



# Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Release Compensation Board

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**MINUTES OF THE 213th MEETING OF THE  
PETROLEUM UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK  
RELEASE COMPENSATION BOARD  
March 11, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.**

**BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Jim Rocco  
Jessica Biggs  
Scott Fleming  
John Gordon  
Brett Hillyer  
Ben Miller

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Sam Smith, representing Director John Logue, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency  
Jason Anthony, representing Director Sheryl Creed Maxfield, Ohio Department of Commerce  
Scott Adams, representing Robert Sprague, State Treasurer of Ohio

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Starr Richmond	Executive Director, PUSTRCB
Jonathan Maneval	Assistant Director, PUSTRCB
Vijetha Deshineni	Chief Fiscal Officer, PUSTRCB
Cindy Stauffer	Compliance Supervisor, PUSTRCB
Hannah Brame	Claims Supervisor, PUSTRCB
Beth Fligner	Assistant Attorney General
Danny Sklenicka	Rea & Associates, Inc.
Nicole Ratliff	Rea & Associates, Inc.

Minutes submitted by:

  
Jonathan Maneval  
Assistant Director

**Call to Order:**

Chairman Rocco convened the two hundred-thirteenth meeting of the Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Release Compensation Board on Wednesday, March 11, 2026.

The following members were in attendance: Jim Rocco; Jessica Biggs; Scott Fleming; John Gordon; Brett Hillyer; Ben Miller; Sam Smith, representing Director John Logue, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency; Jason Anthony, representing Director Sheryl Creed Maxfield, Ohio Department of Commerce; and Scott Adams, representing Robert Sprague, State Treasurer of Ohio.

The following members were not in attendance: Steve Bergman, Larry Burks, and Dan Ridi.

Chairman Rocco announced that Sam Smith had been appointed to serve as designee for Director John Logue, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.

**Minutes:**

Chairman Rocco asked if there were any comments or questions regarding the minutes from the January 14, 2026 Board meeting. There were none. Mr. Hillyer moved to approve the minutes, and Mr. Miller seconded. A vote was taken, and all were in favor. Mr. Smith was not present for the vote. The minutes were approved as presented.

Following the vote, Sam Smith, designee for Director John Logue, arrived at the meeting and introduced himself. Mr. Smith stated that he had recently been appointed to serve as the Ohio EPA director's designee for the meeting and that he serves as the agency's Chief Legislative Officer. He expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to attend.

**BUSTR Report:**

Chairman Rocco called upon Jason Anthony, Bureau Chief, to present the Bureau of Underground Storage Tank Regulations' (BUSTR) report.

Mr. Anthony provided an update on BUSTR program activities. He said responsible party searches are being conducted for historic release events that have occurred, primarily at older facilities. He noted that additional funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) was received to expand this effort. He explained that the initial funding was for 50 responsible party searches, and funding was increased to include an additional 20 searches. He said the searches are being conducted by three vendors.

Mr. Anthony reported, in the month of January 2026, a total of 29 No Further Action (NFA) determinations were issued, and a total of 143 NFAs have been issued for the fiscal year, which started on October 1, 2025. He reported that a total of 203 on-site inspections were conducted for the month of January, with 1,257 inspections completed during the current inspection cycle. He said inspections resulting in informal or formal enforcement actions totaled 179 for the month of January. He said 939 inspections have identified violations for the inspection cycle that started last year. He noted that one site inspection resulted in a fine or penalty for the month, and one facility was referred to the Ohio Attorney General's Office.

Mr. Anthony reported that issues related to implementation of the OTTER Engage platform and third-party DocuSign software have been resolved. With those issues addressed, things are moving along and proceeding accordingly.

Mr. Anthony stated that BUSTR has received fiscal year 2025-2026 allocations for the LUST grant and the fiscal year 2026 allocation for the UST grant from the U.S. EPA. He commented that the U.S. EPA has indicated that states should plan to apply for a similar funding level for the LUST program. He said the next LUST grant application is due in April or May 2026. Mr. Anthony explained that funding for the release prevention program remains uncertain, as the federal budget currently reflects no allocation for release prevention activities. He said additional information is expected following meetings with U.S. EPA staff in Chicago in May 2026.

