Peduto designed to modernize and resolve systemic problems.

PWSA received resignation letters from board Chairman Alex Thomson, Secretary Caren Glotfelty and Andrea Geraghty. The seven-member board can function with a quorum of four remaining members, according to Pittsburgh Finance Director Paul Leger, who serves on the PWSA board.

All three noted in resignation letters that PWSA faces difficult challenges.

Glotfelty, executive director of the Allegheny County Parks Foundation, and Geraghty, an attorney with the Downtown firm of Meyer Unkovic and Scott, cited time constraints as their reasons for resigning. Thomson is an attorney with the Downtown firm of Houston Harbaugh.

They did not return calls seeking comment.

"At this point, I cannot be effective as a member of the board," Geraghty said in her letter. "I am sure it is best for me to step aside and make room for someone with sufficient time and energy to devote to the very important tasks of PWSA."

Peduto spokeswoman Katie O'Malley said the mayor is in the process of seeking board replacements and expects to name them later this week.

PWSA in recent years has been plagued by problems, including lead-tainted water, leaking water mains, erratic billing and turnover in top leadership.

Last week, the PWSA board extended interim Executive Director Bernard Lindstrom's contract through 2019 after extended negotiations. Lindstrom initially turned down the offer, which will pay him \$225,000 per year.

John Welch of Homewood, a Democrat running against Peduto in the May primary election, blamed the mayor for PWSA's problems.

"(PWSA's) problems have been quietly creeping up for 16 years," he told reporters Wednesday during a news conference in front of PWSA headquarters in the Strip District. "Our current mayor while on city council did nothing."

Peduto spokesman Tim McNulty referred questions to Keyva Clark, the mayor's campaign manager. Clark could not immediately be reached for comment.

Earlier this month Peduto created an advisory panel to manage a wide-scale restructuring of PWSA. The panel will hold a public meeting March 31 in the City-County Building, Downtown.

Peduto on Wednesday named six elected and community leaders to help guide the panel. They include Thomson; Pittsburgh City Councilwoman Deb Gross, who serves on the PWSA board; Controller Michael Lamb; Sylvia Wilson, who chairs the Alcosan board of directors; David Miller, founder of the Congress of Neighboring Communities; and Alex Sciulli, who once headed the defunct Pittsburgh Water Department.

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com (<mailto:bbauder@tribweb.com>).

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<http://triblive.com/local/alleggheny/12104719-74/pwsa-needs-2-more-months-17m-in-all-to-repair-leaky-water>

PWSA needs 2 more months, \$1.7M in all to repair leaky water main

BOB BAUDER [✈ \(https://twitter.com/BobBauder\)](https://twitter.com/BobBauder) | Thursday, March 23, 2017, 4:00 p.m.



Bob Bauder / Tribune-Review

Lanpher Reservoir

Plugging a leaky water main feeding the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority's largest reservoir will take about two more months, an authority official said Thursday.

PWSA spokesman Will Pickering said workers from Butler-based Frank J. Zottola Construction have finished excavating around the 60-inch main on Parker Street in Etna. The century-old pipe ruptured last month, sending about 10,000 gallons per minute into the Allegheny River and threatening to drain the 133 million-gallon Lanpher Reservoir in Shaler.

The construction crew will install a new section of pipe inside the old one, Pickering said. Workers also must repair a 48-inch storm sewer line running next to the water main.

"We estimate that repairs will be completed by June 1," Pickering said.

PWSA estimates it will cost \$1.7 million to repair the main, which runs about 4 miles from the authority water works in Aspinwall to Lanpher. The reservoir supplies North Side homes and businesses.

Parker Street remains closed between Washington Street in Etna and Koehler Street in Shaler, according to police.

PWSA is supplying Lanpher and the North Side with water from a reservoir in Highland Park.

The water leak is one in a series of problems to befall the troubled PWSA in recent months. Low chlorine levels in January closed the Highland Park No. 1 reservoir, which remains out of commission, and triggered a boil-water order for about 100,000 city residents. The authority also has been criticized for high lead levels in water and billing errors that resulted in customers not being billed for more than a year.

Mayor Bill Peduto's office announced Wednesday that three members of the seven-member PWSA board of directors have resigned. Peduto last month created an advisory panel to study PWSA's problems and propose resolutions.

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com (<mailto:bbauder@tribweb.com>).

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Jim Roddey: Our vital water resources have not been managed well

March 24, 2017 9:15 AM

By Jim Roddey

When predictions are made about the economic development of our region, we most often see a list of such things as the strength of our financial institutions, higher education, health care, proximity to large population centers and, of course, the natural gas from the Marcellus formations.

Interestingly, rarely does anyone mention our abundant availability of fresh water. While we seem to take our remarkable water supply for granted, in the long run it could be our most important competitive advantage. As water tables shrink in many areas of the United States, as they are doing in numerous countries throughout the world, the Pittsburgh area is blessed to have all the water we will likely need for the foreseeable future. For instance, the city of Pittsburgh uses approximately 60 million gallons of water each day. Without additional infrastructure, the city has the capacity to draw, treat, store and deliver more than 100 million gallons per day. Inevitable water shortages elsewhere could weigh heavily in our favor when companies and people are making location and relocation decisions.

Despite this very positive picture, there is "Trouble in River City." The stewardship of this vital resource by the city administration and the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority has been disappointing at best. While the mayor has appeared on "Undercover Boss" and championed bike lanes, the PWSA has mismanaged what could be our most valuable asset. As a result, the magnitude of the problem is staggering.

The PWSA is beset by a host of infrastructure problems in the water and sewer systems. Major leaks and equipment failures are becoming commonplace. And the reason is not hard to pinpoint. Most of the PWSA's major pipes, large and small, are well past their design life of 70 years, with some dating to the early 20th century. An engineering firm study from 2011 recommended complete replacement of the water and sewer systems over a 40-year period at an estimated cost of \$2.5 billion. The plan was not adopted by the PWSA.

In a recent performance audit, the Pittsburgh city controller echoed the 2011 engineering study findings and recommended the PWSA "establish a realistic and comprehensive line replacement plan of action for both water and sewer lines."

There can be no doubt that the water and sewer systems face very serious problems that pose major threats to the ability to reliably provide water and sewer service for Pittsburgh residents and businesses. Equally as problematic as the very old pipes and equipment will be the difficulty of finding the money to replace the water and sewer systems. Eventually, users of the systems will bear most if not all of the costs.

Borrowing money or raising adequate revenue through service charges to fund the \$2.5 billion project will be complicated by the fact that the PWSA's debt already stands near \$750 million and is headed toward \$800 million this year. Bear in mind too that the engineering estimate was based on 2011 dollars — that is, not inflation-adjusted since 2011 or going forward — and the figure also assumes there will be no major cost overruns.

Residential water and sewer rates beyond the fixed allowance were raised 30 percent for 2017. That increase, along with the additional Alcosan charge of \$6.90 per thousand gallons, puts the cost of a residential bill with 4,000 gallons per month at just under \$90 and for 3,000 gallons at \$71. Pittsburgh water and sewer bills will now be among some of the highest for major cities. But even at the 2017 rates, there will not be nearly enough money to fund the cost of replacement.

A 20-year program of replacement will require \$125 million per year (assuming no inflation or cost overruns) beyond the pace of capital outlays in recent years. Much higher bills will almost certainly be necessary to generate the revenue required for system replacement. Over time the bills might need to double from recent levels.

Clearly, raising the replacement funds through service charges will face enormous public and political pushback. Indeed, relying exclusively on water and sewer charges might prove to be impossible. In that case, the city might be forced to consider using its other funding sources to finish the project.

Government can never be all things for all people. Nevertheless, local governing bodies are obligated to provide certain basic services, including public safety, reasonable and fair zoning, and building regulations and inspection. We certainly expect to have a safe and reliable supply of clean water and sewage disposal. Anything less is unacceptable.

Jim Roddey is a former Allegheny County executive and a former chairman of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, Alcosan, the Three Rivers Regatta and RiverQuest.

Taking authority: The mayor is right to assert himself at PWSA

March 26, 2017 12:00 AM

By the Editorial Board

If a board or authority has been established to oversee some aspect of city business, does the mayor have the right to take the wheel whenever it suits him? In the case of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, Mayor Bill Peduto is right to assert himself. The agency's problems ultimately are his responsibility.

The Rev. John Welch, one of Mr. Peduto's opponents in the May primary, questioned whether Mr. Peduto overstepped his authority in negotiating a contract extension for Bernard Lindstrom, the PWSA's executive director. "How much input did the board have in that contract?" Rev. Welch asked. "It should have input."

By now, the PWSA's problems, from costly leaks to poor customer service, clashes with state regulators and elevated levels of lead in the water, require little elaboration. In recent years, Pittsburgh has experienced economic gains in various neighborhoods, debuted new social and recreational amenities, and attracted more national exposure. A problem-plagued water and sewer agency has no place in this picture, and Mr. Peduto has a responsibility to step in.

He did as much last month, when he announced the formation of a panel to review the PWSA's future, and two weeks ago, when he arranged a partnership with Peoples Natural Gas to provide faucet filters to customers concerned about lead contamination. City Councilwoman Deb Gross, who is also a PWSA board member, had suggested providing lead-filtering water pitchers to households with children younger than 6. Mr. Peduto used his clout to improve upon Ms. Gross' proposal; with Peoples' help, all city households are eligible for the faucet filters.

Now, if Mr. Peduto believes Mr. Lindstrom is the person who can lead the PWSA forward, that is his call to make. If Mr. Lindstrom fails, Mr. Peduto will have to own the mistake. It would be wrong for a mayor to inject himself into a board or authority's work for political reasons; in matters of public safety, however, his involvement is a veritable obligation, especially when the agency's board, however well meaning, has been unable to right the ship.

Mr. Peduto and his chief of staff, Kevin Acklin, were personally involved in arranging Mr. Lindstrom's contract extension. Mr. Peduto said he didn't know whether board members knew of those efforts. That's

our one complaint — board members serve on a volunteer basis, and they deserve to be kept up to speed.

The unexpected resignation of three board members last week gives Mr. Peduto additional leverage for recasting the agency. While some may view the departures as adding to the agency's turmoil, they provide Mr. Peduto an opportunity to appoint fresh eyes and, perhaps, new expertise to an agency badly in need of help — and the mayor's continued oversight.

Peduto fires back after Wagner calls on city to replace city's lead service lines

March 28, 2017 1:02 PM

By Don Hopey / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Allegheny County Controller Chelsa Wagner said Mayor William Peduto is gambling with the public's health by not quickly and completely replacing about 20,000 public and private lead water service lines in the city.

