



PINOLE/HERCULES WASTEWATER SUBCOMMITTEE



**JULY 10, 2025
AT 8:30 P.M.**

Attend in Person: PINOLE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - 2131 PEAR STREET

**SUBMIT PUBLIC COMMENTS TO PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR / CITY ENGINEER BEFORE OR
DURING THE MEETING VIA EMAIL: helguindy@pinole.gov**

Comments received before the close of the public comment period for that item will be read into the record and limited to 3 minutes. Please include your full name, city of residence and agenda item you are commenting on. Any comments received after the close of the public comment period will be distributed to Committee Members and relevant Staff after the meeting and filed with the agenda packet.

AGENDA

- 1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 2. ROLL CALL**
- 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE APRIL 16, 2025 MEETING**
- 4. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD - FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**
- 5. WATER POLLUTION CONTROL PLANT (WPCP) OPERATIONS REPORT**
- 6. NEW SEWER CONNECTIONS**
 - i. PINOLE (VERBAL)**
 - ii. HERCULES (VERBAL)**
- 7. ADJOURN TO THE REGULAR SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING OF OCTOBER 2, 2025 AT 7:00PM.**

WASTEWATER SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

April 16, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Subcommittee Meeting was held via a Zoom videoconference and broadcast from the Pinole Council Chambers, 2131 Pear Street, Pinole, California. Council Member Anthony Tave called the meeting to order at 7:06pm. Council Member Romero chaired the meeting and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. ROLL CALL & STATEMENT OF CONFLICT

An official who has a conflict must, prior to consideration of the decision; (1) publicly identify in detail the financial interest that causes the conflict; (2) recuse himself/herself from discussing and voting on the matter; and (3) leave the room until after the decision has been made, Cal. Gov. Code § 87105.

A. COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT

Dilli Bhattarai, Council Member - City of Hercules
Devin Murphy, Council Member - City of Pinole
Anthony Tave, Vice Mayor – City of Pinole

COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT

Tiffany Grimsley, Council Member - City of Hercules

B. STAFF PRESENT

City of Pinole

Heba El-Guindy, Public Works Director
Josh Binder, Plant Manager

City of Hercules

Jeff Brown, Interim Public Works Director

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE APRIL 24, 2024 MEETING

Council Member Murphy made a motion to approve; Council Member Bhattarai seconded; all in favor; motion passed.

4. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD (Public Comments) - None.

5. WATER POLLUTION CONTROL PLANT (WPCP) OPERATIONS REPORT

Plant Manager Binder presented the Operations report for the period of January-March of 2025 via PowerPoint presentation, which covered monthly flow data, monthly performance indicators, and project updates. Fluctuations occur during these wet weather months.

Pinole and Hercules flows were higher in February because it was a very wet month for rain. Pinole in particular has much influent infiltration with rainwater getting into the sewer collection system and making its way to the treatment plant. The flows are measured in that both collection systems come in separately to the treatment plant and then join up. Prior to them joining up into one combined pipe each city has their own flow meter. That flow is recorded separately. Then the combined flow joins up and goes through the treatment plant.

Council Member Tave: Has there been an analysis between what is incoming and what is outgoing? Are they the same or is there a difference?

Plant Manager Binder: Those numbers are always very close because what goes in has to come out. There are minor decreases because the solids portion within the waste stream is removed. Therefore, less is going out due to what was removed from the waste stream as it went through the treatment plant. The meters are usually calibrated at plus or minus 5% on a quarterly basis by an instrument technician. The 5% can contribute to a high number if the calibration is on the higher range. There is some room for error, and I will get back with the exact number.

Council Member Tave: I am not sure if that error is already accounted for if it is averaged across both meters. By these two numbers we do know that there is water coming into our system. A Sewer Master Plan was initiated in the past which kind of suggested the same. Did that plan ever come back to this board?

Plant Manager Binder: No, it went to Pinole City Council because it was a Pinole Master Plan.

Council Member Tave: We probably should have been informed what that plan looks like. Some sewer work was done over off Pinon Ave which was supposed to correct some of that.

Per Council Member Murphy and Vice Mayor Tave, a Sewer Master Plan presentation at the next meeting is preferred to determine how this body should operate. For instance, what do those reports look like when COVID numbers are increasing/decreasing which are tested through the waste stream. Another concern from the West Contra Costa Integrated Waste Management Authority (WCCIWMA) is microplastics that are becoming an issue with trash, and what those numbers look like coming out of the wastewater plant. Some environmental concerns in Pinole have surfaced. There will be more testing and possibly more equipment with expenses tied to them; we need to understand any future expenses.