Mr. Anthony reported that the annual Inspector Training Course will begin next week at the Fire Academy and will be held in the multipurpose room due to building renovations. He said Fire Safety Inspector training is scheduled for April 6 and 7, 2026, with additional sessions anticipated later in the year. Mr. Anthony said BUSTR continues to provide firefighter training annually. He noted the courses are offered at a cost of \$25, with attendance averaging approximately 50 participants. He said attendance includes fire departments from Columbus and surrounding jurisdictions, with occasional participation from rural departments. He mentioned that recent Ohio Fire Code update sessions saw substantially higher attendance statewide.

Mr. Anthony discussed recent Ohio Fire Code changes affecting underground storage tank (UST) systems. Under the updated Ohio Fire Code, manifolding above shear valves is prohibited for new installations. He stated that existing systems are not affected; however, modifications to older systems that involve manifolding above shear valves are no longer permitted. He commented that staff have observed multiple releases resulting from improper installations, including lack of backflow prevention, incorrect Veeder-Root programming, incorrect leak detection setup, and insufficient post installation testing. Concerns were noted regarding unpermitted work and failure to conduct tightness testing following installations, resulting in releases that could have been prevented with proper procedures.

Mr. Anthony reported there are 21,407 registered tanks and 6,939 registered facilities, as of February 21, 2026. He said there are 2,274 active releases and 1,880 active closures. He reported that 33,263 NFAs have been issued since the inception of the program. He said a total of 161 NFAs have been issued since the start of the fiscal year on October 1, 2025. He said a total of 1,415 new federal inspections had been completed since the start of the three-year inspection cycle on August 1, 2025. He said 776 re-inspections were done for a total of 2,191 inspections. Chairman Rocco asked how many NFAs are typically issued annually, and Mr. Anthony responded that the U.S. EPA goal is 240, noting that the target is ambitious and is not often met. He mentioned that Ohio continues to rank second nationally, behind California, in total cleanups and NFAs issued.

### **Financial Reports:**

Chairman Rocco called upon Vijetha Deshineni, Chief Fiscal Officer, to present the financial reports.

### ***Audit Report***

Ms. Deshineni said Rea & Associates submitted the audited financial statements to the Auditor of State's Office on February 11, 2026, and it is currently under review by that office. She pointed out that the audit report had been provided to the Board members.

Ms. Deshineni then introduced Danny Sklenicka, a representative from the accounting firm of Rea & Associates and asked him to discuss the audit and related financial statements.

Mr. Sklenicka stated that the audit was submitted in February and is currently pending the Auditor of State's desk review. He explained that while the financial statements are considered final by management, they are not officially finalized or released until the Auditor of State completes the desk review. He said the desk review process is expected to take approximately six to nine weeks, with completion potentially anticipated later this month.

Mr. Sklenicka introduced Nicole Ratliff, who served as the in-charge of the audit engagement and asked her to go through some of the required communications.

Ms. Ratliff presented an overview of a report related to their audit of the financial statements, outlining auditor responsibilities, audit timing, key accounting standards reviewed, and overall audit outcomes. She said the first page of the audit materials detailed the auditor's responsibilities related to the financial statement audit, as well as the agreed-upon audit timeline. She noted the pre-audit letter was completed on October 6, 2025, formally initiating the audit process. She said the audit team, including Ms. Richmond and Ms. Deshineni, began procedures following completion of the pre-audit letter.

Ms. Ratliff said the second page summarized key audit focus areas, which included review of the adoption of GASB Statement No. 101 and GASB Statement No. 102. She explained that GASB 101 addresses the reporting of compensated absences to promote consistency and comparability among governmental entities. She commented that GASB 102 did not have a material impact on the financial statements, but GASB 101 resulted in a minor effect on the statements.

Ms. Ratliff said no significant or unusual transactions were identified. She noted that the audit team evaluated key accounting estimates and management judgments, including allowances for uncollectible accounts, reserve for unpaid claims, compensated absences payable impacted by GASB 101, leases, and pension and OPEB liabilities.

Ms. Ratliff said no audit adjustments were required but noted that a small number of uncorrected misstatements were identified. She discussed that these items were not considered material and did not impact users' understanding of the financial statements and primarily involved reclassifications.