Speaking at a news conference Tuesday, she also called on the mayor to commit funding from a variety of sources — including some of the \$9 million a year the county redevelopment authority gets from casino operations — to pay for replacing all lead lines in the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority service area.

Ms. Wagner said full line replacement would cost about \$25 million, reflecting significant savings due to economies of scale and elimination of duplicated excavation work, and is also preferable from a public health perspective to partial line replacement, which studies show can increase lead contamination levels.

"There are perils in how the city is approaching lead line replacement, and I'm calling on the mayor to change course," Ms. Wagner said, citing delays in putting into place a free home-filter program, identifying where lead service lines exist and where the authority has done partial line-replacement work.

She said that according to PWSA records, the water authority recently replaced 58 lead lines in Lawrenceville but only one property owner chose to pay for and replace his privately owned section of the lead line. Property owners must pay to repair or replace service lines on their property, a bill that could be several thousand dollars.

"People are not aware that one in four homes may have lead in their water. They don't know if they have lead service lines and they don't know where the PWSA is replacing their portion of the service lines," Ms. Wagner said. "It's like Russian roulette and an absolute crisis."

An estimated 25 percent of the PWSA's 83,000 residential customers in the city get their water through lead pipes, which can corrode and cause health problems for pregnant women, infants and young children. High lead levels in the water supply of Flint, Mich., in early 2015 have heightened public concern about lead in water supplies.

Ms. Wagner said the mayor and the PWSA have been “slow-walking” solutions to the PWSA water quality “crisis” that has seen lead levels in the aging system climb above federal standard of 15 parts per billion in some homes.

Ms. Wagner applauded the mayor’s announcement earlier this month of a \$1 million safe water plan and a free lead-filter program for residents, but said it’s a “Band-Aid” approach that isn’t occurring quickly enough.

But Tim McNulty, the mayor’s spokesman, said a meeting Monday in the mayor’s office with PWSA officials and board members resulted in the targeting of filters for residences in neighborhoods where PWSA is replacing lines. Strategies for distributing the filters will be announce soon, he said.

And Kevin Acklin, Mr. Peduto’s chief of staff, said in a statement Tuesday afternoon that a full evaluation of all PWSA’s operations is ongoing, including the lead service line issues and the authority’s \$1 billion debt.

To that end, Mr. Acklin said a “blue-ribbon panel of water experts” will on Friday interview potential members of an advisory team to oversee a possible restructuring of the PWSA. He said Ms. Wagner is “taking cheap political shots at those actually working to address the authority’s issues.”

Mr. Acklin said the city is barred by the state Municipal Services Act from replacing privately owned sections of the PWSA lead service lines, a legal obstacle Ms. Wagner said could be overcome.

She said full service line replacement programs in York, Philadelphia, and East Lansing, Mich., have created economies of scale that have driven water line replacement costs to as low as \$1,200 per service line. Mr. McNulty pointed out that York’s water system is much smaller and privately owned, and Philadelphia is governed by different regulations that allow full replacement.

Mr. Acklin said the mayor agrees with Ms. Wagner on one point: He does not support privatization of the city’s water and sewer system.

Don Hohey: dhohey@post-gazette.com, 412-263-1983, or on Twitter @donhohey

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Wagner and Peduto clash over lead water line replacement

Theresa Clift 🐦 (<https://twitter.com/TClift>) | Tuesday, March 28, 2017, 4:57 p.m.



Allegheny County Controller Chelsa Wagner holds a news conference Tuesday morning to urge Mayor Bill Peduto to require PWSA to replace all lead lines.

An Allegheny County elected official's proposal to replace privately owned lead water lines in Pittsburgh met swift resistance Tuesday from Mayor Bill Peduto's office, which said state law makes the plan unworkable.

Because Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority water samples have been exceeding an EPA threshold of 15 parts per billion since July, it's required by the state to replace 7 percent of its roughly 20,000 residential lead service lines annually.

The authority replaces only the portion of the lines it owns, however, not the sections owned by homeowners.

County Controller Chelsa Wagner urged Peduto to require PWSA to replace all lead lines in the city, including the private portions. Wagner estimates that would cost \$25 million and says financing could come from city and county funds.

PWSA is not allowed to replace the privately owned portions of the lines, city and PWSA officials say, because of the state Municipal Authorities Act.

Wagner noted that Philadelphia is replacing its lead lines, but Philadelphia, unlike Pittsburgh, is a first-class city and therefore not covered under the Municipal Authorities Act, a news release from Peduto's office said.

Wagner also named York in Pennsylvania and East Lansing, Mich., as cities that are replacing all lead lines.

York is replacing all lead service lines, but the water authority there is private, not public like PWSA. The East Lansing area's water authority replaced all 12,150 of its residential lead lines from 2004 to 2016, but in that city, no portion of the lines is owned by the homeowner, a spokeswoman said.

Pittsburgh is planning to supply every home, school and public building with water filters and has put together a panel of water experts to restructure the PWSA.

Wagner says those efforts are not enough.

"The city's actions and inactions are making the problem much worse," she said.

Theresa Clift is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach her at 412-380-5669 or tclift@tribweb.com (<mailto:tclift@tribweb.com>).

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<http://triblive.com/local/allegheeny/12133123-74/pittsburgh-seeks-firm-to-give-out-free-filters-to-remove-lead-from>

Pittsburgh seeks firm to give out free filters to remove lead from water

BOB BAUDER 🐦 (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Wednesday, March 29, 2017, 4:54 p.m.



Andrew Russell | Tribune-Review

Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto will seek a business to give out free filters to remove lead from water.

Pittsburgh will hire a private company to distribute free water filters as part of its \$1

million plan to minimize residents' exposure to lead contamination, Mayor Bill Peduto said Wednesday.

The city and Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority are each contributing \$250,000 to match a \$500,000 grant from Peoples Gas to buy filters. Peduto said they would be distributed "as soon as possible" to every home, school and public building.

"We're looking for a company that has the ability to bring in the input of who it is that requested (a filter) so we don't have people taking 10 filters, and also at the same time be able to make sure that they're delivered in a timely basis," the mayor said.

He said the city this week will seek proposals from companies to do that work.

City and PWSA officials met this week to lay groundwork for distributing the filters.

City Council on Tuesday introduced legislation that would reallocate \$250,000 from its capital budget.

Councilwoman Deb Gross of Highland Park, who serves on the PWSA board and proposed supplying the public with filters, said families with young children and homes in close proximity to where PWSA is replacing lead water pipes would have priority.

Children are most vulnerable to lead poisoning, which can cause learning disabilities and other ailments.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection requires PWSA to replace 1,500 lead service lines by June, Gross said. The work can knock loose pipe corrosion and cause elevated lead levels in homes.

"The goal here is to protect the public," she said. "I was really hoping that we would have the funding in place by summer and it's not even April. I'm happy with the pace of things."

Peduto said he is close to filling three empty seats on the PWSA board left vacant by three members who resigned unexpectedly last week. Two people, whom he declined to identify, have accepted the positions.

Peduto said it's been tough to find qualified candidates willing to serve because of controversies surrounding PWSA.

"You're dealing with all of these different silos of problems, one of the largest being the system itself, which is so antiquated that there are at least a half dozen different areas where if one thing were to go wrong the entire city would be without water," Peduto said. "Then on top of that billing problems and lead problems and the other parts that come with a system that really cannot exist as is."

The city is seeking a private company to devise long-term strategies for improving PWSA's operations, customer service and value. A panel of government, nonprofit, academic and business executives assembled by Peduto is scheduled to interview finalists Friday.

The 10 a.m. meeting in City Council Chambers on the fifth floor of the City-County Building, Downtown, is open to the public and will be televised.

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com (<mailto:bbauder@tribweb.com>).

Peduto says city seeking outside help to procure and distribute lead water filters

March 29, 2017 5:14 PM

By Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Pittsburgh officials are looking for professional expertise to secure and distribute thousands of lead filters for water customers, Mayor Bill Peduto said Wednesday.

Mr. Peduto said a request for proposals will solicit logistical help for the "Safe Water Plan," announced this month to offer a free lead filter to every Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority and Pennsylvania American Water Co. customer in the city.

The RFP should go public this week, with the water-purifying devices to be available "as soon as possible," Mr. Peduto said. He said he did not have an exact date yet for distribution.

"We want to make sure this happens as soon as possible. But we also want to make sure that when it does happen, it's being run and administered effectively," Mr. Peduto said. "That will require a third party being brought in to be able to do that."

He said PWSA is "already over capacity" and unable to handle the filter project on its own. He estimated the effort could involve some 80,000 filters.

Mr. Peduto has called the filter plan a stop-gap while PWSA addresses widespread infrastructure deficiencies over a period of years. State environmental authorities ordered last summer that the authority begin to inventory and replace its lead service lines after tests found elevated levels of the metal in some homes.

Under a state mandate, PWSA must replace at least 7 percent of its lead service lines each year. Each residential or business customer relies on a perpendicular service line that ties into a larger water main beneath the street. Around 20 percent to 25 percent of 85,000 PWSA service connections likely contain lead, according to the authority.

PWSA and city officials together have pledged \$500,000 to the lead filter program, with \$500,000 more coming from Peoples Natural Gas. Mr. Peduto said the total program cost would hinge on responses to the

RFP.

“The goal here is to protect public health,” said Deborah Gross, a city councilwoman and PWSA board member. “We realize that there’s risk, and people are stepping up to figure out how to protect people from that risk. I’m happy with the pace of things, absolutely.”

PWSA has a board meeting scheduled for 1 p.m. Friday at its Strip District headquarters. At 10 a.m. that day, a mayoral advisory panel will interview finalists for a financial and legal team to strengthen PWSA services. That public session will be held in City Council chambers at the City-County Building, 414 Grant St., Downtown.

Adam Smeltz: 412-263-2625, asmeltz@post-gazette.com, [@asmeltz](#).

First Published March 29, 2017 3:13 PM

City seeking legislation to allow for funding of private lead water line replacement

March 29, 2017 10:16 PM

By Don Hopey and Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The very public political spat between Pittsburgh's mayor and Allegheny County's controller over removal of lead water service lines in the city turns out to be less about if it should be done and who should pay for it, and more about how fast.

To recap: County Controller Chelsa Wagner said Tuesday that Mayor William Peduto was slow to push the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority to remove lead service lines that carry water to 20 to 25 percent of the authority's 83,000 customers and find the money to pay for that work.

