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FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Central Lake Erie Regional Water Reclamation District
("CLERWTR")
Background & Responses to Frequently Asked Questions

Background

In 2009, a group of Lorain County jurisdictions, supported by federal funding, commissioned a study to explore the feasibility of forming a regional wastewater authority in Lorain County. The study, completed in 2012, provided a high-level assessment and presented its findings to what was then called the Lorain County Regional Wastewater Authority Work Group.

In 2023, Lorain County Board of County Commissioners led renewed efforts to optimize and extend necessary sewer infrastructure in the County and to consider again the benefits and feasibility of a regional wastewater authority under Ohio Revised Code (R.C.) Chapter 6119. The goal was, and remains, to provide cost-effective wastewater treatment services for the region.

In August 2023, communities from across Lorain County were invited to discuss specific scenarios where regionalization could be cost-effective under a definitive timeframe. Those entities that were willing to explore the necessity and benefits of a 6119 proceeded forward. No entity was forced to participate or barred from the conversation. As discussions continued, it became clear that, while there might be several possible opportunities or configurations for a regional district, many were not ripe enough to be able to meet the statutory burden of demonstrating necessity and benefit, with community willingness, in a definitive near-term time frame.

The discussions successfully resulted in a proposed regional wastewater authority, the proposal to establish the Central Lake Erie Regional Water Reclamation (CLERWTR) District (hereinafter referred to as "CLERWTR" or the "District"). Three willing partner entities, Lorain County Board of Commissioners, the City of Avon Lake, and Lorain County Rural Wastewater District (LORCO), identified overlapping and redundant infrastructure and resolved to optimize that infrastructure now and for the future.

The partner entities undertook extensive evaluation to develop this specific configuration under a definitive implementation timeframe that will benefit all their ratepayers. This proposal involves only areas already served or are capable of being served by the Avon Lake Water Reclamation Facility.

Efforts on the West Side of Lorain County

The establishment of CLERWTR is unrelated to the County's efforts to develop infrastructure in the western portion of Lorain County. No part of the state's recent grant of \$67.4 million will be used to establish and operate CLERWTR pursuant to the draft Plan of Operation.

In July 2025, Lorain County received \$67.4 million from the State of Ohio for infrastructure improvements for the West side of the County. This award is to promote infrastructure to support development on the West side of Lorain County.

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Because CLERWTR does not currently exist, it is not in any position to lead other efforts in the County outside of the area served by the Avon Lake Water Reclamation Facility. Without being established, CLERWTR could not receive the state’s support from the All Ohio Future Fund, which expeditiously has been moving on its separate timeframe to award financial support for critical economic development projects.

Though they arise from a common vision to optimize and extend necessary sewer infrastructure in Lorain County to support economic development, CLERWTR establishment is unrelated to the evolving West side developments.

CLERWTR is necessary today for the people served and who can be served by the Avon Lake Water Reclamation Plant. It is one – but just one – part of the overall effort to optimize and enhance infrastructure capacity in Lorain County to position the region for significant economic growth where the local governments support it.

CLERWTR and Regional Sewer Districts

What is a regional sewer district?

Ohio Revised Code (R.C.) Chapter 6119 authorizes counties and municipalities to create a regional water and sewer district to supply water to users within and without the district and/or to provide for the collection, treatment, and disposal of wastewater within and without the district. The proposed District here will only provide the treatment and disposal of wastewater.

Creating a district under R.C. Chapter 6119 creates a new local government that has its own powers and authorities granted to it by the Ohio General Assembly. R.C. Chapter 6119 regional districts are a political subdivision of the state of Ohio, and are bound by all public meetings, public records, and public requirements for contracts and budgets.

What is CLERWTR?

Central Lake Erie Regional Water Reclamation District or “CLERWTR” is the proposed R.C. Chapter 6119 sewer district. Lorain County and the Avon Lake Board of Municipal Utilities, by and through the City of Avon Lake, with the support of Lorain County Rural Wastewater District (LORCO) proposed creating CLERWTR. CLERWTR will provide regional conveyance and treatment of wastewater flow at the current Avon Lake Water Reclamation Facility at 180 Shields Rd., Avon Lake Ohio, 44012. CLERWTR will be governed by a three-member Board of Trustees made up of a trustee appointed by each of Lorain County, Avon Lake, and LORCO.