Ms. Ratliff stated that the third page indicated there were no disagreements with management, no consultations with other auditors, and no significant difficulties or issues encountered during the audit. She noted that the audit timeline was extended by mutual agreement among management, the Auditor of State, and Rea & Associates to allow sufficient time for audit completion and reporting.

Ms. Ratliff directed members to the final page which detailed the uncorrected misstatements, consisting solely of reclassifications. She said vacation pay was reclassified from accrued liabilities to

compensated absences in accordance with GASB Statement No. 101, and that certain assets were reclassified to the restricted portion of net position. She noted that these items reflected presentation and classification changes and did not constitute errors in recorded amounts.

Mr. Sklenicka provided an overview of the financial statements, directing the Board's attention to key sections of the audit report. The independent auditor's report on the first page was highlighted, with emphasis on the auditor's opinion being presented at the beginning of the report. He stated that the financial statements received a clean, unmodified opinion.

Mr. Sklenicka reported that there were no post-audit adjustments to the financial statements. He noted that while a small number of immaterial items were identified, these were not recorded, as they did not materially impact the financial results.

Mr. Sklenicka reviewed responsibilities associated with the audit process, noting that management is responsible for the preparation and accuracy of the financial statements, while the auditor's responsibility is to express an opinion based on audit testing. He said the audit was conducted to provide reasonable assurance, not absolute assurance, utilizing a risk-based sampling approach rather than testing all transactions. Mr. Sklenicka also explained that, although no formal opinion is expressed on the Required Supplementary Information (RSI), including Management's Discussion and Analysis and supplemental pension and OPEB schedules, this information is reviewed for consistency with the financial statements.

Mr. Sklenicka then directed the Board to pages 40 and 41 of the report, which contain the auditor's report on internal control over financial reporting, conducted in accordance with Government Auditing Standards. Mr. Sklenicka stated that no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were identified, and therefore, no reportable items were included. He commented that the brevity of the report was noted as a positive outcome.

Mr. Sklenicka said, in summary, the audit reported a clean opinion on the financial statements, no post-audit adjustments, no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal control, and the audit confirmed that the financial information presented by staff matched the information included in the final financial statements.

Mr. Sklenicka reiterated that the audit has been submitted to the State Auditor's office and is currently pending final desk review. He noted that the audit falls within the second term of the existing audit contract, with several years remaining. He expressed appreciation to staff for their cooperation and responsiveness throughout the audit process, which began in October and progressed efficiently despite the size and complexity of the financial reporting package.

Chairman Rocco asked if there were any changes from the draft that had previously been provided to the Board and Mr. Sklenicka indicated no changes to the statements had been made.

### ***December and January Financials***

Ms. Deshineni stated that the December and January financials were emailed to each member. She noted that she would be discussing the January 2026 report.

Ms. Deshineni reported that, as of March 10, 2026, the unobligated account balance was \$22.38 million. She said this amount includes \$5.34 million in STAR Ohio (State Treasury Asset Reserve of Ohio), \$759,000 in the custodial account, and \$16.28 million invested in U.S. Treasuries and U.S. Agency bonds. She said the obligated account balance for the payment of claims is \$3.76 million.

Ms. Deshineni stated that, as discussed during the October Board meeting, Huntington Bank sold its institutional custody business to a firm based in Florida that is not licensed to operate in Ohio. Consequently, the Board's bond ladder portfolio was transferred from Huntington Bank to Fifth Third Bank, effective December 1, 2025. She reported that total interest income for December 2025 was reflected as a negative \$72,654 in the December financial statements; however, accrued interest income on U.S. Treasury and U.S. Agency bonds totaling \$184,836 was inadvertently omitted from the December 2025 report. She explained that had this accrued income been recorded, total interest income for December would have been \$112,182. She noted that an adjusting entry had been posted in February 2026 to properly record the accrued income.

Ms. Deshineni reported that \$1.18 million in cash from interest earnings and matured investments held in STAR Ohio in the former Huntington Bank investment account was subsequently transferred to Fifth Third Bank, where it was invested in a Fidelity institutional money market fund. She stated that on March 5, 2026, \$1 million of these funds was used to purchase a Treasury bond, bringing the Board's total investment in U.S. Treasuries and U.S. Agency bonds to \$16 million, as previously authorized by the Board. She noted that \$116,000 would be transferred to STAR Ohio.