Wednesday, Kevin Acklin, the mayor's chief of staff, said the administration was on it. And had been for some time.

According to Mr. Acklin, Mr. Peduto has been working with state Sen. Wayne Fontana on legislation that will amend the state Municipal Authorities Act to allow the spending of public money on private water lines.

"Those changes will put us on good legal footing," Mr. Acklin said. "And given the need and desire of this administration to remove these lead lines, we think these changes can proceed as emergency legislation."

Service lines, which run from the water mains under city streets into residences and businesses, are publicly owned by the PWSA under the streets, but privately owned under residential and business properties.

Mr. Peduto, in a statement issued Wednesday afternoon, said the amendments to state law are necessary because the PWSA is now only permitted to work on publicly owned lines, leaving homeowners and small businesses on their own to remove private lead service lines and fix broken sewer laterals.

"These changes in state law will create valuable tools to assist PWSA's efforts to eliminate public and private lead service lines from Pittsburgh's water system and continue to address our crumbling sewer infrastructure," Mr. Peduto said.

Mr. Acklin said many of the privately owned lead service lines are located in areas that are “disadvantaged,” and where residents can’t afford to replace the lines themselves, even with low-interest loans. Line replacement can cost thousands of dollars.

Mr. Peduto also has talked with Mr. Fontana and Gov. Tom Wolf about amending the rules of the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority, known as Pennvest, to allow the state-funded authority to spend money on removal of the private lead water lines.

“Part of the obstacle that we identified several months ago is that replacing the privately owned lead lines will increase the financial responsibility of the PWSA,” Mr. Acklin said. “So we’ve had conversations aimed at amending Pennvest to allow PWSA to apply for state funding now only used for publicly owned infrastructure.”

Mr. Fontana, whose district includes about half the city of Pittsburgh, introduced legislation in December that would allow the PWSA to repair, replace and pay for sewer line replacement under private property, and this week began circulating new legislation allowing public money expenditure on private water line replacement.

He said his new proposal will target and encourage efficient replacement of old lead water in Pittsburgh and other communities throughout the state.

“We want to give everybody the ability and option to replace [the lead lines], but there’s no question it costs money,” he said.




Ms. Wagner estimated replacing all the lead service lines in the city would cost approximately \$25 million. Mr. Acklin said doing that plus making necessary repairs to the PWSA reservoirs, water mains and sewer lines will cost “hundreds of millions” more.

Mr. Fontana said passage of his bill will save cities and municipalities money in the long run by allowing more underground work to be done at one time without repeatedly tearing up streets and sidewalks.

“Ultimately, the goal is to replace all the old lines,” Mr. Fontana said. “This is the first step, I think, in many steps going forward.”


Don Hopey: dhohey@post-gazette.com, 412-263-1983, or on Twitter @donhohey; Adam Smeltz: 412-263-2625, asmeltz@post-gazette.com, @asmeltz.

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<http://triblive.com/local/allegHENY/12139094-74/former-pwsa-management-company-lambastes-city-audit>

Former PWSA management company lambastes city audit

BOB BAUDER  (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Thursday, March 30, 2017, 6:30 p.m.

A company that ran Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority operations for more than three years denounced Thursday an audit that was released more than a month ago by the city controller.

In a letter to Controller Michael Lamb, Veolia North America's Senior Vice President of Operations Keavin Nelson called the audit "flawed and misleading" and requested a meeting and corrections to the audit. Veolia released the letter Thursday afternoon. Lamb's office declined to comment.

Nelson outlined "significant errors" in the audit, including allegations that Veolia as a way of saving money recommended a change in corrosion control chemicals that limit lead content in water. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection last year cited PWSA with violating safe drinking water standards for failing to notify it of the change.

An email attached to the letter indicates employees at PWSA's Aspinwall waterworks made the chemical change on their own and later advised Veolia of it.

"Any suggestion that Veolia directed, was aware of, or benefitted from the chemical switch is simply false," Nelson wrote. "Your erroneous conclusion supported a false narrative that the PWSA has been advancing to the press. Veolia, the PWSA's scapegoat, continues to battle those libelous statements ..."

Veolia spokesman Paul Whitmore said the company released the letter in response to continued negative publicity. Lamb released the audit Feb. 16.

"We thought this substantive response was timely given the news stories," Whitmore said.

PWSA in October filed a lawsuit against Veolia seeking damages not expected to exceed \$12.5 million. The complaint contends the company created problems such as faulty automated water meters and the change in corrosive chemicals. Veolia had a management contract with PWSA from July 12, 2012, to Dec. 31, 2015.

PWSA could not be reached for comment.

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer.

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Pittsburgh to select experts to solve water issues

March 30, 2017 10:26 PM

By Don Hohey and Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Pittsburgh's mayor and its public water authority on Friday will take what they hope is a step or two toward solving operations and funding issues facing the authority, and lead contamination problems affecting some city water customers.

At 10 a.m., Mayor Bill Peduto will attend a public meeting of his nine-member "blue-ribbon" panel, which will interview four teams of experts that have applied to serve as advisers to the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority on legal, operational and financial matters.

The four finalists were selected by the panel from 18 teams that responded to the city's request for proposals.

Each of the four finalist teams contains legal, financial and community members. One will be selected to manage a possible restructuring or "revamping" of the PWSA, according to Mr. Peduto, who declined to name the four finalists Thursday.

"Each of those finalists will make their pitch," Mr. Peduto said. "What they're pitching now is what a redevelopment or a restructuring would look like. What they're pitching is the ability to be the financial experts, the legal experts, the engineering experts in order to be able to provide the board with the best options going forward.

"At that point, then, there will be another full public process in finding what that strategic partnership would look like."

Kevin Acklin, the mayor's chief of staff, will lead the meeting and said the panel will recommend one of the four teams to the mayor, who will then submit that recommendation to City Council for its approval.

He said the PWSA board would eventually be asked to share in the cost for the advisory team that is selected. He said the cost of hiring the advisory team and the length of its contract hasn't been determined but would be based on the scope of the consulting work proposed by the team selected.

"We're at the point where that tin can can't be kicked down the road any longer without flying up and hitting us in the forehead," Mr. Acklin said. "We need to own this. And we will solve this problem."

Friday's meeting will be held in City Council chambers at the City-County Building and is open to the public.

Three hours after the start of that meeting, the PWSA, which postponed its regular monthly meeting last Friday after three board members, including its chairman, resigned, is scheduled to meet at its Strip District offices on Penn Avenue.

Only four members remain on the PWSA board, the bare minimum for a quorum, and the mayor, who appoints the board, has said that he wants to name replacement board members by the end of the week, but they would need to be confirmed by City Council, so the new members will not take their seats before that.

Neither the mayor, Mr. Acklin nor Will Pickering, a PWSA spokesman, would say who the mayor will appoint.

Mr. Acklin said the appointments could be announced Friday or Monday.

The PWSA has been buffeted by a storm of problems, missteps, frustrations, errors and bad luck, including a revolving door of executive directors, meter problems, billing inaccuracies, water main failures, a boil water advisory, board resignations, and an illegal switch in water treatment chemicals that has contributed to rising lead levels in homes with lead service lines.

The PWSA board also hired in July 2012, Veolia North America-Northeast LLC, a private water management company to oversee operation of the water system, but fired the firm in December 2015.

A draft performance audit of the PWSA by the city controller released in February blamed Veolia for several of the authority's problems involving incompatible meters, billing problems and the water treatment chemical change.

Veolia on Thursday sent a five page letter to City Controller Michael Lamb challenging those findings.

In an email accompanying the letter, Veolia's press office stated, "In the audit report, he was sharply critical of Veolia, basing many of the conclusions on a number of erroneous PWSA statements that are part of an ongoing attempt by PWSA to shift blame from themselves and avoid responsibility for recent mismanagement and corrosion problems."

Don Hopey: dhopey@post-gazette.com, 412-263-1983, or on Twitter @donhopey; Adam Smeltz: 412-263-2625, asmeltz@post-gazette.com, @asmeltz.

Here is City Controller Michael Lamb's audit:

To print the document, click the "Original Document" link to open the original PDF. At this time it is not possible to print the document with annotations.

And here is Veolia's response:

To print the document, click the "Original Document" link to open the original PDF. At this time it is not possible to print the document with annotations.

PWSA board tables director's contract

March 31, 2017 11:39 PM

By Don Hopey and Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority board decided Friday to table approval of a new contract for its interim director Bernard Lindstrom, further muddling the course forward for the troubled public water supplier.

The PWSA board, which has only four members after the resignation last week of three members, said it wanted to wait until a full board is empaneled to make the hire.

"It would be wiser, before we take action to hire another executive director, to wait until we have some community representatives on the board," said Paul Leger, the board member who made the motion to table the contract approval. "We want to have community input on who leads this organization."

Mayor Bill Peduto hopes to nominate three new board members early next week, but city council would then need to confirm those appointments before they could be seated on the board.

Deborah Gross, a city councilwoman who serves on the PWSA board, said she raised the option of waiting for a full board to approve Mr. Lindstrom's contract, and that was discussed during an executive session prior to the board meeting.

"We talked about it and decided that because there is a lot of work the executive director will need to do with the board it will be a good idea to have the consensus of the full board," Ms. Gross said.

The decision puts on hold a tentative agreement, negotiated by Mr. Peduto, that was set to begin Monday and would have paid Mr. Lindstrom up to \$225,000 through Mar. 13, 2019. It contains a provision that allowed its termination with a 30-day notice if a new director is found.

Mr. Lindstrom, a retired U.S. Army colonel, has been working as the authority's interim executive director since September, under a six-month, \$100,000 agreement that ended March 19.

The PWSA, which is facing a raft of problems, including infrastructure failures, customer service problems and elevated lead water levels in some households served through lead pipes, has had four directors since late 2015, not counting Robert Weimar, PWSA's interim director of construction and engineering, who has been overseeing day-to-day operations.

Kevin Acklin, the mayor's chief of staff, said Mr. Weimar has the legal authority to hire Mr. Lindstrom as interim director until the board confirms the appointment.

Although Mr. Acklin said continuity is an important consideration for the authority, he said that any action involving Mr. Lindstrom isn't a long-term solution.

"So this is not a permanent placement," Mr. Acklin said. "Nor is he [Mr. Lindstrom] approaching it as a permanent placement. We need a permanent executive director at PWSA. That remains an issue."

