

**MIDDLESEX BOARD OF HEALTH
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 22, 2023**

This special meeting of the Middlesex Board of Health and the Mayor and Council was held on the above date at Borough Hall and called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Madden with the following statement:

UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 ET SEQ., NOTICE OF THE TIME AND PLACE OF THIS MEETING WAS GIVEN BY WAY OF AN ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE TO THE STAR LEDGER, COURIER NEWS AND HOME NEWS, AND POSTED AT BOROUGH HALL.”

Roll Call

Steve Ember - President	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Melissa Fedosh	<input type="checkbox"/>	- Absent
Ken Griggs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Thomas Harrity – Vice President	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Kevin Nelson – Alt. 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	- Late
Karen Rutkowski	<input type="checkbox"/>	- Absent
Robert Sherr	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Laura Steinau	<input type="checkbox"/>	- Absent

Others in attendance via teleconference:

Victor Poretti, NJDEP, Director of Water Division	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Robert Schuster, NJDEP, Marine Water Monitoring	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

A. Special Meeting with DEP & EAP to discuss the condition of Creighton Lake and the cause of the high levels of E. coli. – Scope of the discussion consisted of:

- Introduction provided by the historical research of our library staff
- Excessively high E. coli readings as performed by Garden State Laboratories through the Middlesex county Environmental Health Department
- DEP testing data supplied by Mr. Brett Wiley (Environmental Specialist) and commented that the E. coli data of the Creighton Lake “exceeds the criteria” i.e., NJ Surface Water Quality Standards
- Various points of the Mayor’s reports
- NJ American Water Company culpability of damage
- Short presentation by Lenard Vidal, Supervisor of the Department of public Works, including depth readings of the lake – post – NJ American Water main break and Storm Ida
- Dredging vs. Hydro Raking
- The Strategic Plan of the EPA of FY 2022 – FY 2026
- DEP – core mission
- General comments/conclusions

Mayor Madden discussed the issues regarding the August 1st and August 2nd, 2021 water main break near Birch Run & Possumtown Road in Piscataway, which exasperated the water conditions at Creighton Lake. He stated that the purpose of this meeting is to raise awareness of the significant water quality impairment and the ecological damage of the Creighton Lake within the Water Management Area 9 (a neglected historic body of water). He also read a statement regarding unsafe, unhealthy water conditions at Creighton Lake.

Mayor Madden stated that since the main break he urged NJ American Water Company to pay for the damages caused by the main break. It was concluded through the DEP that the water levels exhibited high levels of E. coli in 2011 and 2014. In the 3 days following the break, the Lake lost approximately 11,000 fish due to contamination. The Department of Public Works had to clean up all dead fish. No Fishing signs were posted throughout the Lake due to the dangerous levels of E. coli. He also read a newspaper article dated August 13, 2021, he called "The Perfect Storm meeting at the Bermuda Triangle". The article mentioned that the water main break affected 150,000 customers and five municipalities. The main break caused a sewer back up into a Piscataway sewer line which caused a surcharge of raw sewage to the manholes at the section of Cedar Avenue. Sewage emptied into Ambrose Brook which feeds directly into Creighton Lake. Since then, very little has been done to remediate the problem. DEP and NJ American Water discussed the possibility of draining the Lake.

He also stated that he would like the Borough to participate in the DEP programs such as the NJ Non-Point Management Program Plan, Bureau of Freshwater & Biological Monitoring (Lake Monitoring and the NJ Hazard Mitigation Plan regarding assessment, implementation, monitoring and restoration of the Lak's water quality for future protection. He stated that water testing took place on May 11, 2021 and January 1, 2023, which included 20 site visits with 42 samples taken. Results showed very high levels of E. coli. In 2011 and 2014, DEP also tested the water downstream from the waterfall. He stated that he met with Vice President and President of the water company. They stated they would pay for the remediation. Mayor Madden further discussed the impact of Hurricane Ida. Mayor Madden also spoke about the EPA's 2022-2026 Mission, strategic plan. "The commitment to protect the environment and all people".

Mr. Lenny Vidal, DPW Supervisor, presented a slide show detailing the flooding issues caused by the water main break by Birch Run in Piscataway on August 2, 2021. Debris from the Ambrose Brook removed the manhole's lid causing Piscataway's trunk line to surge with water. The volume of sewage spilled is unknown. He presented a slide showing discolored water surging from the manhole after the water main break. It was stated that the discharge contained effluent from Spray Tek. The discharge resulted from the sewer line breakage. The chemicals in the water are not safe for wildlife or fish. The slides also showed foam-like substances floating throughout Creighton Lake. Aerators at the Lake had to be immediately shot off. There was discussion about where the Macadam went. He also mentioned that DPW hauled out 80 tons of debris. The origin of E. coli is still unknown. There was a loss of depth at the Lake. It was surmised that the reduced depth was the result of the debris produced by the breakage and repair conducted by Piscataway.