Ms. Deshineni said the claims expense for the month of January 2026 totaled \$101,983. She explained that claims determined in December are typically paid in January; however, due to the holidays and a January snowstorm, claim payments made in January were lower than in prior months. She further reported that the claims expense for February totaled \$524,000.

Ms. Deshineni reported that since July 1, 2025, a total of \$4.4 million had been paid for claims for fiscal year 2026. She stated that this represents 55% of the \$8 million obligated by the Board for claims for fiscal year 2026. Ms. Deshineni reported that temporary services expenses totaled \$4,500 for the month of January. She noted that, as discussed at the January Board meeting, two temporary employees are currently assisting with the preparation of documents for digitization.

Ms. Deshineni reported that the rent expense increased by \$686 in January due to a 2.5% increase in operating costs in accordance with the lease agreement. She noted that rent paid in January for the February lease payment included increased operating expenses for both January and February. She reported that the office supplies expense totaled \$2,324 in January, attributable to the purchase of additional hard drives for the storage of digitized records.

Ms. Deshineni stated that legal and professional expenses for January were lower than in November and December, as those months included costs associated with the claim liability study, audit, and Assistant Attorney General services. She reported a significant increase in collection costs paid to the Attorney General's Office for the collection of delinquent accounts. She explained that the Collections Enforcement Unit implemented a new IT system in July 2023, which affected its ability to track owner's payments made directly to the Board and to invoice associated collection costs. She explained

that approximately \$18,000 in collection costs recorded in January represented a catch-up of previously unbilled charges. She reported that total operating expenses for January were \$193,380.

Chairman Rocco asked for clarification regarding the reported decrease in investment income. Ms. Deshineni explained that the apparent decrease did not represent an actual investment loss. She stated that during the December transfer of the Board's investments from Huntington Bank to Fifth Third Bank, accrued interest income held at Huntington Bank was properly reduced; however, the beginning accrued interest income at Fifth Third Bank was not recorded in December as it should have been. As a result, the December financial statements reflected a decrease in error. She noted that this had been corrected through an adjusting entry.

**Compliance and Fee Assessment Report:**

Chairman Rocco called on Cindy Stauffer, Compliance Supervisor, to present the compliance and fee assessment report.

Ms. Stauffer reported that the information presented reflects data as of February 28, 2026, unless otherwise noted. She stated that owners may be eligible for refunds of Financial Assurance Fund fees for various reasons, including payments made for aboveground or otherwise exempt tanks, removed tanks, duplicate payments, and the difference in the per-tank fee amounts. She reported that there are currently 2,641 pending refunds totaling \$1,563,116, representing refunds due to 542 owners, noting that multiple refunds may be associated with a single owner. She further reported that refunds totaling \$32,988 had been issued to 41 owners since July 1, 2025.

Ms. Stauffer reported that \$30,300 of pending refunds had been applied to offset outstanding tank and late fees during the current program year. She noted that this typically occurs when an owner is due a refund for one program year but owes fees for a different year. She further reported that, since July 1, 2025, fees collected by the Attorney General's Office and Special Counsel, net of collection costs, totaled \$91,650. She stated that 231 accounts totaling \$736,900 had been certified to the Attorney General's Office for collection. Ms. Stauffer indicated that the next certification is being finalized and is expected to be submitted to the Attorney General's Office in the near future.

Ms. Stauffer reported that, as of February 28, 2026, one Order Pursuant to Law was under appeal. She explained that no sooner than 60 days after the assessment of fees, if payment is not received, an order is issued directing the owner to remit payment and assessing late fees. She said information to support the appeal is expected. Ms. Stauffer further reported that two Determinations to Deny a Certificate of Coverage are currently under appeal. She stated that information has been received and is under review for one appeal, and a hearing has been scheduled for the other.

Ms. Stauffer stated that currently there are no Ability to Pay Applications pending review. The Ability to Pay program allows former UST owners experiencing financial difficulty to apply for and receive a determination of their ability to pay delinquent fees.

Ms. Stauffer reported that, as of March 2, 2026, Certificates of Coverage had been issued to 2,671 owners for program year 2025. She stated that 77 Applications for Certificates of Coverage are currently being processed. She further reported that, for program year 2025, there are 78 owners with

unresolved Pending Denials and 47 owners with unresolved Determinations to Deny a Certificate of Coverage.

