

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2013**

**SESSION LAW 2013-50
HOUSE BILL 488**

AN ACT TO PROMOTE THE PROVISION OF REGIONAL WATER AND SEWER SERVICES BY TRANSFERRING OWNERSHIP AND OPERATION OF CERTAIN PUBLIC WATER AND SEWER SYSTEMS TO A METROPOLITAN WATER AND SEWERAGE DISTRICT.

Whereas, regional water and sewer systems provide reliable, cost-effective, high-quality water and sewer services to a wide range of residential and institutional customers; and

Whereas, in an effort to ensure that the citizens and businesses of North Carolina are provided with the highest quality services, the State recognizes the value of regional solutions for public water and sewer for large public systems; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) All assets, real and personal, tangible and intangible, and all outstanding debts of any public water system meeting all of the following criteria are by operation of law transferred to the metropolitan sewerage district operating in the county where the public water system is located, to be operated as a Metropolitan Water and Sewerage District:

- (1) The public water system is owned and operated by a municipality located in a county where a metropolitan sewerage district is operating.
- (2) The public water system has not been issued a certificate for an interbasin transfer.
- (3) The public water system serves a population greater than 120,000 people, according to data submitted pursuant to G.S. 143-355(l).

SECTION 1.(b) All assets, real and personal, tangible and intangible, and all outstanding debts of any public sewer system operated by a subdivision of the State and body politic that is interconnected with the metropolitan sewerage district receiving assets pursuant to Section 1(a) of this act are by operation of law transferred to that metropolitan sewerage district to be operated as a Metropolitan Water and Sewerage District.

SECTION 1.(c) All assets, real and personal, tangible and intangible, and all outstanding debts of any public sewer system operated by the metropolitan sewerage district receiving assets pursuant to Sections 1(a) and 1(b) of this act, are by operation of law transferred to, and be operated as, a Metropolitan Water and Sewerage District, as established pursuant to this act.

SECTION 1.(d) Until appointments are made to the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage District established pursuant to this act, the district board of the metropolitan sewerage district in the county in which the public water system, the assets of which are transferred pursuant to Section 1(a) of this act, is located shall function as the district board of the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage District. All members of the metropolitan sewerage district shall continue to serve on the district board of the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage District until the governing body with appointing authority appoints or replaces that individual on the district board of the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage District.

SECTION 1.(e) All necessary permits for operation shall also be transferred to the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage District established pursuant to this act to ensure that no current and paid customer loses services due to the regionalization of water and sewer services required by this act. The new Metropolitan Water and Sewerage District shall immediately begin assessing all permits and the process for transferring the permit or applying for any



needed permits. All State agencies shall assist the new Metropolitan Water and Sewerage District in obtaining any needed permits in that entity's name.

SECTION 1.(f) For purposes of this section, the transfer of all outstanding debts by operation of law shall make the Metropolitan Water and Sewer District liable for all debts attached to and related to the assets transferred under this section, and the Metropolitan Water and Sewer District shall indemnify and hold harmless the grantor entity for any outstanding debts transferred under this section.

SECTION 2. Chapter 162A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Article to read:

"Article 5A.

"Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Districts.

"§ 162A-85.1. Definitions.

(a) Definitions. – As used in this Article, the following definitions shall apply:

- (1) Board of commissioners. – The duly elected board of commissioners of the county or counties in which a metropolitan water and sewerage district shall be created under the provisions of this Article.
- (2) City council or Council. – The duly elected city council of any municipality.
- (3) Cost. – As defined in G.S. 162A-65.
- (4) District. – A metropolitan water and sewerage district created under the provisions of this Article.
- (5) District board. – A water and sewerage district board established under the provisions of this Article.
- (6) General obligation bonds. – As defined in G.S. 162A-65.
- (7) Governing body. – As defined in G.S. 162A-32.
- (8) Person. – As defined in G.S. 162A-65.
- (9) Political subdivision. – As defined in G.S. 162A-65.
- (10) Revenue bonds. – Any bonds the principal of and the interest on which are payable solely from revenues of a water and sewerage system or systems.
- (11) Revenues. – All moneys received by a district from, in connection with, or as a result of its ownership or operation of a water and sewerage system, including moneys received from the United States of America, or any agency thereof, pursuant to an agreement with the district board pertaining to the water and sewerage system, if deemed advisable by the district board.
- (12) Sewage. – As defined in G.S. 162A-65.
- (13) Sewage disposal system. – As defined in G.S. 162A-65.
- (14) Sewerage system. – As defined in G.S. 162A-65.
- (15) Sewers. – As defined in G.S. 162A-65.
- (16) Water distribution system. – As defined in G.S. 162A-32.
- (17) Water system. – As defined in G.S. 162A-32.
- (18) Water treatment or purification plant. – As defined in G.S. 162A-32.