Don Hopey: dhopey@post-gazette.com, 412-263-1983, or on Twitter @donhopey; Adam Smeltz: 412-263-2625, asmeltz@post-gazette.com, @asmeltz.

First Published March 31, 2017 2:55 PM

PWSA will need billions for infrastructure needs, new water lines, mayor warns

March 31, 2017 11:51 PM

By Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Start with \$411 million to replace every lead service line in the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority system. Factor in \$750 million to cover existing debt, then \$4 billion — maybe \$5 billion — in capital investments to keep the infrastructure working over the next two decades.

That's the mathematical reality facing PWSA as the city weighs an organizational overhaul at the troubled agency, Mayor Bill Peduto said Friday. Without a creative strategy, he warned, the numbers could force an eventual doubling or tripling of service rates.

PWSA board members already approved a 13 percent rate increase for 2017, saying the increase was necessary to help strengthen failing pipes, beleaguered billing and overall financial management. The state has ordered the authority to replace at least 7 percent of its lead service lines each year, citing elevated lead levels in some homes.

"A city can grow economically. A city can see companies move in, people move in. But if a city can't provide safe drinking water, a city can't survive," Mr. Peduto said before panel interviews of four finalists looking to help reform PWSA.

The nine-member panel has until Tuesday to evaluate the foursome for the mayor, who will submit a final recommendation to City Council for budgetary approval, according to the administration.

Finalists selected from 18 applicants include teams presented by Environmental Consulting and Technology Inc. of Gainesville, Fla.; Infrastructure Management Group Inc. of Washington, D.C.; HJA Strategies Inc. of West Orange, N.J.; and Philadelphia-based PFM Financial Advisors. The chosen party will sell a range of engineering, financial and related expertise to help stabilize PWSA operations and formulate a long-term, sustainable plan.

City officials hope to split that consulting expense — likely to reach several hundred thousand dollars — with PWSA, said Kevin Acklin, Mr. Peduto's chief of staff. Finalists' visual presentations are posted at post-gazette.com, and the panel interviews appear on the City Channel Pittsburgh (Comcast channels 13 and 14; Verizon channels 44 and 45).

"The mayor feels very strongly that every step of this process will be driven by the community and shared with the community," Mr. Acklin said. He said the city will prioritize technical prowess, relevant experience and a commitment to an open, transparent planning process as it considers the finalists.

■ Mayor Peduto's Presentation on systematic issues facing PWSA

Bidding firms

■ Environmental Consulting and Technology Inc.

■ Infrastructure Management Group

■ HJA Strategies

■ PFM Financial Advisors

Mr. Acklin's remarks capped an occasionally rancorous day at the City-County Building, where two of Mr. Peduto's most outspoken critics again challenged his handling of PWSA.

First, City Councilwoman Darlene Harris tweaked the administration over its reliance on consultants. In a press conference, she alleged micromanagement by Mr. Peduto, pointing to his office's involvement in contract negotiations with PWSA interim director Bernard Lindstrom.

Mrs. Harris, who is campaigning against Mr. Peduto for the Democratic nomination for mayor, aired hope for a federal investigation to focus on leadership selection, system maintenance and other PWSA issues. She said she intends to speak with the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office, which she would like to be involved in such a review, she said.

DA spokesman Mike Manko said he could not comment on a request that the office had not received. Mr. Acklin dismissed Mrs. Harris' media event as "a political sideshow."

"It's probably one of the first times that somebody would call for a federal investigation for somebody doing their job," Mr. Peduto said later. He said it's up to the PWSA board, not him, to finalize a director's contract.

The other dust-up involved Allegheny County Controller Chelsa Wagner, who estimated earlier that lead-line replacement costs could hold to around \$25 million. She has said Mr. Peduto was too slow to push PWSA on lead-line removal, among other criticisms.

With Ms. Wagner watching Friday, Mr. Peduto called it "shameful" for "anyone to start to get people concerned and [create] anxiety for pure political points." He said overall lead poisoning among local youth is waning, and that no children in the city are being poisoned by lead in tap water.

Ms. Wagner called the mayor's latter remarks "reckless" and "terribly, terribly dangerous," arguing that Allegheny County Health Department data could not confirm that statement. Mr. Peduto said she had misrepresented the health department.

Reached later, county health director Karen Hacker said nobody could indicate with certainty that no Pittsburgh children are being poisoned by lead in their water. That's because not all children — and not all spigots — are tested for lead, she said.

Still, Dr. Hacker said, health officials have not identified any Pittsburgh children for whom water has been a primary source of lead poisoning.

"It's always been lead paint, lead dust," she said. She said she worries that people will forget about lead-based paint amid the focus on water. The metal is linked to developmental problems and other ailments.

"We are much more concerned about the paint and about the paint dust as a primary source of lead exposure for children," Dr. Hacker said.

Staff writer Kate Giammarise contributed. Adam Smeltz: 412-263-2625, asmeltz@post-gazette.com, @asmeltz.

First Published March 31, 2017 10:16 AM

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<http://triblive.com/politics/politicalheadlines/12141530-74/pittsburgh-city-councilwoman-calls-for-federal-investigation-of-pwsa>

Pittsburgh City Councilwoman calls for federal investigation of PWSA

BOB BAUDER [✉ \(https://twitter.com/BobBauder\)](https://twitter.com/BobBauder) | Friday, March 31, 2017, 1:00 p.m.



Andrew Russell | Tribune-Review

Pittsburgh City Councilwoman Darlene Harris on Friday called for a federal investigation into the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, saying Mayor Bill Peduto's office influenced recent board resignations and a large contract extension for the PWSA executive director.

Harris of Spring Hill, who is challenging Peduto in the May Democratic primary, cited PWSA sources, whom she would not identify, as the source of her claims. PWSA operates independently of Pittsburgh city government, but the mayor appoints the seven board members.

"It appears as if the mayor and/or his staff involved themselves directly in a contract negotiation with acting director (Bernard) Lindstrom outside of and without any involvement of the PWSA board," Harris said during a news conference she called at the City-County Building, Downtown. "There have been three sudden resignations of board members on the same time line as this apparently unilateral contract negotiation with the interim director. That's why I believe an investigation is required in this."

Peduto administration officials denied her allegations.

"She's asking for a federal investigation because the mayor and I were doing our jobs," said Peduto spokesman Kevin Acklin.

Harris said she has not spoken to former PWSA board members Alex Thomson, Andrea Geraghty or Caren Glotfelty, who resigned earlier this month, or PWSA officials about her concerns.

The board members' terms expired in December, according to resolutions that City Council passed in appointing them. Harris produced a document that contradicts that. She said the document came from PWSA and shows their terms actually expire in December 2017.

"As usual the councilwoman is dead wrong, reckless, and completely misinformed," said Peduto spokesman Tim McNulty, adding that the PWSA document is not accurate.

Geraghty and Glotfelty cited time constraints as their reasons for resigning.

"We resigned because it was time for us to move on," Geraghty told the Tribune-Review last week. "We had all worked very hard for a very long time. It was time for us to go, each of us."

Acklin said the mayor's office and PWSA board members jointly negotiated with Lindstrom for a contract extension that would pay him \$225,000 per year in 2017 and 2018.

The PWSA board, operating with a quorum of four members, on Friday postponed a vote on Lindstrom's contract, saying they preferred to wait until the mayor appoints three new members.

Acklin said the appointments would likely be announced early next week.

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com (<mailto:bbauder@tribweb.com>).

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Thousands of Pittsburgh residents left out of water line lead tests

April 5, 2017 12:00 AM

Don Hopey / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The water service line going into Dave Schmitt's house on Obey Street in Pittsburgh's 28th Ward is made of lead.

He knew that even before December, when Pennsylvania American Water Co. finished replacing the water main that runs down the middle of the street and took out the lead water lateral that runs from that main and connects to his lead service line.

But what he doesn't know is whether the water main and lateral work done by Pennsylvania American disrupted the scaling inside his service line, allowing water flowing into his house to pick up higher concentrations of lead from the line.

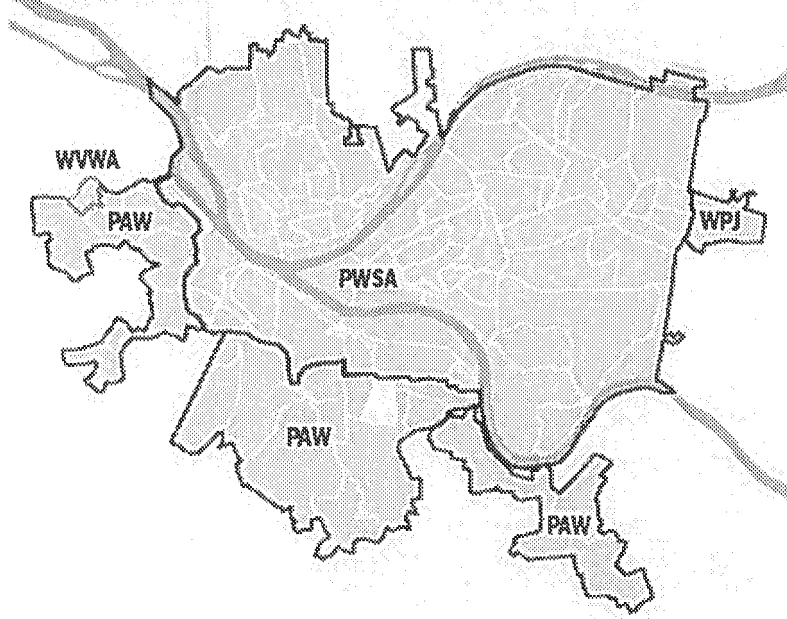
His is one of 27,000 Pittsburgh households, mostly in the city's southern and western neighborhoods, that pay Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority bills for their sewer service but aren't eligible for free lead water testing provided by the authority to its water customers.

They're also not eligible to participate in PWSA's planned free water filter distribution program or its free lead service line replacement program, according to the PWSA and Penn American.

"Most of the homes in this neighborhood have lead service lines, and we're all among thousands of city residents in the same boat," said Mr. Schmitt, a retired city police officer who's concerned about lead exposure for his 5-year-old granddaughter during visits to his home.

"I want someone to test the water coming into my house. When Penn American made the repairs to the main and connecting line, they could have disturbed the existing lead line," he said. "All I'm asking for is peace of mind. I'm not asking for nothing. If they find lead in my water, I'll replace the line."