Ms. Stauffer reported that there are 30 owners with uncashed refund checks totaling \$40,258. She stated that \$25,750 of this amount represents unclaimed funds and is held in the unclaimed trust account for five years, after which unclaimed funds are returned to the unobligated account balance. She reported that the remaining \$14,508 is in payment-pending status. Ms. Stauffer further reported that additional information has been requested from 14 owners with potential refunds totaling \$83,246. She stated that a second request for information will be sent to these owners. She said 43 owners with \$68,155 of possible refunds have not responded to the final more information letters. She noted that a final review of these refunds will be conducted and, if possible, a partial refund will be issued, with any remaining undocumented amounts reapplied to the owner's account.

### **Claims Reports:**

Chairman Rocco called on Hannah Brame, Claims Supervisor, to present the claims reports.

Ms. Brame reported, as of March 2, 2026, the total maximum liability of in-house open claims was approximately \$7.56 million. She stated that using the claim payout ratio of 74%, which is the average ratio over the past five years, the anticipated payout of unpaid in-house claims is about \$5.59 million.

Ms. Brame reported that, as of March 2, 2026, a total of 470 claims with face values above the deductible amount were pending review. She noted that claims staff are currently reviewing claims received prior to June 2025. She further reported that, as of March 2, 2026, 14 claim determinations were under appeal, pertaining to five release sites, with multiple appeals associated with three sites. She stated that hearings had been scheduled for four appeals, supporting information is pending for two appeals, and information has been received and is under review for eight appeals.

Ms. Brame reported that, as of March 2, 2026, a total of 292 claim applications had been received, and 338 claim determinations had been issued. She noted that six determinations involved claims below the deductible amount that had received No Further Action status and therefore were not eligible for payment. She reported that the average payout per claim application for program year 2025 is \$11,951 and that the average claim payout was 61.7% of the net claim value (face value less the deductible). She further reported that the average percentage of claim face value disallowed was 31.4% and stated that staff continues to monitor the percentage of costs being disallowed, as discussed in previous Board meetings.

Ms. Brame reported that, as of March 2, 2026, a total of 62 eligibility applications had been received for program year 2025 and 39 eligibility determinations had been issued. She stated that 25 determinations were approved and 14 were denied. She reported that reasons for denial included two for no release demonstrated, four for late filing of the application, one for lack of a valid Certificate of Coverage, three for tanks being out of compliance with BUSTR's rules at the time of the release, and four for no corrective actions being required by BUSTR. Ms. Brame further reported that, as of March 2, 2026, 177 eligibility applications were open. She noted that 23 applications were unreviewable pending receipt of required reports and that additional information had been requested

for 18 applications. She also reported that, as of March 2, 2026, six eligibility determinations were under appeal, with additional information expected for one appeal, information was received and is under review for four appeals, and a hearing is scheduled for one appeal.

Ms. Brame reported for program year 2025 a total of 81 cost pre-approval requests were received. She said the cost pre-approval requests included 17 requests for new remedial action plans (RAPs); 35 requests for annual costs for RAPs or free product recovery; four requests for an interim response action (IRA) requiring BUSTR approval; 15 requests for either Tier 3 or monitoring/calibration plans; three cost exceedance notifications; and seven voluntary requests for cost pre-approval. She said as of March 2, 2026, a total of 71 cost pre-approval notifications had been issued and 36 cost pre-approval requests were pending review.

### **New Business:**

#### ***Hardship Applications***

Chairman Rocco called on Vijetha Deshineni, Chief Fiscal Officer, to present the hardship applications.

Ms. Deshineni explained that the Board's rule 3737-1-08 provides for an owner experiencing financial hardship to apply for hardship status with the Fund. She said granting hardship status allows for the accelerated review of the claims submitted by the owner. She noted that granting hardship status does not increase the amount of reimbursement to the tank owner. She stated that accelerating the review of a claim reduces the financial burden an owner would experience if the claims were reviewed and settled in the normal course of business. She stated that once granted, the hardship status remains in effect for a two-year period, after which the owner may reapply for hardship status.

Ms. Deshineni stated that, in determining hardship status, the application and a minimum of two years of income tax records are reviewed. She added that a U.S. EPA financial capacity test is also used to evaluate the owner's cash flow and determine whether the owner is able to carry debt, in which case, the owner could finance the costs of corrective actions over time.

