

Niagara Falls Water Board Board of Directors

Note: Pursuant to Public Authorities Law § 1230-e(2), “All [Water Board] members shall continue to hold office until their successors are appointed and qualify.”

Nicholas J. Forster, Chairperson. Mr. Forster was appointed to his current term on the Board by City of Niagara Falls Mayor Robert M. Restaino on February 14, 2020, to fill a term ending on December 31, 2021. Mr. Forster previously served as the Niagara Falls City Council’s appointee from February 2017 through February 2020, and has served as the Water Board’s finance committee chair. Mr. Forster’s professional experience includes service as a supervisory-level Senior Inspector with the New York State Gaming Commission, Erie County Deputy Sheriff, and Director of the Niagara County Office of Traffic Safety. He is a graduate of multiple law-enforcement academies and has served as a training instructor for multiple law-enforcement agencies. Mr. Forster is President of C.S.E.A. Local 003, which represents nearly 600 workers.

Colleen Low Larkin, Vice-Chairperson and Chair of Governance Committee.

Ms. Larkin was appointed by the New York State Senate on March 27, 2017, to fill a term ending on December 31, 2019. Ms. Larkin has a Bachelor’s Degree in Communications from SUNY Buffalo. She operates RooBoo Productions as a freelance communication services consultant. Her prior professional experience included serving as a managing editor of a technical publication and for an in-house publication, as well as several years of employment in sales and service.

Michael J. Asklar, P.E., Treasurer and Chair of Audit and Finance Committee.

Mr. Asklar is a New York State Licensed Professional Engineer who holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo, as well as a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physics from the State University of New York at Fredonia. He has over 20 years’ experience in engineering and is employed as Superintendent of General Maintenance with a major statewide NYS Public Authority.

Rena Kimble. Ms. Kimble was appointed by the New York State Assembly on February 24, 2012, to fill a term ending on December 31, 2014. Ms. Kimble holds a Juris Doctor Degree and a Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science from the State University of New York at Buffalo, as well as an Associate Degree in Liberal Arts/Social Science from Niagara County Community College. She served for over 18 years as a Niagara County Legislator, and her professional qualifications also include serving as Risk Manager for the City of Niagara Falls, Director of the Niagara Falls Human Rights Commission, Adjunct Professor at SUNY Buffalo, Director of the Business Opportunity Program at the Office of Urban Initiatives, and serving as a Legal Associate with the Niagara County Attorney’s Office. Her extensive community involvement includes leadership and Board positions in many organizations, including serving as a member of the Executive Committee and Chairperson of the Legal Redress Committee for the NAACP’s Niagara Falls Branch.

Gretchen Leffler, Treasurer and Chair of Finance and Audit Committee. Ms. Leffler was appointed by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo on February 11, 2013 to fill a term ending on December 31, 2015. She holds a Master of Science Degree in Education from Niagara University, and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Home Economics Education from Misericordia University. Her professional experience includes services as Regional Vice President of the American Cancer Society, Executive Director for the American Cancer Society in Niagara County, Field Director for the Girl Scout Council of Niagara County, and as a teacher in Niagara Falls City Schools.

Executive Management Team

Abderrahman Zehraoui, Ph.D, AM.ASCE, Executive Director. Dr. Zehraoui earned a Ph.D in Civil/Environmental Engineering from the University of Cincinnati, a MSc. in Projects Management (Data Mining and Statistical IT) from Pavia University in Pavia Italy, and a BSc. in Physics and Chemistry from the University of Mohamed V in Rabat, Morocco. He has more than 25 years of relevant experience, and joined the Water Board in 2021 after serving as Director of Utilities for the City of East Chicago, Indiana, where he directed the water and wastewater utilities for that City, including treatment and distribution systems. His professional experience also includes working as Wastewater Operations manager as an employee of Sodexo for a GE plant in Houston, Texas, as a Technical Advisor for Norton Technology, Inc., a Water/Wastewater Project Development Engineer for Streamline Power Resources in Cincinnati, Ohio, and as a Senior Water/Wastewater and PMO Engineer for the Office National de l'Eau Potable in Rabat, Morocco. His professional memberships have included the European Federation of Biotechnology, American Society of Civil Engineers, International Desalination Association, American Concrete Institute, Air & Waste Management Association, International Society for Environmental Information Sciences, American Chemical Society, Ohio Water Environment Association (OWEA), and Researcher Institute. He has had many articles published in scientific journals, and has served on the editorial boards of the International Journal of Environmental Bioremediation & Biodegradation, Frontiers, Environmental Sciences (Wastewater Management), EPFL, Lausanne, Switzerland, and Austin Journal of Environmental Toxicology. Dr. Zehraoui continues his education through a variety of online courses. He is multilingual, proficient in English, French, and Arabic, and intermediate in Italian.

Sean W. Costello, General Counsel and Secretary. Mr. Costello holds a Juris Doctor Degree from Syracuse University College of Law, and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in International Relations, *magna cum laude*, from Syracuse University College of Arts and Sciences. He is admitted to practice law in New York, New Jersey, the Federal District Courts for the Northern, Southern, and Western Districts of New York, the United States Bankruptcy Court, Western District of New York, and the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Prior to becoming an employee of the Water Board in 2018, Mr. Costello was a Partner with one of the region's largest private law firms and first worked on Water Board matters in 2012. His experience includes having served as Contract General Counsel to the Water Board, as attorney for a Western New York Town, and representing municipal entities in tort, civil rights, and employment-based claims in state and federal court. Mr. Costello's experience at the Water Board includes two periods when he was selected by the Board to serve as Acting Executive Director. He was a law clerk with the U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity and with the Defense Information Systems Agency, and is a member of various professional organizations, including the New York State Bar Association, Local and State Government Law Section. He has been honored as a Buffalo Business First 30 Under Thirty Honoree and as an Upstate New York Super Lawyers Rising Star in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021.

Douglas Williamson, Director of Technical and Regulatory Services. Mr. Williamson received a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is a licensed professional engineer in New York State. Mr. Williamson has 25 years of progressive experience focusing on construction and the water/wastewater fields and has been with the Water Board since 2009. He previously worked for the Seneca Nation of Indians and for one of Western New York's largest mechanical contracting firms.

Brian Majchrowicz, Deputy Director of Financial Services. Mr. Majchrowicz holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration with a Concentration in Accounting from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He has 20 years' experience as an accounting and finance professional, including over a decade of audit experience. Prior to joining the Water Board full time in 2018, Mr. Majchrowicz was employed by the Water Board as a consultant, assisting with all aspects of operating the Financial Services Department.

John G. Accardo, Deputy Director of Administrative Services. Mr. Accardo possesses an Associates Degree in Business Administration from Niagara Community College and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from Columbia Union College. He joined the Water Board in 2020. His professional experience includes employment as president of an insurance agency, executive director of the Niagara County Workforce Investment Board. Mr. Accardo was a Niagara Falls City Councilman from 1992-2001, including serving as Council Chairman from 1993-1995, and he has served as a member of numerous civic and community boards in Niagara Falls.