Pittsburgh's water service providers



KEY

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Pittsburgh neighborhood | PAW (Pennsylvania American Water) |
| PWSA (Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority) | WPJ (Wilkinsburg-Penn Joint Water) |
| | WVWA (Westview Water Authority) |

Source: Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority

James Hillston/Post-Gazette

Lead contamination of public water supplies has been a much-debated public health issue since 2014, when dangerous concentrations were found in Flint, Mich. Exposure can cause serious health problems, especially for infants, small children and pregnant women.

Although the PWSA's water contains virtually no lead when it leaves the treatment plant, tests last year show lead levels climbed above the 15 parts per billion federal standard for some homes hooked to the water mains through lead service lines.

Those findings triggered a federal requirement that PWSA each year replace at least 7 percent of the lead service lines in its service area. PWSA estimates that 20 percent to 25 percent of its 83,000

customers get their water through lead lines. It doesn't know where many of those lines are but is conducting research to find out.

PWSA spokesman Will Pickering said the authority is offering free lead testing to any of its residential water customers who request it, but not to its sewage service customers who get their water from Penn American.

Although the city's free water filter program has not yet begun, the city said it will also be limited to PWSA customers, with priority given to those homes with lead service lines, residents whose lines test at or above 10 parts per billion for lead, customers living in areas where the PWSA is replacing its lead service lines, and low-income residents.

City Councilwoman Theresa Kail-Smith, who represents many of the city's western neighborhoods served by Pennsylvania American, is aware of the issue and said those residents should get the same consideration for the free filter program as other city residents.

They also should get free water testing, she said, and line replacement if legislative changes sought by the city allow PWSA to replace privately owned lead service lines for other city residents.

She said she would schedule a meeting soon with Mayor Bill Peduto's administration and Pennsylvania American to request those changes.

"I think Penn American provides great service," said Ms. Smith, who, like Mr. Schmitt, is a PWSA sewage customer but a Pennsylvania American water customer. "But we all need to be assured that our drinking water is safe. They need to be responsible for that. They need to provide water testing and water filters. They need to build the confidence of their customers."

Pennsylvania American spokesman Gary Lobaugh said the company isn't offering free lead tests because the water supplier has consistently met federal water standards and its customers are "not affected by the lead issues currently affecting customers of the (PWSA)."

But while Pennsylvania American's water, like the PWSA's, is almost lead-free when it leaves the treatment plant, lead contamination can enter the water supply if work on adjacent mains or service lines inadvertently removes protective coatings on the inside of lead lines running into residences.

Mr. Lobaugh said Pennsylvania American is "exploring" the replacement of residential lead service lines. As a private company it isn't precluded from doing so by state regulations. But it hasn't replaced those lines in the past when doing water main work, as in Mr. Schmitt's Crafton Heights neighborhood.

"We're doing some internal analysis on that, and working to identify where the customer lead lines are as part of that analysis," Mr. Lobaugh said. A decision isn't expected before late spring or early summer, he said.

Don Hopey: dhohey@post-gazette.com, 412-263-1983, or on Twitter @donhohey.

Lead water tests, filters not limited to PWSA customers

April 5, 2017 3:08 PM

By Don Hopey / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The city's free lead water testing and filter programs will now extend to all city residents, whether they get their water from the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority or other suppliers.

Mayor Bill Peduto said in a statement Wednesday that he is inviting Pennsylvania American Water Co., which serves 27,000 households in the southern and western city neighborhoods, and other public water suppliers, to join the PWSA in addressing the city's lead water issues.

"The city is committed to ensuring clean and safe drinking water to all our residents, regardless of who owns and operates their system," he said. "This includes not only PWSA customers, but residents of Pittsburgh who receive water from Wilksburg-Penn Joint Water, West View Water Authority, and Pennsylvania American Water."

The PWSA has seen its lead water concentrations for some customers with lead service lines climb above the 15 parts per billion federal standard, causing the state to order the replacement of up to 1,500 city-owned lead connector lines, located between water mains and household service lines, by July 1. The other water providers supplying city residents have not registered high lead water concentrations and, unlike PWSA, are not required to take measures to reduce lead levels.

City Council members Theresa Kail-Smith and Natalia Rudiak were pleased by the mayor's announcement.

"I think there was confusion about the filter program and whether Penn American customers would be eligible to receive the filters, too," Ms. Rudiak said. "We've been able now to confirm that they will."

Sam Ashbaugh, the city's chief financial officer, speaking at a City Council standing committee meeting Wednesday morning, encouraged Pennsylvania American to establish a free lead water testing program

similar to that offered by PWSA.

Gary Lobaugh, a spokesman for Pennsylvania American, was noncommittal. He said the commercial water provider is “reviewing the mayor’s comments and will be reaching out to his office and other city officials to further discuss the plans they put forth.”

The water filters are a temporary fix aimed at protecting residents while lead is removed from the PWSA system. According to the mayor’s release, the city will be receiving bids this week to select a company to provide pitcher-style water filters, and has “finalized a distribution strategy that maximizes the delivery of filters to residents.”

Kevin Acklin, the mayor’s chief of staff, said priorities for water filter distribution include households with pregnant women and young children, who are especially vulnerable to lead exposure, and areas of the city where the PWSA will be working in coming months to replace the city-owned section of lead water service lines. The authority is precluded by state law from replacing the section of the service line owned by the property owner, but is working with state legislators to eliminate that restriction.

Allegheny County Controller Chelsa Wagner said she has filed an appeal with the Pennsylvania Office of Open Records, seeking the release of records showing where PWSA has performed and plans to perform hundreds of the partial lead service line replacements that she has labeled “dangerous” because they can loosen lead corrosion in the service lines and increase lead water levels in those households.

She said the PWSA was unresponsive last week to her state Open Records Law request for those records.

“While I continue to call on Mayor Peduto to cease the very dangerous partial line replacement approach that can double lead levels in household water, at an absolute minimum he must ensure that residents know where the hundreds of partial line replacements have already been conducted and where the planned replacements are located for the next four months,” Ms. Wagner said in a release. “Without such transparency regarding line replacement locations, residents will continue to be kept in the dark regarding their increased exposure to lead.”

Will Pickering, a PWSA spokesman, said the authority is committed to “full transparency within the law,” is in the process of mapping lead service line locations and providing notification to nearby residents when lead connector line replacement work is done. Notification includes door hanger notices, notification letters and line flushing instructions.

"The data associated with our lead program will be made fully available to the public, in an open and transparent manner," he said in an email statement. "We remain fully committed to do the hard work of identifying and removing lead from our system, once and for all."

Mr. Pickering said PWSA has replaced 165 publicly owned lead connector lines since July 2016 and 67 more as part of water main replacement projects. Authority contractors are expected to replace another 400 lead connector lines by the end of June.

Ms. Rudiak said the PWSA needs to be more aggressive in mapping where the lead service lines are located.

"We asked PWSA and it has one staff member sifting through paper documents to find the lead lines," Ms. Rudiak said. "Right now, we're just shooting in the dark here because we don't have the data required to make the needed systematic changes."

She has suggested that the city and PWSA look into getting foundation funding to help with the one-time project of identifying and digitizing the lead service line locations.

Don Hopey: dhopey@post-gazette.com, 412-263-1983, or on Twitter @donhopey

Pittsburghers pour forth water concerns at East Liberty town hall

April 11, 2017 10:19 PM

By Don Hopey / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

More than 200 city residents packed the town hall-style meeting Tuesday evening in East Liberty about Pittsburgh's lead water problems, and if concern, frustration and anger came in bottles they would have held gallon jugs.

Nayyirah Shariff, a community activist from Flint, Mich., stepped to the podium and said she understood because she's seen it before, in 2014 when lead water levels went sky high in her home town.

She urged the crowd to get organized and get involved in the management and decision-making of the city's main water supplier, Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, if they wanted a clean, lead-free, affordable water supply.

"Some things are troubling here. Your needs are dismissed by your government and that's something that has to change," said Ms. Shariff, who formed the community organization Flint Rising in 2016 and is its director. She was invited to Pittsburgh to speak by Our Water Campaign, a coalition of eight environmental groups promoting a safe, affordable, publicly controlled water supply in Pittsburgh.

Ms. Shariff said she believes that clean, affordable water is a human right, while charging high water rates and requiring homeowners to pay for lead service line replacement isn't fair, especially to city residents who live below the poverty line. She said 42 percent of Flint residents and 12.3 percent of Pittsburghers are on the wrong side of that line.

"Things need to be fair for all. In Flint people made decisions in terms of dollars and cents and not based on what's best for public health," Ms. Shariff said. "The city should pay for water line replacement. If we care about the lives and homes of our cities' residents, and about keeping families intact, that's what we should do."

"It's not up to us to pay for it. It's up to us to demand it."

Ms. Shariff's talk was followed by a discussion panel that featured Pittsburgh Councilwoman Deb Gross; Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis, executive director of Women for a Healthy Environment; Dr. Christopher Conti, of Primary Care Health Services; Corporate Accountability International's Alissa Weinman; and Glenn Grayson Jr. of One Pennsylvania.

Ms. Gross said who will pay for lead service line replacement in Pittsburgh is "an open question," and an important one.

"I think this is a serious issue," said Ms. Gross, who is also City Council's representative on the PWSA board. "I want to have safe water. I have small children and i have a lead service line. We're going to have to put our voices together to highlight the problem. We've been all about building a great city here but we have to pay attention to what's under the ground as well."

Mr. Grayson said water is a social, economic and racial issue, and noted that PWSA's rates are scheduled to increase by 13 percent this year.

"We can't be one of the nation's most livable cities if we have undrinkable water," he said. "And we can't continue to pay high water rates for a service we're not receiving back. We need affordable, clean water and we need to make sure we have a seat at the table where decisions are made."

Mr. Grayson and all the other panel members expressed strong opposition to any change that would privatize the city's water authority operations or create a "public-private partnership," one of the options the city has considered.

Ms. Weinman said a decline in federal money support for public water operations has opened the door for private water companies to move in to many municipal and metropolitan areas.

"But involving a private water company is never the solution," she said. "Public water providers are democratically controlled water systems that best protect the public."

Lead levels in the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority service area exceeded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency drinking water standards last year, possibly due to a change in corrosion inhibitor chemicals that occurred in 2014 and allowed lead to slowly leach out of lead service lines and welds.

The PWSA estimates that 20 to 25 percent of the systems 83,000 customers may have lead service lines and could be at risk for elevated lead levels in their water.


Mr. Grayson and Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis said the PWSA needs to do a better job finding lead service lines and telling the public where they are.