There was further discussion about options for resolution of the Lake such as dredging/hydro-raking, surface water quality standards and water quality management planning program. Mr. Vidal inquired about our options to remediate the contaminated water issue.

Mr. Vidal inquired about waterfall restoration grants. Mr. Poretti stated that he will look into it.

Victor Poretti, NJDEP, Director, of Water Monitoring, Standards & Pesticide Control, provided a presentation on historic E. coli. and Ambrose Brook Data Summary in 2011 and 5 in 2014. He stated that there was extensive work done in 2011 and 2014. They increased sampling. Samples were taken over a 30-day period. The levels recorded were over the medium ranking. The 2011 data analysis showed a linkage between the rain fall and E. coli. Dry periods showed lower levels of contamination, with the highest results measured after multiple days of rain. The 2014 data analysis showed levels were more consistent, with lower E. coli levels, due to a larger number of small wet weather events throughout the sampling period with fewer dry periods.

He concluded that:

- The area downstream from the Lake as exhibited high levels of E. coli in 2011 and 2014.
- E. coli levels are linked to precipitation, indicating:

- NPS component,
 - Infrastructure issue under storm conditions, or
 - Building up of higher concentrations in the Lake which get flushed downstream during rain.
- Historical data show Ambrose Brook impacted by bacteria for some time.
 - Additional monitoring with further characterize conditions.

Mr. Poretti also presented a short presentation, behalf of Stan Stephansen, EPA Region 2, who was unable to attend the meeting, entitled “EPA Raritan Pathogen Trackdown Project”. The presentation consisted of:

- Modeling Study of Perth Amboy Combined Sewer Overflows identified Additional Pathogen Sources in Lower Raritan upstream of Perth Amboy.
 - ❖ Project Goal is to identify sources of unknown human pathogen sources in the Lower Raritan and subsequently work with area partners to investigate and remediate identified sources.
 - ❖ Project started in 2011.
- 2022 Sampling Locations included sites near Lake Creighton.
- Initial Sampling under Dry and Intense Wet Weather.
- Additional sampling under Dry and Intense Wet Weather in “Hotspot” will be done in 2023, none were done in 2022.
- 2022 Sampling Locations near Lake Creighton and results.
- 2023 Sampling Locations near Lake Creighton and results.

Mr. Schuster stated that the EPA uses human markers in their testing and the results do not indicate that it is a sewer overflow issue.

Both Mr. Poretti and Mr. Schuster addressed questions regarding testing results and future samplings. Mr. Schuster stated that we should work with other organizations and groups to help with testing, forming a partnership.

Public Portion:

Mayor Madden opened the meeting to the public for anybody wishing to speak.

Kevin Redzinski, 411 Fairview Avenue, discussed the debris blown over from the main break. He stated that saw Piscataway DPW vehicles by the berm. He believes that the debris was dumped there by Piscataway in order to access the manhole that is under water. He also expressed concerns that the lid is not properly secured.

Don Klein, 401 Melrose Ave, stated that the Lake is extremely shallow, which is not allowing the channels to be properly flushed out. Mr. Klein suggested that the Borough look into solutions with the Army Corps and offered his contact with the entity.

Matt Adams, 1013 Beechwood Avenue, strongly urged the Council to investigate hiring an experienced Environmental Attorney, stating that it would be money well spent.

Tom Thornton, 11 Greene Avenue, stated that 20 years ago when they last dredged the Lake, the silt that was removed was placed in the woods by his residence. The odor from the dumping was foul. Mr. Thornton expressed his concern that no one is being held accountable for the issues at the lake.

Frank Ryan, 303 Maple Street, stated that the initial dredge plan was never finalized. He expressed the importance of proper funding to finalize the plans. He recommended that our Engineer, come up with a plan.

Pat Stelle, 408 Howard Avenue, asked if there will be an independent Civil Engineer to deal with storm water problems. She also expressed concerns that the fountains at the Lake are operating while there's an issue with the water. She asked if the fountains can be turned off or new ones purchased.

Adjournment:

Council President Conahan made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Mikolajczyk. All in favor. Next regular meeting of the Board of Health will be held June 8, 2023 at the Recreation Building.

Carmen Modica
Board of Health Secretary