CLERWTR will provide its regional treatment and conveyance services on a wholesale basis. All retail users who send flow to CLERWTR will continue to be billed and pay the same retail billing entity as they currently do.

The Necessity of a Regional Sewer District

Why is a new governmental entity necessary for regional water reclamation?

CLERWTR, as a regional wastewater authority, is necessary in order to achieve the following:

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- Optimize use of existing wastewater conveyance and treatment infrastructure to regionalize water reclamation services, which will:
 - eliminate redundant or inefficient infrastructure;
 - improve water quality by maximizing high quality treatment; and
 - institute uniform treatment rates for all customers in a district or subdistrict;
- Create a broad rate base to minimize costs of current water reclamation-related expenditures;
- Leverage economies of scale to meet costs of current and ever-more stringent environmental regulations as cost-effectively as possible; and
- Support regional economic development through regional infrastructure master planning while preserving local development decision authority.

Will this affect water quality in the area?

Regional water quality and the environment will benefit from CLERWTR's creation.

Establishing this regional water reclamation entity will eliminate a small, poorly-performing package plant and ensure that the sanitary flow from the region receives the excellent treatment that the Avon Lake Regional Water facility has provided for many years. The treated flow will also be discharged to Lake Erie, not into a smaller stream that has limited assimilative capacity.

The Avon Lake Water Reclamation Facility continually and consistently meets its required limits under its discharge permit. CLERWTR will operate the Facility under the same permit, therefore, the water quality will not be negatively impacted.

Will this force additional development in the area?

Creating CLERWTR will not force additional development in the area. CLERWTR will have the authority to engage in regional infrastructure master planning to support a regional approach for water reclamation in the area, which can eliminate some existing hurdles to development. CLERWTR as a regional entity will not own or operate local collection systems to which developments must connect. Ownership of local sewers, and decisions as to who may connect to those local sewers, will remain with the local communities.

Benefits to the Community

What is the benefit of a regional sewer district?

Each entity in the subdistrict will be charged a uniform treatment rate across the entire area. Having one, efficient, regional plant will help customers across the entire region avoid future costs of updating multiple plants to meet increasingly stringent environmental regulation requirements, such as meeting stricter limits for nutrient levels and PFAS.

How does this benefit Avon Lake?

Avon Lake benefits from joining CLERWTR by receiving high-quality, regional wastewater treatment for a low, uniform cost. Growth in the CLERWTR service area also leverages economies of scale for all current users. Further, the proposed plan of operations provides that CLERWTR will lease the Avon Lake plant and also assume Avon Lake's debt on the water reclamation facility. With CLERWTR taking over various debts that are currently in the City's name, the City will have at its disposal additional bonding capacity.

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How does this benefit LORCO?

LORCO benefits from joining CLERWTR by receiving high-quality, regional wastewater treatment for a low, uniform cost. Further, the proposed plan of operations provides that CLERWTR will acquire LORCO's regional conveyance assets and assume the associated outstanding debt. By joining CLERWTR, LORCO will have a sustainable financial future where it can focus on fostering the growth as it desires.

How does this benefit Lorain County?

Lorain County benefits from joining CLERWTR by receiving high-quality, regional wastewater treatment for a low, uniform cost. By joining CLERWTR, Lorain County will be able to take a small package plant at the Eaton Estates offline, and avoid exorbitant upgrade costs. By removing the Eaton Estates plant, and potentially other package plants in the future, the County will avoid the high costs of updating these plants to meet current and future permit requirements. This will benefit the environment in the area by removing discharges to the small receiving streams.

Financial Feasibility of CLERWTR

Will rates go up?

As demonstrated in the Plan of Operation and the Financial Feasibility report, CLERWTR projected treatment rates and rate increases match exactly those that have been projected for Avon Lake and LORCO for the next five years. The financial feasibility report shows that, using conservative assumptions, CLERWTR will start on financial sustainable path from its beginning. All retail bills to individual customers will remain the responsibility of the local sewer provider, which will continue to set its own rates.

How will CLERWTR be funded?

CLERWTR, as with most sewer utilities, will be funded by user rates and fees consistent with the requirements of R.C. Chapter 6119. CLERWTR will also work to leverage non-local funding in the form of federal and state grants and loans for any necessary projects.

Is CLERWTR financially viable?

CLERWTR's consultant completed financial models and a financial feasibility report. The Plan of Operation includes this financial model and report, which shows that CLERWTR will be financially viable from its inception.