"A lot of people are not even aware of the ongoing problem," Mr. Grayson said. "But they need to know what their options are to make good decisions."

Members of Our Water Campaign include the Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter, One Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh United, Clean Water Action, Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network, Nine Mile Run Watershed, New Voices for Reproductive Justice and Thomas Merton Center.

Don Hopey: dhopey@post-gazette.com, 412-263-1983, or on Twitter @donhopey.

Peduto nominates 3 to fill vacancies on PWSA board

BOB BAUDER  (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Friday, April 21, 2017, 12:06 p.m.

Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto on Friday nominated three people, including his chief administration officer, to fill vacancies on the Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority's board of directors.

The nominees — Debbie Lestitian, Chaton Turner and Jim Turner — are subject to approval by Pittsburgh City Council.

Lestitian, a lawyer, has served as Peduto's chief administrative officer since he took office in 2014. She also heads the city personnel department and has an accounting degree.

Chaton Turner is assistant counsel for the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. She is an expert in patient safety and regulatory compliance and provides support for the Center for Fertility in UPMC's Physician Services Division, according to the Mayor's Office.

Jim Turner is an adjunct professor at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. He previously served as budget director, finance director and chief administrative officer for the city, as managing director for the Pennsylvania Economy League and chief financial officer for the Allegheny Conference on Community Development.

They would replace Alex Thomson, Caren Glotfelty and Andrea Geraghty, who all resigned the same week from PWSA's board in March.

"I want to extend my gratitude to these nominees, who are coming on during a time of long-term, systematic challenges facing the PWSA. There is a great amount of work ahead, and they will help us accomplish all we need to do," Peduto said in a statement.

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Mayoral candidate John Welch criticizes Bill Peduto's handling of PWSA problems

April 14, 2017 12:00 AM

By Don Hopey / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The Rev. John Welch, a city mayoral candidate, has again criticized Mayor Bill Peduto for his mismanagement of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority and said a plan to spend \$1 million on carafe-style water filters is “ludicrous and unacceptable.”

Thursday, at his second news conference in as many months on the Penn Avenue sidewalk outside the PWSA headquarters, Rev. Welch also said that installing point of entry filters directly onto residential service lines is a better solution than the carafe-style filters and would cost significantly less than digging up and replacing the 16,000 to 20,000 city-owned lead service lines.

“This solution will ensure that the water delivered to the residence is completely free of lead and other contaminants at a fraction of the cost of breaking up the streets and replacing half of the laterals,” Rev. Welch said.

He also said the city, county and state should join in a declaration of a state of emergency for the city’s water supply, making it eligible for state and federal funding.

Concentrations of lead in water supplied by PWSA to some of its customers with lead service lines have climbed above the 15 parts per billion federal drinking water standard. To reduce that unhealthy exposure, the state has ordered PWSA to annually replace at least 7 percent of the city-owned lead connector lines, located between water mains and household service lines.

Mr. Peduto has estimated that replacing the city-owned lead laterals would cost \$411 million. Rev. Welch said the point of entry filters would cost about \$300 million, and are an allowable alternative to replacing the connector lines.

"This is what I would do as mayor," Rev. Welch said. "I will not put the health of city residents at risk nor spend taxpayer money without first looking at compliant and more cost-effective solutions."

Peoples Natural Gas has pledged to put up half of the money for the carafe-style filter program, with the city and PWSA splitting the remainder.

The city has not yet selected a filter provider or made public plans for how the filters will be distributed, except to say that priority will be given to areas of the city where the PWSA will be working in coming months to replace the city-owned lead service line connectors, low-income households and those with young children and pregnant women who are especially vulnerable to lead exposure.

Don Hopey: dhopey@post-gazette.com; 412-263-1983. Twitter @donhopey.

Veolia accuses PWSA of defamation over mismanagement claims

April 24, 2017 1:39 PM

By Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A contractor accused of mismanaging the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority returned the criticism Monday, charging that PWSA defamed the Boston-based company through “reckless and false statements.”

Veolia North America-Northeast LLC also withdrew from mediation with PWSA and is initiating formal arbitration, the company announced. The parties had been in talks since January, after PWSA claimed in October that Veolia “grossly mismanaged” operations.

A company spokesman said Veolia lost faith in the mediation before resorting to arbitration under the auspices of the American Arbitration Association. Both sides are seeking damages.

“We don’t take such a step lightly, because we work with municipalities throughout the country and view them as our partners. But after PWSA’s unceasing attempts at blame-shifting for their errors, and their complete mischaracterization in the media of the problems at PWSA, we must take steps to publicly defend our work and our reputation,” Veolia vice president Keavin Nelson said in a statement.

The company didn’t have a specific monetary claim Monday for the alleged defamation, although it will present “relevant information” at an arbitration hearing, spokesman Paul Whitmore said. PWSA contracted Veolia to help run the authority from July 2012 to December 2015.

Veolia also is seeking unpaid amounts from PWSA, which declined to comment amid pending litigation. Still, Mayor Bill Peduto’s spokesman, Timothy McNulty, vented disappointment.

“This is a disappointing move by Veolia, and these actions will give PWSA no option other than to pursue its claims in court,” Mr. McNulty said in a statement. Mr. Peduto appoints the seven-member PWSA board.

As early as October, the authority claimed Veolia had “misled and deceived PWSA as part of its efforts to maximize profits for itself to the unfair detriment of PWSA and its customers.” PWSA said failures during the company’s tenure included “the botched procurement and implementation” of an automated system to read water meters; improper billing of PWSA customers; and a mishandled change in chemicals used for corrosion control.

The utility has indicated it would seek up to about \$12.5 million in damages — the maximum under agreed-to terms.

But Veolia has said it never assumed control over PWSA, asserting that the authority, through its board, retained ultimate decision-making power over key matters. The company argued that it helped PWSA to institute financial controls and to “realize at least \$5.5 million in annually recurring revenue and efficiencies.”

Veolia said it remains proud of its work and will mount an aggressive defense, with arbitration to begin by late August. A company website outlines its arguments, including that it was not involved in the 2014 decision over corrosion-control chemicals.

That switch — since reversed — has been eyed as a potential contributor to elevated lead levels that PWSA is working now to subdue. During a news conference Monday, Allegheny County Controller Chelsa Wagner said her office would audit county health department programs that monitor and investigate elevated blood-lead levels in children.

She requested that the health department meet with her staff by Friday, suggesting she could have initial findings within about six weeks. Ms. Wagner said she’s especially interested in how well the health department evaluates water as a potential lead source.

“We certainly acknowledge that lead can come from a variety of sources — paint, dust, soil and water. But we know we have a significant water crisis in Pittsburgh,” Ms. Wagner said.

She renewed her claims that city and health officials haven’t moved with enough urgency on the lead issue. Health department spokeswoman Melissa Wade said the agency would participate in the audit “with full cooperation and professionalism.” County and city leaders have rejected suggestions of an acute crisis.

At an earlier briefing at the health department, expert panelists said overall lead-poisoning rates among children have fallen. The county should announce soon a task force to explore lead data along with policy and intervention strategies, said Karen Hacker, the county health director.

She listed several ongoing efforts to undermine lead contamination, which is often linked to lead-based paints. Ms. Wade said the health department relies on a state reporting system to identify youngsters with elevated lead levels, and offers to investigate confirmed cases — including water sources.

Health officials have not identified any Pittsburgh children for whom water has been a primary source of lead poisoning, Dr. Hacker has said. An estimated 17 percent to 18 percent of Allegheny County youth are tested for the metal, which is linked to developmental problems and other ailments.

County health board chairman Lee Harrison said the testing figure isn't nearly high enough. He said the board should vote next month on mandatory testing — once at 9 to 12 months of age and again at 24 months.

"We think that's going to generate an enormous amount of data so that we can target our interventions," Dr. Harrison said.

Adam Smeltz: 412-263-2625, asmeltz@post-gazette.com, @asmeltz.

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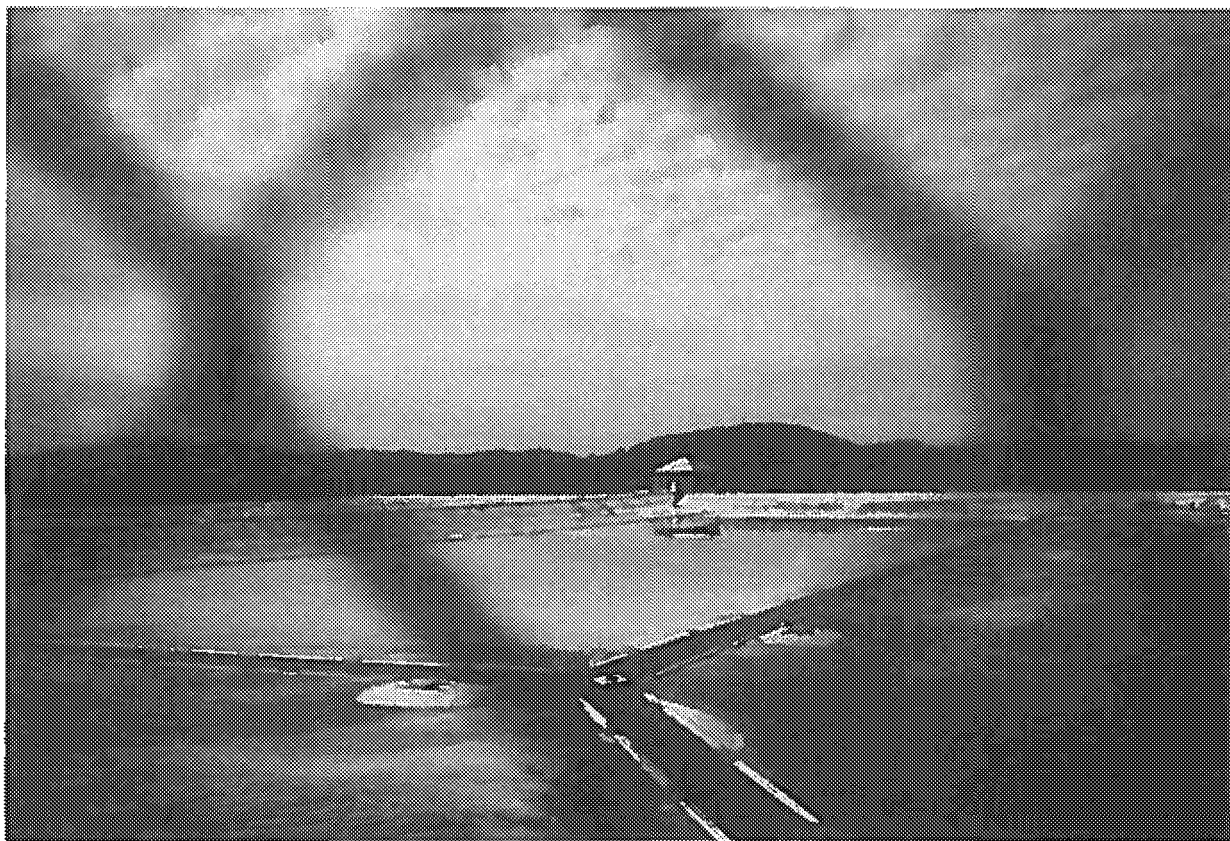
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Pittsburgh could spend \$900K to restructure PWSA

BOB BAUDER [✈](https://twitter.com/BobBauder) (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Tuesday, April 25, 2017, 5:24 p.m.



