



Erie County Sewer Division and Sewer Districts
Nathan Kerstein
University at Buffalo Law Student

What is the Sewer Division's website and contact information?

Website: <https://www.erie.gov/dsm>

Phone :

8:00 AM - 4:30 PM: (716) 858-8383

4:30 PM - 8:00 AM: (716) 823-8188

Email: DSM@erie.gov

What geographic area does it serve?

The Division of Sewer Management is responsible for over 900 miles of sewer, with 87 wastewater pumping stations, three storm sewer pumping stations, 462 low pressure grinding units, 5 overflow retention facilities, and seven advanced wastewater treatment facilities.

There are seven different districts that are described in the map (http://www.erie.gov/dsm/district_map.asp), and each district is run by its own board of managers. ⁱ

What are the key powers the Sewer Districts Have?

The key power that a district has is that it can assess fees and levy charges on the sewer usage within a district. Each district is a self ruling entity and makes decisions on its own policy from the board of managers.

How is the Division of Sewer staffed?

The division is staffed by members of seven different boards. Each board has a secretary and is made up of other members. Some of the boards are staffed with engineers and all of the boards have at least one town supervisor or city mayor on the staff. The boards are set up through Erie County, and are run through the department of Environment and Planning.

What is the annual budget?

The projected budget for the Division of Sewer in 2009 is \$44,156,356. ⁱⁱⁱ
The sewer districts are self running and sustain their operating costs entirely on the revenue that they bring in. They get their money from appropriating service fees, levying sewer taxes, flat rate charges, parcel charges, footage charges, user charges, and sewer charges based on the assessed value of real property and other property and usage characteristics. ^{iv}

What are some examples of the Division of Sewer's projects?

Many of the projects that are done by this agency are aimed at making the pumping stations more modern and efficient.

This year the Division of Sewer discussed a goal of beginning construction of replacing the pumping stations at Point Breeze and Lake Street along with the diversion chamber at the Big Sister wastewater treatment plant.

They also want to eliminate the pump station at Greenmeadow, and construct a sanitary sewer in the Town of Boston.



This year the department of sewer is continuing implementation of a comprehensive Capital Improvement Planning process. The CIP is the plan that the department uses in how to prioritize rehabilitation, renewal, replacement and optimization of the sewers, pumping stations, treatment facilities and other assets. Assets are characterized based upon the importance of an individual facility and a rating of the confidence that performing capital improvement on a particular asset is “the right project, at the right time, for the right cost, and for the right persons.” The agency is also working on implementing and developing a computerized maintenance management system. The Division is looking to consolidate the seven districts into one to lower operating costs and to promote greater efficiency. ^v

How does the Division of Sewer measure its success? The Division of Sewer is seeking to increase efficiency. The current goal is to reference and compare numerous reports, conduct field visits, and perform manual calculations to be as efficient as possible. For the customer they want to standardize the generating of a bill and reduce the challenges to the tax levies by ten percent. For commercial accounts, the Division wants to decrease the total time that it takes to perform account audits by 10-20%, and plan on accomplishing this goal through improved technology. They want to fully integrate tablet computers and GIS systems into the process of daily use by the field staff. Currently, the people in the field use paper forms and then must manually register them in to the database. These steps will help the department to reduce its operation costs by a desired 10%, particularly in overtime where they will not have to spend time entering in forms and eliminating paper costs. ^{vi}



How Can I contribute input to a sewer district's decisions?

The Board of Managers are listed on the sewer department's website and it also lists the contact information and the names of the people that work in the seven districts and how to contact these people. The people appointed to the board are appointed by the County Executive so it is possible that contacting him with suggestions of people to run the board, or problems with candidates before their actual terms begin. There are agency meetings which are listed on the website. Finally all of the listed boards have offices at 95 Franklin Street in the department of Environment and planning. All of these offices have contact information and secretaries listed so that people can get in touch with their representatives. Also, there is a "contact us" section on the website with different contact information for different locations and different water pump stations and offices that are under the jurisdiction of the department.

How is the division funded?

In the 1970's and 1980s the Federal government established grants to fund infrastructure improvements that were required after the Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1972. During the Regan administration, this grant program was

ended, and currently funds are obtained through the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation (NYSEFC). The money from NYSEFC is given in the form of low interest loans, not grants, but the new ARRA and stimulus funds signed from President Obama give some funding to NYSEFC, and part of that will be a 25% grant.^{vii}



How do sewers relate to sprawl?

In the Erie County Framework for Growth, the county laid out their argument against sprawl, pointing out that the region's urbanized area nearly tripled in size, expanding from 123 square miles in 1950 to 367 square miles in 2000, despite only a modest increase in population over the same 50 year period, a little over 7 percent.^{viii} The plan suggests that there is a vast amount of land available that already has access to public sewers, and it would make sense to use this land rather than just to continue sprawling out and building new sewer lines.

Can I attend Division of Sewer Meetings?

The board of managers meeting schedule is posted online at http://www.erie.gov/dsm/board_meetings.asp, and it appears that these meetings are open to the public. Each district, has its own meetings and take place at the specified locations within the district and on dates listed at the website.

How do I learn more about the Division of Sewer?

You can learn more by reading the Erie County Budget – specifically “Book B,” which relates to special funds in the county. The Division of Sewer Management also has its own website, which is www.erie.gov/dsm and this site is useful for more of the day to day things that come up. On the department's website you can learn about the formula that is used to formulate the tax level, and what the rules and regulations are that are relevant to the department.

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- ⁱ https://erie.gov/dsm/district_map.asp
- ⁱⁱ New York State County Law Book 11 Article 5a Special Districts
- ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.erie.gov/exec/pdfs/budget09_bookB_adopted.pdf (page 108)
- ^{iv} http://www.erie.gov/exec/pdfs/budget09_bookB_adopted.pdf (page 105)
- ^v http://www.erie.gov/exec/pdfs/budget09_bookB_adopted.pdf (page 107)
- ^{vi} http://www.erie.gov/exec/pdfs/budget09_bookB_adopted.pdf (page 108-109)
- ^{vii} James Carr, P.E. (Secretary), Assistant Deputy Commissioner, DEP
- ^{viii} Erie County Framework for Growth.
http://www.thepartnership.org/files/pdfs/Framework_Full_Rpt.pdf