(b) Description of Boundaries. – Whenever this Article requires the boundaries of an area be described, it shall be sufficient if the boundaries are described in a manner which conveys an understanding of the location of the land and may be by any of the following:

- (1) By reference to a clearly identified map recorded in the appropriate register of deeds office.
- (2) By metes and bounds.
- (3) By general description referring to natural boundaries, boundaries of political subdivisions, or boundaries of particular tracts or parcels of land.
- (4) Any combination of the foregoing.

"§ 162A-85.2. Creation.

(a) Except as provided by operation of law, the governing bodies of two or more political subdivisions may establish a metropolitan water and sewerage district if all of the political subdivisions adopt a resolution setting forth all of the following:

- (1) The names of the appointees to the district board.
- (2) The date on which the district board shall be established.
- (3) The boundaries of the district board.

(b) Prior to the adoption of a resolution under subsection (a) of this section, the governing body shall hold at least two public hearings on the matter, held at least 30 days apart,

after publication of the notices of public hearing in a newspaper of general circulation, published at least 10 days before each public hearing.

"§ 162A-85.3. District board.

- (a) Appointment. – The district board shall consist of members appointed as follows:
- (1) Two individuals by the governing body of each county served, wholly or in part, by the district.
 - (2) One individual by the governing body of each municipality served by the district located in any county served by the district with a population greater than 200,000.
 - (3) Two individuals by the governing body of any municipality served by the district with a population greater than 75,000, in addition to any appointments under subdivision (2) of this subsection.
 - (4) One individual by the governing body of any county served by the district with a population greater than 200,000, in addition to any appointments under subdivision (1) of this subsection.
 - (5) One individual by the governing body of a county in which a watershed serving the district board is located in a municipality not served by the district, upon recommendation of that municipality. The municipality shall provide to the governing body of the county a list of three names within 30 days of written request by the county, from which the county must select an appointee if the names are provided within 30 days of written request.
 - (6) One individual by the governing body of any elected water and sewer district wholly contained within the boundaries of the district.
- (b) Terms; Reappointment. – Terms shall be for three years. A member shall serve until a successor has been duly appointed and qualified.
- (c) Vacancies; Removal. – If a vacancy shall occur on a district board, the governing body which appointed the vacating member shall appoint a new member who shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term. Any member of a district board may be removed by the governing board that appointed that member.
- (d) Oath of Office. – Each member of the district board, before entering upon the duties, shall take and subscribe an oath or affirmation to support the Constitution and laws of the United States and of this State and to discharge faithfully the duties of the office. A record of each such oath shall be filed with the clerk or clerks of the governing boards appointing the members.
- (e) Chair; Officers. – The district board shall elect one of its members as chairman and another as vice-chairman. The district board shall appoint a secretary and a treasurer who may, but need not, be members of the district board. The offices of secretary and treasurer may be combined. The district board may also appoint an assistant secretary and an assistant treasurer or, if the office is combined, an assistant secretary-treasurer who may, but need not, be members of the district board. The terms of office of the chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, treasurer, assistant secretary, and assistant treasurer shall be as provided in the bylaws of the district board.
- (f) Meetings; Quorum. – The district board shall meet regularly at such places and dates as are determined by the district board. All meetings shall comply with Article 33C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes. A majority of the members of the district board shall constitute a quorum, and the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the district board present at any meeting thereof shall be necessary for any action taken by the district board. No vacancy in the membership of the district board shall impair the right of a quorum to exercise all the rights and perform all the duties of the district board. Each member, including the chairman, shall be entitled to vote on any question.
- (g) Compensation. – The members of the district board may receive compensation in an amount to be determined by the district board but not to exceed that compensation paid to members of Occupational Licensing Boards as provided in G.S. 93B-5(a) for each meeting of the district board attended and for attendance at each regularly scheduled committee meeting of the district board. The members of the district board may also be reimbursed the amount of actual expenses incurred by that member in the performance of that member's duties.