Andrew Russell | Tribune-Review

The Lanpher Reservoir in Etna, shown, Friday, Feb. 17, 2017.

Pittsburgh has chosen a Maryland-based infrastructure consulting firm to manage a possible restructuring of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority.

The hiring of Infrastructure Management Group Inc. (IMG) of Bethesda is subject to approval by the PWSA board of directors, which is expected to vote Friday on a contract for the first phase of work.

Sam Ashbaugh, Pittsburgh's chief financial officer, said that IMG's proposal totaled about \$900,000. He said the first phase, an evaluation of PWSA operations and needs, would account for "several hundred thousand." Officials will decide after the first phase whether to engage IMG for the remainder of the proposal.

"Our goal for this first phase is to get us through what would be, based on their proposal, the assessment and a review of options," he said. "I'm working to finalize the actual scope of work and cost by Friday."

The city and PWSA are splitting the costs.

Mayor Bill Peduto empaneled a committee to oversee a possible restructuring of PWSA, which has been plagued with debt, breakdowns and water quality issues for years. The panel and city officials picked IMG from a group of four companies submitting consulting proposals.

Ashbaugh said IMG did not submit the cheapest proposal, but it was the best fit for the city's needs.

"This is something where everyone brought different approaches," he said. "There were some vendors that they thought the city should go in a particular direction. One of the things we liked about IMG was they don't come in with any preconceived notion of what the end result would look like."

Pittsburgh will also receive advisory help from Mayors Innovation Project, a Wisconsin-based nonprofit, which is governed by a rotating group of mayors and advises U.S. cities on best practices in public endeavors.

The project plans to send Howard Neukrug, retired CEO of Philadelphia Water, and Mel Meder, an expert in water management, to study PWSA and offer their suggestions for improvements.

Pittsburgh is seeking funding from the Downtown-based Heinz Endowments to pay for the Innovation Project's work.

"We consider it to be a worthy project, but it's premature for us to comment further until a funding decision is made," Heinz Endowments spokesman John Ellis said.

City Councilwoman Deb Gross of Highland Park, who serves on the PWSA board, said she won't decide her vote on the IMG contract until she reviews Ashbaugh's cost estimate.

She noted that the city can't restructure PWSA without input from City Council. The authority leases the PWSA system from the city.

"I'm interested to see what the price tag actually is," she said. "It's a very important topic, so it's probably good to start investing resources."

Peduto said he hasn't been involved in the IMG selection process.

"I've been purposely hands-off on this task force so that they can make an independent recommendation," he said. "This still needs to go through a public process with City Council and a public process with PWSA before there's any final selection."

Staff writer Natasha Lindstrom contributed. Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com (<mailto:bbauder@tribweb.com>).

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Peduto announces his choice to handle PWSA study, possible restructuring

April 25, 2017 1:39 PM

By Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A Washington, D.C.-based firm has won Mayor Bill Peduto's support to study the troubled Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority.

The Peduto administration and an expert panel tabbed Infrastructure Management Group to lead an in-depth review and possible restructuring at PWSA, the mayor's office announced Tuesday. IMG was among four finalists that made public presentations last month before the panel.

"They don't come in with any preconceived notion of what the end result would look like," said Sam Ashbaugh, the city's chief financial officer. He said officials favor IMG's approach and experience.

The administration, City Council and PWSA board have yet to finalize a contract and projected expenses, which could run several hundred thousand dollars for an initial phase, Mr. Ashbaugh said.

He said that should include an organizational assessment and specific options to strengthen PWSA — a process that "will get us through the next few months."

In particular, work to evaluate PWSA's operations and needs should finish by late September, according to Mr. Peduto's office.

The administration promised a series of public meetings "to consider full community input."

"After decades of disinvestment and neglect, the PWSA is in need of billions of dollars of long-term infrastructure improvements. It can't borrow its way out of the problem, or implement giant rate increases" for residents, Mr. Peduto said in a statement.

"IMG will help us study the best way to keep the city's water asset public while addressing the improvements that have been ignored for the better part of a century."

The PWSA board is to vote Friday on a joint financing agreement to split the first-phase contract expenses with the city. Mr. Peduto's office said it would submit related legislation to City Council this week to enable the contract.

In addition to nearly \$1 billion in debt, PWSA is facing a deteriorated infrastructure, lead contamination, billing and customer service shortfalls, and turnover in leadership. At IMG, chairman Steve Steckler said the company has taken on similar work in at least 30 cities.

"The mayor has made it clear that he does not intend to sell the utility to a private entity.

"Other than that, all of the other options are going to be explored here," Mr. Steckler said.

He said options could range from internal technology improvements to "involving the private sector in some fashion that does not necessarily involve a transfer of the assets."

"Everybody is going to know what we're doing while we're doing it," Mr. Steckler said.

Adam Smeltz: 412-263-2625, asmeltz@post-gazette.com, @asmeltz.

Estimate on leakage, unmetered use illuminates PWSA woes

April 28, 2017 12:00 AM

By Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

To understand the troubles besetting the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, pick a number.

For starters, the agency faces more than 20,000 service connections that probably include lead. It's counted three executive directors since March 2016. A massive leak in February spewed about 10,000 gallons a minute.

Now add this: In years past, system leaks and unmetered use together may have consumed 40 percent to 50 percent of PWSA's clean-water production.

While the estimate revealed at a city planning workshop last week dates back several years, Mayor Bill Peduto said it illustrates "a system that has not been invested in for decades." He called the situation "not just wasteful — it's sinful."

PWSA, which generates about 70 million gallons of treated water every day, said it's updating an analysis of leakage and unmetered use. The authority now announces infrastructure repairs on a near-daily basis.

"The problem is that PWSA is structurally broke," Mr. Peduto said Thursday. "They have \$750 million in debt, which — if [we] tried to liquidate — would be over \$1 billion. They can't issue bonds. One out of every four dollars that customers pay just goes to pay old debt."

He said system leaks and unmetered water use should be among the PWSA issues targeted in a forthcoming study. The Peduto administration and an expert panel tentatively tabbed Infrastructure Management Group Inc. of Washington, D.C., to handle the review and craft options to strengthen the authority.

PWSA board and City Council members have yet to finalize the IMG arrangement, which could cost several hundred thousand dollars, according to the administration. Troubles confronting the authority range from customer service and billing to elevated lead levels in some homes.

Leakage spotlights one of the biggest problems: deteriorated infrastructure. A high-profile line break in Etna in February opened an eight-foot hole in a century-old main serving the North Side. An estimated \$1.7 million fix should be complete by June 1, PWSA spokesman Will Pickering said.

He said the authority is prioritizing other improvements based largely on which components are most likely to fail.

“We’re actively exploring smart meter technology in our distribution system that would allow us to pinpoint the location of water loss,” Mr. Pickering said in a statement. “We could then use the data from those meters to prioritize our infrastructure investments.”

He said the earlier estimate of system leaks and unmetered use stemmed from a PWSA study. It was uncertain how much water might have escaped through line failures and how much went to unmetered, unbilled customers.

Mr. Pickering said those customers are limited to city entities — listed as facilities such as the City-County Building and the public schools — and the Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium.

Zoo spokeswoman Tracy Gray confirmed the organization does not pay for water under a long-term lease agreement signed by the zoo and the city in 1993. That’s when the zoo was privatized.

But “we always monitor and look for ways to reduce our water use,” Ms. Gray said, citing rain barrels, water recycling and other efforts.

In the mayor’s office, chief of staff Kevin Acklin said reducing water loss could make PWSA more economically viable. He said the city would ask PWSA reviewers to explore ways to limit losses in “leaking pipes underground but also at the meter.”

Approaches may include technology to study flow throughout the PWSA system, Mr. Acklin said. Its distribution pipes run about 950 miles, not including service connections into individual buildings.

Mr. Peduto has floated selling excess water to other communities to raise revenue for the system, which he said could use more than \$3 billion in updates. He allowed that discussions may examine metering both city and zoo facilities.

"It's something that needs to be on the books," Mr. Peduto said.

In the meantime, it wasn't immediately clear Thursday how leakage and unmetered use at PWSA stack up against other cities. Mr. Acklin said the circumstances are "not inconsistent with other water authorities across the country."

At the Water Research Foundation in Denver, research manager Maureen Hodgins said many water utilities don't present loss estimates in percentage terms anymore "because it's not very useful." She wasn't familiar with the PWSA system but said evaluating underground infrastructure is a hurdle.

Age isn't everything, Ms. Hodgins said.

"Age might be an indicator of condition, but I've heard utilities say that sometimes the older pipes are better than some of the newer pipes," she said.

Adam Smeltz: 412-263-2625, asmeltz@post-gazette.com, @asmeltz.

Cleaning up PWSA: Overhauling water authority cannot be more vital

April 28, 2017 12:00 AM

By the Editorial Board

An important step was taken Tuesday with Mayor Bill Peduto's selection of a firm to review and possibly restructure the beleaguered Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority.

The question is, where to begin? The agency has so many problems, from billing errors and leaks to poor customer service, debt and worrisome levels of lead in the water, that developing a plan of correction will be a daunting task. Daunting, but essential to the city's future.

Along with improving the Pittsburgh Public Schools, overhauling the PWSA may be the most pressing issue on the city's agenda. Pittsburgh cannot soar to greater heights if it cannot provide safe water to people's taps or address customer-service problems in an expeditious manner. It's that simple.

Mr. Peduto and a panel of advisers selected Infrastructure Management Group of Washington, D.C., to lead the study of the PWSA's restructuring. The PWSA board and city council must approve the choice, but in this matter, they should defer to Mr. Peduto. He is asserting leadership on this issue, as he should, and he will own the outcome.