Plant Manager Binder continued with the Monthly Performance Indicator Definitions. These are for constituents we monitor the performance on which are Carbonaceous Biochemical Oxygen Demand (cBOD); Total Suspended Solids (TSS); Enterococcus; and Ammonia. (At this point, Plant Manager Binder read the monthly performance indicators, to be found in the presentation.)

Looking at the monthly effluent limit, for example for January for cBOD: The monthly affluent limit is 25; 314 milligrams per liter coming into the plant and 10.63 milligrams leaving the plant. Our permit monthly affluent limit is 25 and we are discharging 10.63 milligrams per liter which is considerably below the limit.

Council Member Bhattarai: How are surrounding neighboring cities fairing with their numbers; 10 looks good, but where do we stand. Plant Manager Binder: I would have to look up the data for other treatment plants. I can answer that more precisely at a later time.

Vice Mayor Tave: Richmond Municipal Sewer District, Rodeo Sanitary District, and West County Wastewater District are in the area. There have been unofficial discussions about the benefits to combine forces with the agencies from our region. We share a congressman, and it would make conversation easier with a larger package project. Familiarity with those plants would be helpful.

Plant Manager Binder continued with project updates about blower replacement, nutrient probes installation, effluent outfall project and the Wastewater Treatment Plant operations and maintenance manual. During this fiscal year one blower failed, and the manufacturer is no longer producing parts for the part. One of the three existing blowers is in the process of being replaced in June or July.

The next project is nutrient probes installation. The background is that the Water Board introduced stricter permit limits over the next 5-10 years and all wastewater treatment plants in the Bay Area are required to lower their nutrient discharges by 40%. These nutrient probes are being installed in the aeration basins to begin gathering the necessary data for evaluating the nutrient load as it is moving through the aeration basins. This allows to have a plan in place to meet the removal rates as the permit

limits become actionable. The timeline to be nutrient probe compliant is 10 years. Each year there is an actionable item that has to be met toward the new removal rate. The plant is on track.

The plant went out to bid in the summer of 2024 for the effluent outfall project, but there were no bidders. A regroup of that project and adding a few items might make the project more attractive to design firms.

The last project update is the in-progress Wastewater Treatment Plant Operations and Maintenance Manual. The manual has to be updated periodically; since we had our plant upgrade project, the upgrade of each chapter has begun and hopefully finishes this calendar year.

Vice Mayor Tave: How old was that blower? It was discussed in the capital plan. There was a level of redundancy. That was for aeration, correct?

Plant Manager Binder: Yes; the aeration is basically the heart of the treatment plant providing biological treatment. We have three blowers; one of them is currently out of service and being replaced.

Vice Mayor Tave mentioned that if a blower malfunctions, waste cannot be treated. How is that affecting operations now? Plant Manager Binder replied that the blowers went online in 2017 or early 2018. These are manufacturer errors. The supplier is not making those inverters any longer and it is an inverter problem. The blowers are not pieced together because they would have to be re-certified by UL which is very tough on a product no longer made. Therefore, they had to be replaced from a new manufacturer.

Council Member Murphy: The effluent alpha project went to bid last summer. Can you talk about the challenges of that bidding process, maybe why we did not have bidders and what staff recommend being more successful this time?

Plant Manager Binder: We had an estimated design fee of \$150,000. There are few engineering firms active in wastewater work; the talent pool is small. The design fee could have been potentially a number they were not interested in.

Public Works Director El-Guindy: We increased the design fees, which is reflected in the CIP.

Plant Manager Binder: The number we have listed is 3.15 million, but that includes construction.

Vice Mayor Tave: To add some clarity, the effluent outfall is the same as last year. Was it Rodeo that said to move forward with the design work of 3 million? That was in the 24-25 budget.

Plant Manager Binder: The initial design number was \$150,000. The anticipated construction was 3 million. The budget reflects 3.15 million which includes construction and design. We just combined those numbers for this budget year knowing that we would not necessarily use the entirety of that number.