"§ 162A-85.4. Expansion of district board after creation.

(a) After creation pursuant to G.S. 162A-85.2, the district board may expand to include other political subdivisions if the district board and the political subdivision adopt identical resolutions indicating the political subdivision will become a participant in the district board.

(b) Prior to adopting the resolution under subsection (a) of this section, the district board and the political subdivision shall hold at least two public hearings on the matter, held at least 30 days apart, after publication of the notices of public hearing in a newspaper of general circulation, published at least 10 days before each public hearing.

(c) Upon adoption of the identical resolutions, the political subdivision shall appoint a district member in accordance with G.S. 162A-85.3(a), if that political subdivision is entitled to an appointment under that section.

"§ 162A-85.5. Powers generally.

(a) Each district shall be deemed to be a public body and body politic and corporate exercising public and essential governmental functions to provide for the preservation and promotion of the public health and welfare, and each district is hereby authorized and empowered to do all of the following:

- (1) To exercise any power of a Metropolitan Water District under G.S. 162A-36, except subdivision (9) of that section.
- (2) To exercise any power of a Metropolitan Sewer District under G.S. 162A-69, except subdivision (9) of that section.
- (3) To do all acts and things necessary or convenient to carry out the powers granted by this Article.

(b) Each district shall keep its accounts on the basis of a fiscal year commencing on the first day of July and ending on the 30th day of June of the following year.

"§ 162A-85.7. Bonds and notes authorized.

A metropolitan water and sewerage district shall have power from time to time to issue bonds and notes under the Local Government Finance Act.

"§ 162A-85.13. Rates and charges for services.

(a) The district board may fix, and may revise from time to time, rents, rates, fees, and other charges for the use of and for the services furnished or to be furnished by any water system or sewerage system. Such rents, rates, fees, and charges may not apply differing treatment within and outside the corporate limits of any city or county within the jurisdiction of the district board. Such rents, rates, fees, and charges shall not be subject to supervision or regulation by any bureau, board, commission, or other agency of the State or of any political subdivision.

(b) Any such rents, rates, fees, and charges pledged to the payment of revenue bonds of the district shall be fixed and revised so that the revenues of the water system or sewerage system, together with any other available funds, shall be sufficient at all times to pay the cost of maintaining, repairing, and operating the water system or sewerage system, the revenues of which are pledged to the payment of such revenue bonds, including reserves for such purposes, and to pay the interest on and the principal of such revenue bonds as the same shall become due and payable and to provide reserves therefor. If any such rents, rates, fees, and charges are pledged to the payment of any general obligation bonds issued under this Article, such rents, rates, fees, and charges shall be fixed and revised so as to comply with the requirements of such pledge.

(c) The district board may provide methods for collection of such rents, rates, fees, and charges and measures for enforcement of collection thereof, including penalties and the denial or discontinuance of service.

"§ 162A-85.17. Rights-of-way and easements.

A right-of-way or easement in, along, or across any State highway system, road, or street, and along or across any city or town street within a district is hereby granted to a district in case such right-of-way is found by the district board to be necessary or convenient for carrying out any of the work of the district. Any work done in, along, or across any State highway system, road, street, or property shall be done in accordance with the rules and regulations and any reasonable requirements of the Department of Transportation, and any work done in, along, or across any municipal street or property shall be done in accordance with any reasonable requirements of the municipal governing body.