In announcing his preference for IMG, Mr. Peduto noted that long neglect of the PWSA infrastructure has contributed to many of the agency's problems. That is undoubtedly true. But the city long has neglected the PWSA in other ways — such as treating it as a dumping ground for political hacks and failing to adequately monitor the agency from city hall — and those missteps also hurt.

Mr. Peduto doesn't want to privatize the agency, but all options should be on the table here. Who owns the water service is less important than the quality of the product. While the mayor said he neither wants the agency to borrow its way out of its problems nor sock the ratepayers with a huge increase, infrastructure improvements have to be financed somehow. Long-term improvements should be accomplished with long-term financing.

Consumers should be relieved to hear that Mr. Peduto is taking decisive action to retool the agency. They should be pleased to hear that a series of public meetings will be held to gather input about the agency's future.

The public has had to put up with PWSA's multiple failures. It should be able to provide its 2 cents on where to go from here.

U.S.

Pittsburgh Tries to Avoid Becoming the Next Flint

Unsafe levels of lead have the city wondering how to pay to avoid a crisis

By Kris Maher

April 30, 2017 7:00 a.m. ET

PITTSBURGH—As its soot-filled skies cleared, this city built on the steel industry gained a reputation as one of the nation's most livable places. But it now has another environmental issue to contend with: It is one of several major American cities with lead levels in drinking water above the federal limit.

A total of seven U.S. water systems, which each serve more than 100,000 people, had lead concentrations above the federal action level of 15 parts per billion in recent months, according to Environmental Protection Agency data. They include Portland, Ore., and Providence, R.I., which both exceeded the limit at least one other time in the past five years.

Since the lead crisis in Flint, Mich., cities have been under greater scrutiny from regulators and pressure from residents to reduce lead in drinking water. In most cases, there is no easy fix, and more cities are looking at the costly prospect of replacing vast networks of pipes buried under streets and private property.

Last week, Michigan's legislature voted to send \$100 million in federal funds to Flint for lead-pipe replacements and other infrastructure upgrades. The funds were approved by the Obama administration in December.

Pittsburgh, which exceeded the lead limit last July for the first time, is drawing renewed attention to the problems besetting crumbling and heavily indebted water systems nationwide. Pittsburgh's troubled water authority has nearly \$1 billion in debt and has been plagued with allegations of overbilling and water-main breaks. It began testing for lead in the late 1990s.

"We have old pipes, and some of those pipes are lead," said Mayor Bill Peduto, a Democrat. "What took many decades to happen with the system itself will take at least a decade to solve."

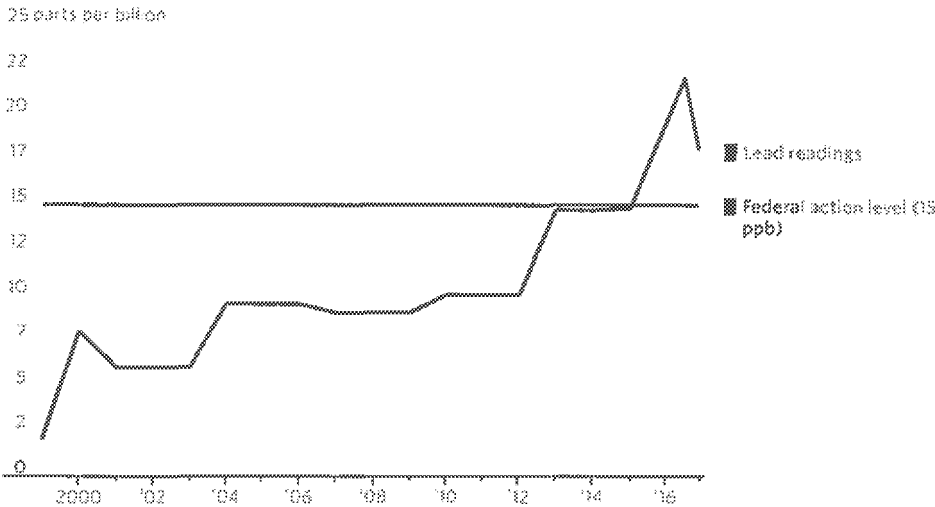


The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority's Brian Schacht worked last week to repair a broken lead public service line at a home in Pittsburgh's Homewood neighborhood. PHOTO: JUSTIN MERRIMAN FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

The city wants to restructure the water authority so it can borrow \$1.5 billion to upgrade the water system, and spend an estimated \$411 million to replace the city's lead pipes over the next 10 years. On Monday, the mayor rolled out a \$1 million program to provide free water filters to residents, giving priority to families with children under 6.

Heavy Metal

Lead concentrations found in Pittsburgh's drinking water have risen steadily since the late 1990s.



Note: The water system was required to test for lead at least once every three years between 2001 and 2016.
Source: Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

County health department data show a decline in the percentage of children in Pittsburgh with elevated blood-lead levels through 2016, but Chelsa Wagner, Allegheny County's controller, has ordered an audit of those numbers. She says progress made in cleaning up lead paint, among other factors, could be concealing the effects of lead in water.

"It's a public health crisis," said Ms. Wagner, a Democrat who has criticized the mayor for not responding quickly enough when higher lead levels were found last year.

WHAT'S THE LATEST IN FLINT?

Three years ago, the drinking water in Flint, Mich., became contaminated with lead after the city changed its water source and failed to guard against pipe corrosion.

Today:

- Flint's 99,000 residents are still advised to drink only filtered tap water or bottled water.
- Flint has replaced 800 of an estimated 20,000 lead and galvanized steel residential water lines since last year.
- The city plans to replace 6,000 water lines in 2017 and finish all replacements by 2020.
- Residents can still pick up free bottled water and water filters at nine locations.
- Michigan has spent \$187 million since 2015 to address health and infrastructure issues from the lead crisis.
- Last week, Michigan lawmakers approved sending \$100 million in federal funds to Flint for lead pipe replacements and other upgrades.

Source: WSJ Research

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority serves about two-thirds of the city, or about 250,000 people. It treats water from the Allegheny River and distributes it through 1,000 miles of pipes to 81,000 homes.

The authority estimates that a quarter of those homes have lead pipes.

The lead levels in Pittsburgh's drinking water, based on sampling from a limited number of homes, reached 22 parts per billion last July and fell to 18 ppb in December. The next test results will be released in June. Exceeding the 15 ppb federal action level triggers

increased regulatory oversight, and cities are typically required to begin replacing lead pipes and launch a public awareness campaign about the hazards of lead in water.

Cities typically treat water with special agents to coat aging pipes and prevent lead from leaching into drinking water. In Flint, the crisis was sparked when the city switched to a different water supply in April 2014 and failed to treat the water properly.

That same month, by coincidence, Pittsburgh changed the chemical it used to control corrosion. Last year, state regulators cited the authority for failing to report the switch or conduct tests to ensure it would be effective.

Will Pickering, a spokesman for the water authority, said it isn't clear if the chemical change, the city's aging infrastructure or another factor caused the higher lead levels.

Marc Edwards, a Virginia Tech researcher who helped uncover lead contamination in Flint, said Pittsburgh's lead woes are representative of issues facing many older cities. "No one in Pittsburgh with a lead pipe should be drinking the water without a filter," he said.

He criticized Pittsburgh officials for replacing only the public portion of lead service lines. In the short term, the disruption typically causes more lead to be released from the remaining lead pipe, he said.

Mr. Pickering of the water authority said it is lobbying state lawmakers to pass a bill giving the city the ability to replace private lines. "Our preference would be to do full replacements, but we don't have the legal ability to do so," he said.

Some residents are taking action. Trina Peduzzi, a pediatrician with two daughters, ages 7 and 2, decided with her husband to replace their entire lead line after a test found 32 ppb of lead in water from their kitchen tap last May.

In October, workers jack-hammered their hilly front yard to unearth 30 feet of lead pipe at a cost of between \$9,000 and \$10,000.

Ms. Peduzzi said she has treated many children exposed to lead from soil and paint, and that the possibility of ingesting lead from water was especially troubling. "Kids absorb a heck of a lot more lead in growing bodies than adults," she said. "Northeast cities are all like this. This is not going to be an easy fix."



A piece of a broken lead service line, stamped with the date 1899, was removed by the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority at a home in Pittsburgh's Homewood neighborhood. PHOTO: JUSTIN MERRIMAN FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Write to Kris Maher at kris.maher@wsj.com

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U.S.

Pittsburgh Water Authority, Consulting Firm Square Off

The agency and Veolia Water each seek damages



The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority's Ryan Hungerman worked to repair a broken lead water line at a home last week. PHOTO: JUSTIN MERRIMAN FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Kris Maher

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As the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority tries to solve its lead problem, it is also waging a fight to recoup \$12.5 million it paid to consulting firm Veolia Water North America—a firm that has also faced criticism for its work in Flint, Mich.

The PWSA's board hired Veolia, part of Veolia Environnement SA, in 2012 to help it run the water system. Veolia has since said it provided a small group of managers to work alongside 200 PWSA employees and that the board had the final say on operational decisions. In October, the authority filed a claim for arbitration and said the consulting firm "grossly mismanaged" the water system.

Local officials in Pittsburgh say, among other things, that Veolia recommended the switch to a new corrosion-control chemical in 2014, which regulators later said was done in violation of a federal law intended to protect drinking water. Veolia says it only found out about the switch after the fact in an email from a PWSA employee.

"Any suggestion that Veolia directed, was aware of, or benefited from the chemical switch is simply false," said a Veolia spokeswoman.

Veolia had filed a counterclaim for money it said it was owed by the PWSA, and the two sides entered mediation. But on Monday, the company withdrew from mediation and said it was adding a defamation claim for more damages from what it said were reckless statements made about by it by the PWSA.

RELATED

- Pittsburgh Tries to Avoid Becoming the Next Flint

Veolia said it didn't take the step lightly because it works with municipalities across the country. "But after PWSA's unceasing attempts at blame-shifting for their errors, and their complete mischaracterization in the

media of the problems at PWSA, we must take steps to publicly defend our work and our reputation," the company said.

Last June, the Michigan attorney general sued Veolia, alleging that negligence and fraud committed by Veolia contributed to Flint's lead contamination.

Veolia said the Michigan lawsuit was an effort to deflect responsibility from the state and local officials who caused Flint's lead problems. It called the allegations in Michigan "false, inaccurate and unwarranted."

Write to Kris Maher at kris.maher@wsj.com

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