Vice Mayor Tave: The RFP process was public. Did you look at some of the pre-bid contractors like Bidwell, Omni Partners, Southland, there are different large pre-bid contractors that could work on such a project. They might be more expensive, but at least we could fast-track. With one blower when there are supposed to be three, we might be running into a larger problem if the last one malfunctions.

Public Works Director El-Guindy: This coming fiscal year we are proposing \$350,000; partial construction of \$250,000; and contingency is \$50,000. We are going to adjust the scope itself and allow additional design funding. With using OpenGov, we will have a wider reach.

6. FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2025-26 BUDGET

Finance Director Guillory: From an operating perspective, there are not many changes from the current fiscal year. Staffing has not changed since last year, it is a total of 11.48 full-time equivalence. All salaries and benefits costs are for those; staff that are listed in the attachment are not included. At this point, not

included are any cost-of-living adjustments which could change as we are going into labor negotiations. Those numbers could shift a little bit, depending on the results of the negotiations.

Vice Mayor Tave: The carry-forwards are just an item where those costs are rolling into the next fiscal year from previous years? Finance Director Guillory: Yes.

Vice Mayor Tave: What are the current reserves?

Finance Director Guillory: We are looking at an estimated end balance of 21.8 million. Many projects have been carried forward for several years, especially the larger amount dollar projects.

Plant Manager Binder: 21.8 million is the current Sewer Enterprise Fund. The sewer enterprise fund is what Pinole has available for sewer related projects. It is the amount we have accumulated in our Sewer Enterprise Fund with the funds that come in each year from the rate payers.

Finance Director Guillory: That is the amount that has been carried forward from capital projects which have not been completed.

Public Works Director El-Guindy: To clarify, this is also dependent on the engineering team. We have had changes in staffing, some vacancies and are in the process now of staff replacement. We are planning a comprehensive CIP program for this coming fiscal year.

Vice Mayor Tave: Is it possible to have somebody dedicated to getting these capital projects done?

Plant Manager Binder: The Sewer Enterprise Fund covers the collection system as well, so any sewer project - such as the current Pinon project which is an approximately \$5 million project - and other projects to follow, will be drawn from the Sewer Enterprise Fund. The bulk of these funds is likely going to be spent on collection system projects.

Vice Mayor Tave: Can some of these funds be dedicated to staff moving those projects forward? These kinds of funds seem to be deferred because of not being able to get to the work. Since we had no bidders for a project, are we in tune with where the market is. Compounded with the fact that costs are getting escalated as we speak. It seems like somebody dedicated would be necessary.

Public Works Director El-Guindy: We are proposing an additional engineer who would partially be responsible for sewer-related projects. The cost and review of the budget, because it is shared between the cities of Hercules and Pinole, is something that you would discuss and guide us through. The added engineer will be reflected under the engineering division of City of Pinole's Public Works.

Council Member Murphy: On the FTE, which is 11.48 for FY25-26, perhaps there is a space where we could use some of that budget to implement staff that supports the capital improvement project side. The added engineer capacity might be best for the number of projects that Pinole has, and then we have staff specifically supporting our shared collective vision for the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Public Works Director El-Guindy: Yes, we have been discussing the potential of the added staffing, and we have a proposal which the City Council and Finance Committee will be reviewing next week. The engineer would function outside of the engineering division, but the position itself would be funded through the fees.

Council Member Murphy mentioned that this is not represented in the budget. Finance Director Guillory answered that it has not been added yet. The budget development phase for FY25-26 is still ongoing. The

position would not be 100% allocated to the treatment plant but to several different areas while including this area as well.

Interim Public Works Director Jeff Brown: As the Capitol projects move forward, we have our enterprise fund and Pinole has theirs. We are going through some fund adjustments in Hercules; we have to make sure that Pinole's fund capability does not outweigh our fund capability.

Vice Mayor Tave: Do both committee members have an understanding and then take that back to Council? It seems we have about \$6 million of project carryover along with another \$500k to 600k coming in as new projects. Dedicated staff would be needed to move the projects forward. Due to staff turnover, Pinole has had to restart these projects repeatedly. We are losing money that way. Can you work together to figure out what that looks like?

