



# Newsletter

## April 2026

### Hartstene Pointe Water-Sewer District

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### Pay Your Bill 24/7

Online: [hpwsd.org](http://hpwsd.org)  
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### Billing Office Hours

Mondays: 9:00 am—2:00 pm  
Tuesdays: 9:00 am—2:00 pm  
Thursdays: 9:00 am—2:00 pm

Board of Commissioners meetings are held on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month at 1:00 pm in the District Office, 119 E Liberty Rd. All meetings are open to the public.

*Hartstene Pointe Water-Sewer District is not associated with or governed by the Hartstene Pointe Maintenance Association. Please direct water-sewer service related questions to the District.*

*Hartstene Pointe Water-Sewer District is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

## Vacuum Trailer Procured for In-House Projects

*Vacuum (Vac) Trailers and Trucks* are valuable tools with a versatile array of uses and applications. These pieces of machinery are equipped with a powerful pump, tank and a hose system used to jet, suction, transport and dispose liquids, sludge, mud, as well as dry debris. You've probably seen contractors utilizing vac-trailers while working on various projects around the Pointe.

Typical water & sewer applications for its use include:

- Sewer maintenance: clearing blockages or transporting waste to the District's sewerage
- Underground installations & repairs: digging accurately, including digging near fragile existing infrastructure for repairs
- Trenching: creating narrow, uniform trenches with minimal disturbance

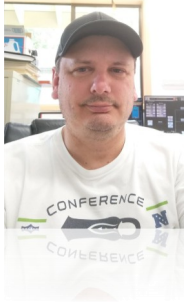
Vac-trailers are effective for many reasons. For starters, they are very accurate and are a non-destructive option when working around underground pipes and cables, meaning water and sewer infrastructure can be precisely exposed when needed. They are efficient, as they are faster than manual digging (especially hard-pan soil types around the Pointe). They're also cost-effective, reducing labor hours and mitigating damage risks to utilities—for example, there comes a high risk of damaging utilities when digging with an excavator, no matter how carefully performed. Additionally, vac-trailers are much cleaner, stirring up less dirt and exhausting fewer emissions than other machines. Another advantage: long hoses enable work to be performed in remote and confined areas.

While District staff already have some experience working with this type of equipment, they will undergo training on how best to use this equipment safely and effectively. They look forward to using this new-to-us tool to provide great benefit to the community.



# General Manager's Report

## Sewage Spills



If you pay attention to the news, you probably heard about the big sewage spill on the east coast that dumped into the Potomac River. This was a huge environmental nightmare that shows the severe consequences of old, failing infrastructure. This actually happens all across the country every year, but on smaller scales, so they don't make national news. As things continue to age, the risk increases.

It's no different here at Hartstene Pointe. We have infrastructure that was installed 50 years ago, and at times, quite inadequately. For this reason, we've been improving our sewer system over the last year. As this project has been progressing, we've experienced other problems with old, failing pipes and equipment. We're looking into ways that we can still use this same loan and grant received from Dept. of Ecology to replace other things that desperately need it.

Trust me—we don't want to do more than is necessary, since this impacts the rates you and your commissioners pay, but we also have to keep in mind what happens if we don't do *anything* and then something happens. While it wouldn't be as catastrophic as what happened to the Potomac River, it would still be an environmental incident, with costs to our immediate surroundings and to District operations and finances.

Sadly, this is a problem all over the place. If you have time, I strongly encourage you to read this article regarding underfunded infrastructure:

<https://www.nrdc.org/media/potomac-sewage-spill-reminder-we-need-fund-our-nations-wastewater-infrastructure?news>

—Jeff Palmer, General Manager



## Drippy the Droplet's Water-Saving Tip:

**"Do you love gardening? As Spring is upon us, consider cultivating drought-resistant plants, such as succulents, lavender and aloe, which require less water once established!"**

## Staff Repair Lift Station Pumps, Train for Confined Space Entry Safety

One of the pumps at Lift Station #5, near Lagoon Dr., was in need of repairs. Normally, pumps are lifted from the bottom of the "wet well" (where sewage is stored before being pumped to gravity sewer) with a wench; in this circumstance, a District employee needed to climb down the wet well to fasten a new chain.

A wet well meets the criteria of what's defined in industry as a *confined space*. Any time a person needs to enter a confined space, there are safety procedures that must be followed. District staff are trained on these procedures and this was the perfect opportunity to put that training into practice.

One of the District's operators, Kelly, harnessed up for the task and in cooperation with co-workers, followed the required steps for this particular situation:

1. Filled out a Confined Space Entry Permit
2. Utilized appropriate Personal Protective Equipment, including a safety harness in case a need arose for emergency extraction
3. Ensured at least two other people were present
4. Lowered a specialized gas detector into the wet well to ensure oxygen levels and toxic gas levels were within safe ranges for occupation (or determine if a specialized face mask was required)
5. Engaged a blower to ventilate the wet well with fresh air while occupied

There are more protocols for staying safe in confined spaces and certain circumstances require observing additional steps. At the end of the project, the crew safely and successfully completed the tasks, resulting in the repair of a backup pump and attachment of the chain to the other pump.



**Kelly, left, assesses and prepares for confined space entry into the wet well at Lift Station #5, while safety equipment is installed and observed to be operating satisfactorily**