Will this save the region money?

Yes, this regional approach is projected to save the region money as environmental regulations for the treatment of sanitary wastewater become stricter, where the cost of necessary improvements will be spread over the widest possible rate base to leverage economies of scale.

Operation of CLERWTR

Where is CLERWTR's Water Reclamation Facility?

CLERWTR will lease the Avon Lake Water Reclamation Facility at 180 Shield Road, Avon Lake. Avon Lake will continue to operate the Reclamation Facility by contract with CLERWTR.

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This facility has long been providing high quality treatment and discharges to Lake Erie, which has the highest assimilative capacity for receiving reclaimed water.

Will Avon Lake employees lose jobs?

Avon Lake will continue to staff and operate the water reclamation facility, and no Avon Lake employees of the Facility will lose their job because of the lease of the plant to CLERWTR.

Why use the Avon Lake facility?

The Facility has treatment capacity to take additional flow from the region. Between 2016 and 2019, this Facility has undergone a \$35 million rehabilitation project to increase the amount of water treated at the facility. Upgrades included new UV disinfection units, a new laboratory, a new power generation system, a new raw sewage pump station, upgrades to other pumps, new screening units, grit removal upgrades, upgrades to tanks, and new solids press. The Facility's discharge to Lake Erie is a benefit as the lake has the highest assimilative capacity to receive reclaimed water.

What is the CLERWTR Governance Structure?

CLERWTR will be governed by a three-member Board of Trustees. Lorain County, Avon Lake, and LORCO will each appoint a Trustee to the Board. CLERWTR will also have a Chief Executive Officer to run the day-to-day business operations.

How are Trustees chosen?

The Petition and Plan of Operations establish an initial three-person board with a representative from each of the three founding entities: Lorain County, Avon Lake, and LORCO. The Lorain County Board of County Commissioners, The Avon Lake Board of Municipal Utilities, and the LORCO Board of Trustees each will appoint one Trustee on a staggered schedule for 4-year terms. CLERWTR trustees cannot be elected officials and trustees will receive no compensation.

Will this change the CWA Facility Planning Areas in the region?

The formation of CLERWTR will not change the current boundaries of existing designated facility planning areas (FPAs) that have been established pursuant to the Clean Water Act Section 208.

Does this give CLERWTR control over other municipalities and local decision making?

No. Ownership of local sewers and development in those communities remains with the local government. Further, CLERWTR is being established by willing entities who are the petitioners and a supporter. Ohio law does not permit a regional district to force any municipality to join a R.C. Chapter 6119. Future master planning completed by CLERWTR may indicate opportunities for growth or collaboration, but only municipalities or local entities that may choose to join or be served by CLERWTR will participate, and those entities will retain authority and responsibility for their local sewers.

Will CLERWTR supply drinking water?

No. Though R.C. Chapter 6119 allows regional water entities to treat and supply drinking water regionally, CLERWTR by its Petition and Plan of operations, if approved, will be expressly

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limited to regional wastewater treatment and conveyance. CLERWTR will not, and cannot, supply drinking water without a subsequent court approval.

Will CLERWTR take over stormwater management? Will it charge a stormwater fee?

No, though “stormwater” is within the scope of “wastewater” as defined under R.C. Chapter 6119 and subsequent court decisions, the CLERWTR Petition and Plan of Operations, if approved, only authorizes regional sanitary wastewater treatment and conveyance, and explicitly carves out regional stormwater management. So CLERWTR will not, and cannot, undertake regional stormwater management without a subsequent court approval.

Will CLERWTR take over local wastewater collection systems?

No. The CLERWTR Petition and Plan of Operations, if approved, limit CLERWTR to regional wastewater treatment and conveyance. The authority over and responsibility for local wastewater collections stays with the local entity. CLERWTR may assist in addressing local wastewater collection, if ever, only through agreement with the local collection system owner.

Community Outreach and Public Participation

What are opportunities for community involvement?

R.C. Chapter 6119 requires the Petitioners to hold at least one joint public meeting to present the proposed regional district. This public meeting will be announced in the local newspapers as well as other news outlets once it is scheduled. The court ultimately will also hold a hearing.

How can I submit a comment?

People who wish to provide comments are encouraged to do so through providing oral comments at the joint public meeting, or written comments via the website, CLERWTR.org, or email comments@clerwtr.org.