

# LWVCC Annual Meeting Report

## Metropolitan Water Reclamation District

### Overview

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District was created 130 years ago, and serves 129 communities including Chicago totaling 5.6 million residents.

- Its primary responsibilities are the treatment of waste water within its legislated boundary and management of stormwater [flood control] for all of Cook County.
- It is governed by a Board of 9 Commissioners elected district-wide with 6-year staggered terms. An Executive Director, chosen by the Board, manages the day-to-day operations. The racially diverse board is comprised of 6 woman and 3 men.
- The 2023 operating budget is \$1.62 billion and FTEs are 1,957. \$ 129 million and 100 FTEs are dedicated to carrying out its regional authority for stormwater management.
- In-person Board and Committee meetings have resumed.

### Highlights 2022-23

- On average, treated more than two billion gallons of waste water per day.
- Increased the number of flood control projects with communities across the District and approved contracts and Intergovernmental Agreements with diverse communities for green and gray projects to reduce flooding.
- Expanded its Space To Grow school project beyond the city of Chicago. Schools throughout the District can now apply to participate.
- Passed new Land Use and Environmental Justice Policies to carry out its Strategic Plan's Equity goals.
- Approved an updated Climate Action Plan at its May 4 Board Meeting.
- Successfully participating in a COVID-19 sewage study to see if early detection is possible.
- Received State approval to establish an in-house office of the Independent Inspector General. However, it has just signed an intergovernmental agreement with Cook County to provide services thru its Inspector General Office and reimbursed by the MWRD.

### Challenges 2022-23

- Continued water treatment challenges include identifying PFAS and their source as well as Potassium reduction which kills life downstream and into the Mississippi River.
- A major challenge is the execution of a contingency plan for energy neutrality at the MWRD by 2030 given the delays still caused by COVID supply chain and other issues.
- The Board has approved an Environmental Justice Policy calling on staff to reach out to non-affluent communities to engage with the MWRD on for flood-control projects with increased funding from the District.
- Due to climate change, prioritizing increased flood control measures is a very high priority both as a Utility and thru intergovernmental agreements with communities.

- Deciding the best use of Bio-Gas created by the District's. Should it use the excess energy inhouse or sell it.
- Obtaining State approval to use the District's land as appropriate for wind and solar energy production.
- Implementing its Affirmative Action goals to increase minority and women's participation in contract bidding and approval.

### **LWVCC - Observe, Educate, Advocate**

- Ten committed Leaguers covered 22 bi-weekly board meetings and submitted reports for the LWVCC website and for board members. Quarterly Inspector General Reports were also monitored with feedback to the CC/MWRD Interest Group and full Board.
- Observed and reported on several study sessions covering land use, Environmental Justice Policy, Budget, and a new Affirmative Action Plan.
- Conducted a virtual meeting with Commissioner Sepulveda Chair of Municipalities and Maintenance Operations and Vice Chair of Public Health & Welfare, Ethics, and Labor & Industrial Relations.
- In-person commissioner meetings will resume in late summer and fall of 2023.
- Maintain regular contact with individual Commissioners on issues, policies, and good governance.

*Diane Edmundson, MWRD Observer Coordinator & member of the CC and MWRD Interest Group*