Plant Manager Binder: Of the projects that are currently listed as capital items, some are carried forward and some are new. The water pollution control plant lab remodel is carried forward as well as the clarifier center column. We have finished two air release valve replacements, but we need two more and are carrying that dollar amount forward. The effluent outfall project design is carried forward; we are trying to add some funds to the design fee to make it more attractive for bidders. The water pollution control plant solar and battery project is new as well as the blower replacement. The Tennent Avenue rehabilitation is carried forward. If some of those projects would place Hercules in an overextended financial position, then we can discuss the items that may either need to be pushed out or worked into the side operations budget.

Interim Public Works Director Jeff Brown: We are going through a sewer fee model program; those fees and models are getting finalized to bring to our Council. Could the \$250,000 on the solar battery part be pushed out one year? If the blower replacement could become part of the operations budget, it would help Hercules keep their funding and fee schedule moving forward the way we need it to. Making radical changes is not a good time. We have been discussing with Pinole staff to not necessarily dispose of the battery project but pushing it out. There was also talk about the blower project basically being absorbed into the operations staff to not be such a capital issue.

Council Member Murphy: The deferment of the solar battery is fine. When you are saying that's a new project, are you saying that because it was not in our last year's budget or are you referring to it as a new project in FY25-26?

Plant Manager Binder: It was a new project in that we had already submitted the 5-year CIP plan to Hercules a little over a year ago. And that was an item that was not included in that 5-year CIP project. In Pinole it was on our CIP list, but it was an item that was being pushed out into the future. We were looking to move it up because it is a project that will offset our energy bill. We understand what the circumstances are with Hercules, so we can push that out.

Interim Public Works Director Jeff Brown: It was not on the 5-year CIP plan that we received in relation to the plant that we are working our model off of. The 5-year CIP plan we received from the plant is the plan we handed to our staff to work on our sewer rate model. If we make modifications to it, it would skew the model.

Council Member Murphy and Vice Mayor Tave would prefer a meeting closer to the June budget approval period. Another meeting would benefit the new members and clarifying where the two cities meet with the plant; the finished renovation; weaknesses and threats; opportunities and strengths; a blueprint for this plant. It is not certain how much direction is coming from Council.

Interim Public Works Director Jeff Brown: Another meeting is a good idea. Current staffing in both cities includes an Interim Public Works Director and a newer Public Works Director; more time is needed to provide a better understanding of plant operations and this committee.

Vice Mayor Tave: Our next meeting is in August. The budget will finalize around June. We could have an introduction to the structure and background for our newer members about the contract, MOU, policies, identified challenges and outlook.

Public Works Director El-Guindy: We can come back in June with general information about the master plan and the upgrades that took place at the plant and covering the budget.

7. NEW SEWER CONNECTIONS

Public Comment open

City Manager of Hercules Dante Hall: These newer projects were not factored into our current rate study; we appreciate stretching those costs out somewhat. We start our budget process in March/April. The sooner the budget can be discussed in future, the better: it would give us the opportunity to have workshops; have technical committees; get our engineering departments together; assemble our finance staff; talk through capital projects and operational costs for the treatment plant.

Public Comment closed

It was further discussed to have a shorter meeting in May or June at the 7pm time frame once the budget has been compiled. Advance notice of one to two weeks is preferred. Staff should organize a meeting calendar and plan dates for the future.

The question was posed whether there are opportunities for grants, which was confirmed. The issues are positioning the organization correctly and having enough staff on hand. Plant Manager Binder mentioned the challenges to receive grants when a project is not off the ground yet. It is more likely to receive a grant when funds and designs have been fully committed to.

8. ADJOURNMENT to the next meeting TBD

Vice Mayor Tave adjourned the meeting to the next Wastewater Subcommittee Meeting at 8:02pm.

Submitted by:

Heba El-Guindy

Public Works Director

City of Pinole

Approved by Wastewater Subcommittee Meeting:

PINOLE-HERCULES WASTEWATER SUBCOMMITTEE

OPERATIONS REPORT

July 10, 2025

Josh Binder, Plant Manager



Topics Will Include:

1. Monthly Flow Data
2. Monthly Performance Indicators
3. Project Updates
4. Questions From 04/16/2025 Meeting
5. Treatment Plant Overview