"§ 162A-85.19. Authority of governing bodies of political subdivisions.

(a) The governing body of any political subdivision is hereby authorized and empowered to do any of the following:

- (1) Subject to the approval of the Local Government Commission regarding the disposition of any outstanding debt related to the water system or sewer system, or both, to transfer jurisdiction over and to lease, lend, sell, grant, or convey to a district, upon such terms and conditions as the governing body of such political subdivision may agree upon with the district board, the whole or any part of any existing water system or systems or sewerage system or systems or such real or personal property as may be necessary or useful in connection with the acquisition, construction, reconstruction, improvement, extension, enlargement, equipment, repair, maintenance, or operation of any water system or sewerage system by the district, including public roads and other property already devoted to public use.
- (2) To make and enter into contracts or agreements with a district, upon such terms and conditions and for such periods as such governing body and the district board may determine for any of the following:
 - a. For the collection, treatment, or disposal of sewage.
 - b. For the supply of raw or treated water on a regular retail or wholesale basis.
 - c. For the supply of raw or treated water on a standby wholesale basis.
 - d. For the construction of jointly financed facilities whose title shall be vested in the district.
 - e. For the collecting by such political subdivision or by the district of rents, rates, fees, or charges for the services and facilities provided to or for such political subdivision or its inhabitants by any water system or sewerage system and for the enforcement of collection of such rents, rates, fees, and charges.
 - f. For the imposition of penalties, including the shutting off of the supply of water furnished by any water system owned or operated by such political subdivision, in the event that the owner, tenant, or occupant of any premises utilizing such water shall fail to pay any such rents, rates, fees, or charges.
- (3) To fix and revise from time to time, rents, rates, fees, and other charges for the services furnished or to be furnished by a water system or sewerage system under any contract between the district and such political subdivision and to pledge all or any part of the proceeds of such rents, rates, fees, and charges to the payment of any obligation of such political subdivision to the district under such contract.
- (4) To pay any obligation of such political subdivision to the district under such contract from any available funds of the political subdivision and to levy and collect a tax ad valorem for the making of any such payment.
- (5) In its discretion or if required by law, to submit to its qualified electors under the election laws applicable to such political subdivision any contract or agreement which such governing body is authorized to make and enter into with the district under the provisions of this Article.

(b) Any such election upon a contract or agreement called under subsection (a) of this section may, at the discretion of the governing body, be called and held under the election laws applicable to the issuance of bonds by such political subdivision.

"§ 162A-85.21. Submission of preliminary plans to planning groups; cooperation with planning agencies.

(a) Prior to the time final plans are made for the extension of any water system or sewerage system, the district board shall present preliminary plans for such improvement to the county or municipal governing board for their consideration if such facility is to be located within the jurisdiction of any such county or municipality. The district board shall make every effort to cooperate with the county or municipality in the location and construction of any new proposed facility authorized under this Article.

(b) Any district board created under the authority of this Article is hereby directed, wherever possible, to coordinate its plans for the construction of any new water system or sewerage system improvements with the overall plans for the development of the planning area if such district is located wholly or in part within a county or municipal planning area.

(c) This section shall not apply to renovations, repairs, or regular maintenance of water systems or sewer systems.

"§ 162A-85.25. Adoption and enforcement of ordinances.

(a) A district shall have the same power as a city under G.S. 160A-175 to assess civil fines and penalties for violation of its ordinances and may secure injunctions to further ensure compliance with its ordinances as provided by this section.

(b) An ordinance may provide that its violation shall subject the offender to a civil penalty of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) to be recovered by the district in a civil action in the nature of debt if the offender does not pay the penalty within a prescribed period of time after he has been cited for violation of the ordinance. Any person assessed a civil penalty by the district shall be notified of the assessment by registered or certified mail, and the notice shall specify the reasons for the assessment. If the person assessed fails to pay the amount of the assessment to the district within 30 days after receipt of notice, or such longer period, not to exceed 180 days, as the district may specify, the district may institute a civil action in the General Court of Justice of the county in which the violation occurred or, in the discretion of the district, in the General Court of Justice of the county in which the person assessed has his or its principal place of business, to recover the amount of the assessment. The validity of the district's action may be appealed directly to General Court of Justice in the county in which the violation occurred or may be raised at any time in the action to recover the assessment. Neither failure to contest the district's action directly nor failure to raise the issue of validity in the action to recover an assessment precludes the other.