#### **Claim # 19104-0001/10/30/14, Owner – American United Oil Inc.**

Ms. Deshineni reported that American United Oil Inc. is the responsible party for a release discovered in program year 2014 at 342 E. Main Street in Ashland, Ohio, and that this represents the company's sixth request for hardship status. She stated that, to date, the Fund has reimbursed \$841,947.51 for this release and that one claim is currently pending review. She reported that corrective action costs anticipated over the next 24 months are estimated at \$140,000 and that, upon payment of these costs, the claim will reach the statutory maximum of \$1 million, less the \$11,000 deductible.

Ms. Deshineni reported that the tanks were removed and replaced in the summer of 2015. She stated that tax returns submitted for 2022, 2023, and 2024 reported net income of \$25,000, \$26,000, and \$30,000, respectively. Based on this information, she reported that ABEL estimates less than a 50% probability that American United Oil Inc. can afford the projected corrective action costs. She stated that, accordingly, the Director is recommending that the Board approve the hardship application and grant hardship status to American United Oil Inc.

Mr. Gordon inquired regarding the total amount reimbursed to date and the anticipated additional corrective action costs. Ms. Deshineni responded that, once the statutory maximum of \$1 million (less the deductible) is reached, no additional costs will be reimbursed by the Board. The Chairman asked if there were any further questions. Hearing none, he requested a motion to approve the hardship application. Vice-Chairman Fleming moved to approve the application, and Mr. Gordon seconded. A vote was taken, and all members voted in the affirmative. The motion passed.

Mr. Anthony asked whether the release occurred in 2015 or earlier, and Ms. Deshineni clarified that the release was discovered in program year 2014. Board members discussed the duration and severity of the release, its impacts, EPA involvement, and that it possibly affected waterways.

**Claim # 22987-0001/09/27/22, Owner – Prabha Ventures LLC**

Ms. Deshineni reported that Prabha Ventures LLC is the responsible party for a release discovered in 2022 at 50 Church Street in Coalton, Ohio. She stated that the owner, Piyush Panchal, is requesting that the Board grant hardship status to the LLC and noted that this is the LLC's second request for hardship status.

Ms. Deshineni reported that, to date, the Fund has reimbursed \$53,772.41 for this release and that one claim is currently pending review. She stated that corrective action costs anticipated over the next 24 months are estimated to range from \$50,000 to \$100,000. She reported that the U.S. EPA financial capacity model was run using three cost scenarios: \$50,000, \$75,000, and \$100,000.

Ms. Deshineni reported that IRS tax returns submitted for tax years 2022, 2023, and 2024 reflected net income of \$108,000, \$157,000, and \$117,000, respectively. Based on this information, she reported that the EPA model estimates that Prabha Ventures LLC can afford corrective action costs of up to \$50,000. She noted that only a portion of costs exceeding \$50,000 are affordable based on the EPA model and, accordingly, stated that the Director is recommending the Board approve the application and grant hardship status to Prabha Ventures LLC.

The Chairman asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he then requested a motion to approve the application for hardship status. Vice-Chairman Fleming so moved, and Mr. Gordon seconded. A vote was taken, and all members voted in the affirmative. The motion passed.

**Unfinished Business:**

***Employee Handbook***

Chairman Rocco called upon Jonathan Maneval, Assistant Director, to present updates to the Board's Employee Handbook.

Mr. Maneval reported that, as noted at the Board's November 2025 meeting, staff undertook a comprehensive review and update of the Board's Employee Handbook to ensure consistency with current internal policies, applicable law, and statewide Department of Administrative Services policies.

Mr. Maneval stated that the revised handbook updates standards of conduct, customer service expectations, ethics compliance, and nondiscrimination, harassment, workplace violence, and domestic-violence policies. He reported that operational policies were clarified, including business

hours, timekeeping, information technology and cybersecurity requirements, records management, and emergency procedures. Attendance and leave policies were consolidated and updated; compensation and performance evaluation processes were reaffirmed; the benefits section was updated to reflect current state programs; and the separation section was revised to provide clearer guidance regarding notice, leave payouts, and the return of Board property.

Mr. Maneval reported that the revisions modernize the handbook, align it with statewide policies and legal requirements, and improve clarity for employees and supervisors.