Monthly Flow Data

Hercules right to use: 2.27 MGD*

Pinole right to use: 1.79 MGD*

* Average Dry Weather Flow

HERCULES Flow – April 2025			HERCULES Flow - May 2025			HERCULES Flow - June 2025		
		Gallons			Gallons			Gallons
Minimum	1.20	1,200,000	Minimum	1.20	1,200,000	Minimum	1.23	1,230,000
Average (MGD)	1.32	1,3230,000	Average (MGD)	1.29	1,287,000	Average (MGD)	1.31	1,309,000
Maximum	1.42	1,420,000	Maximum	1.38	1,380,000	Maximum	1.39	1,390,000
Total	39.68 [49%]	39,680,000	Total	39.91 [50%]	39,910,000	Total	39.26 [50%]	39,260,000

PINOLE Flow - April 2025			PINOLE Flow - May 2025			PINOLE Flow - June 2025		
		Gallons			Gallons			Gallons
Minimum	1.25	1,250,000	Minimum	1.19	1,190,000	Minimum	1.21	1,210,000
Average (MGD)	1.37	1,365,000	Average (MGD)	1.27	1,273,000	Average (MGD)	1.29	1,287,000
Maximum	1.53	1,530,000	Maximum	1.36	1,360,000	Maximum	1.36	1,360,000
Total	40.96 [51%]	40,960,000	Total	39.45 [50%]	39,450,000	Total	38.61 [50%]	38,610,000

Monthly Performance Indicator Definitions

- Carbonaceous Biochemical Oxygen Demand (cBOD) – Measures dissolved oxygen depletion from organic carbon-containing compounds.
- Total Suspended Solids (TSS) – The dry weight of suspended particles that can be trapped by a filter.
- Enterococcus – An indicator organism used to measure the presence of fecal matter in water.
- Ammonia – A key nutrient in the wastewater nitrification process but is toxic to fish and other aquatic life at higher concentrations.

Monthly Performance Indicators

April 2025 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS					
PARAMETER	UNIT	MONTHLY EFF LIMIT	INFLUENT AVERAGE	EFFLUENT AVERAGE	% REMOVAL
cBOD	mg/L	25	232	11.5	95
TSS	mg/L	30	508	20.4	96
Enterococcus	MPN	260		9	
Ammonia	mg/L	110		35	

June 2025 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS					
PARAMETER	UNIT	MONTHLY EFF LIMIT	INFLUENT AVERAGE	EFFLUENT AVERAGE	% REMOVAL
cBOD	mg/L	25	214	7.63	96
TSS	mg/L	30	329	25.1	92
Enterococcus	MPN	260		3.3	
Ammonia	mg/L	110		40	

May 2025 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS					
PARAMETER	UNIT	MONTHLY EFF LIMIT	INFLUENT AVERAGE	EFFLUENT AVERAGE	% REMOVAL
cBOD	mg/L	25	230	10.6	96
TSS	mg/L	30	447	22.5	97
Enterococcus	MPN	260		5.1	
Ammonia	mg/L	110		36	

- ❖ Enterococcus is calculated as a 6-week Rolling Geometric Mean.
- ❖ Influent Ammonia sampling is performed in June and November.

Project Updates

- Aeration Basin Maintenance and Switchover
- Blower Replacement
- Nutrient Probes Installation
- Effluent Outfall Project
- WWTP Operations & Maintenance Manual

Aeration Basin Maintenance and Switchover



Aeration Basin Maintenance and Switchover



Project Updates

- Blower Replacement - Delivery Mid August 2025



Project Updates

- Nutrient Probes Installation



Project Updates

- Effluent Outfall Project - Out to bid summer of 2024 - No bidders
- WWTP Operations & Maintenance Manual - In Progress

Questions From 04/16/2025 Meeting

- How does Pinole-Hercules performance compare to other WWTP's?

Pinole-Hercules - April 2025 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS					
PARAMETER	UNIT	MONTHLY EFF LIMIT	INFLUENT AVERAGE	EFFLUENT AVERAGE	% REMOVAL
cBOD	mg/L	25	232	11.5	95
TSS	mg/L	30	508	20.4	96
Enterococcus *	MPN	260	N/A	9	N/A
Ammonia	mg/L	110	N/A	35	N/A

City of Benicia - April 2025 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS					
PARAMETER	UNIT	MONTHLY EFF LIMIT	INFLUENT AVERAGE	EFFLUENT AVERAGE	% REMOVAL
cBOD	mg/L	25	303	12	96
TSS	mg/L	30	350	7.4	98
Enterococcus *	MPN	260	N/A	8.9	N/A
Ammonia	mg/L	110	N/A	38	N/A

Treatment Plant Overview