(c) An ordinance may provide that it may be enforced by an appropriate equitable remedy issuing from court of competent jurisdiction. In such case, the General Court of Justice shall have jurisdiction to issue such orders as may be appropriate, and it shall not be a defense to the application of the district for equitable relief that there is an adequate remedy at law.

(d) Subject to the express terms of an ordinance, a district ordinance may be enforced by any one, all, or a combination of the remedies authorized and prescribed by this section.

(e) An ordinance may provide, when appropriate, that each day's continuing violation shall be a separate and distinct offense.

"§ 162A-85.29. No privatization.

The district board may not in any way privatize the provision of water or sewer to the customers of the district unless related to administrative matters only."

SECTION 3. G.S. 159-44(4) reads as rewritten:

"(4) "Unit," "unit of local government," or "local government" means counties; cities, towns, and incorporated villages; consolidated city-counties, as defined by G.S. 160B-2(1); sanitary districts; mosquito control districts; hospital districts; merged school administrative units described in G.S. 115C-513; metropolitan sewerage districts; metropolitan water districts; metropolitan water and sewerage districts; county water and sewer districts; regional public transportation authorities; and special airport districts."

SECTION 4. G.S. 159-48(e) reads as rewritten:

"(e) Each sanitary district, mosquito control district, hospital district, merged school administrative unit described in G.S. 115C-513; metropolitan sewerage district, metropolitan water district, metropolitan water and sewerage district, county water and sewer district, regional public transportation authority and special airport district is authorized to borrow money and issue its bonds under this Article in evidence thereof for the purpose of paying any capital costs of any one or more of the purposes for which it is authorized, by general laws uniformly applicable throughout the State, to raise or appropriate money, except for current expenses."

SECTION 5. G.S. 159-81(1) reads as rewritten:

"(1) "Municipality" means a county, city, town, incorporated village, sanitary district, metropolitan sewerage district, metropolitan water district, metropolitan water and sewerage district, county water and sewer district, water and sewer authority, hospital authority, hospital district, parking authority, special airport district, special district created under Article 43 of Chapter 105 of the General Statutes, regional public transportation authority, regional transportation authority, regional natural gas district, regional sports authority, airport authority, joint agency created pursuant to Part 1 of Article 20 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, a joint agency authorized by

agreement between two cities to operate an airport pursuant to G.S. 63-56, and the North Carolina Turnpike Authority described in Article 6H of Chapter 136 of the General Statutes and transferred to the Department of Transportation pursuant to G.S. 136-89.182(b), but not any other forms of State or local government."

SECTION 5.5. Article 5 of Chapter 162A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 162A-66.5. Approval of all political subdivisions required.

Prior to the adoption of a resolution under G.S. 162A-66 on or after April 1, 2013, the Environmental Management Commission shall receive a resolution supporting the establishment of a district board from (i) the board of commissioners of the county or counties lying wholly or partly within the boundaries of the proposed district and (ii) from the governing board of each political subdivision in the county or counties lying wholly or partly within the boundaries of the proposed district. If the Environmental Management Commission does not receive a resolution from each of those political subdivisions, the Environmental Management Commission may not adopt the resolution to create the district board."

SECTION 6. This act becomes effective May 15, 2013, and the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage District in Section 1 of this act shall be created by operation of law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 2nd day of May, 2013.

s/ Daniel J. Forest
President of the Senate

s/ Paul Stam
Speaker Pro Tempore of the House of Representatives

This bill having been presented to the Governor for signature on the 3rd day of May, 2013 and the Governor having failed to approve it within the time prescribed by law, the same is hereby declared to have become a law. This 14th day of May, 2013.

s/ Karen Jenkins
Enrolling Clerk