Mr. Maneval reported that the draft handbook was provided to Vice-Chairman Fleming and to the Board's Assistant Attorney General, Beth Fligner, for review and comment. He stated that Ms. Fligner also had a Senior Assistant Attorney General in the Employment Law Section review the draft handbook and provide feedback. Mr. Maneval reported that suggested revisions were incorporated and the final draft was included in the Board meeting materials.

Mr. Maneval invited Vice-Chairman Fleming to provide comments regarding the revised Employee Handbook. Mr. Fleming stated that the handbook was thorough and comprehensive and commended staff for their work. Based on his review and the revisions made, Vice-Chairman Fleming recommended that the Board approve the updated Employee Handbook.

Chairman Rocco stated that the changes made to the Employee Handbook were primarily intended to align the document with updates to statewide policies, rather than to substantively change the Board's existing policies. Mr. Anthony inquired about compliance with statewide branding requirements. Mr. Maneval responded that the handbook incorporates the approved branding guidance, including the required Cardinal Red and Buckeye Blue color scheme and font standards.

Chairman Rocco then requested a motion to adopt the updated Employee Handbook dated March 2026, as written. Mr. Hillyer so moved, and Mr. Miller seconded. A vote was taken and all members voted in the affirmative. The motion passed.

#### **Certificates of Coverage – Ratifications:**

Chairman Rocco called on Cindy Stauffer, Compliance Supervisor, to present the lists of owners who have been issued or denied a Certificate of Coverage for ratification by the Board.

Ms. Stauffer said the process used to review the fee applications and issue or deny a Certificate of Coverage includes a review for completeness to determine full payment was received; financial responsibility for the deductible has been demonstrated; and the owner has certified with his signature that he is in compliance with the State Fire Marshal's rules for the operation and maintenance of petroleum USTs; and, if the tanks existed in previous years, a Certificate for the subject tanks has been issued to the owner in at least one of the prior two years. She said if a Certificate has not been issued in one of the prior two years and the tanks existed during those years, the owner must comply with rule 3737-1-04.1 by demonstrating the tanks are in compliance with the State Fire Marshal's rules for the operation and maintenance of USTs.

Ms. Stauffer stated that, if the requirements are met, a Certificate is issued. She said if the requirements

are not met, the Certificate is denied. She explained that if the Certificate is denied, the owner is provided with an opportunity to appeal the denial. She said that, throughout the denial process, the Board's staff works closely with the owner to resolve any deficiencies. She stated that all processes within the Board's rules and Revised Code were followed to make a determination to issue or deny the Certificates of Coverage.

Ms. Stauffer requested the Board ratify the Director's actions with respect to the issuance of the program year 2024 Certificate of Coverage for the owner of the facility included on the program year 2024 Certificates issued list.

Mr. Gordon moved to ratify the issuance of the 2024 Certificate of Coverage for the facility listed. Mr. Miller seconded. A vote was taken, and all members were in favor. The motion passed.

Ms. Stauffer requested the Board ratify the Director's actions with respect to the denial of the program year 2024 Certificates of Coverage for the 10 USTs located at the three facilities included on the program year 2024 Certificates denied list.

Mr. Gordon moved to ratify the denial of the 2024 Certificates of Coverage that were listed, and Vice-Chairman Fleming seconded. A vote was taken, and all members were in favor. The motion passed.

Ms. Stauffer requested the Board ratify the Director's actions with respect to the issuance of the program year 2025 Certificates of Coverage for the 149 owners of the 432 facilities included on the program year 2025 Certificates issued list.

Mr. Miller moved to ratify the issuance of the program year 2025 Certificates of Coverage for the facilities listed. Vice-Chairman Fleming seconded. A vote was taken, and all members were in favor. The motion passed.

Ms. Stauffer requested the Board ratify the Director's actions with respect to the denial of the program year 2025 Certificates of Coverage for the 46 USTs located at the 23 facilities included on the program year 2025 Certificates denied list.

Mr. Gordon moved to ratify the denial of the 2025 Certificates of Coverage that were listed, and Vice-Chairman Fleming seconded. A vote was taken, and all members were in favor. The motion passed.

**Confirm Next Meeting and Adjourn:**

Chairman Rocco said the next Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 10, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Gordon made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Vice-Chairman Fleming seconded. All members were in favor.