

## Plant Staff

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*Executive Director*

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May 18, 2026

## **A Legacy of Stewardship in an Uncertain World**

To our Neighbors and Residents:

In 1989, as R. Brent Ekwinski began his leadership journey with the Yorkville-Bristol Sanitary District (YBSD), the District earned the USEPA National Award for Outstanding Operation & Maintenance. The world, however, was on the precipice of monumental change. The Berlin Wall was coming down, signaling the end of an era and the beginning of a new, often turbulent, global chapter. Over the next 37 years, the world would endure the Dot-com bubble, the tragedy of 9/11, the housing market's meteoric rise and devastating crash, and a global pandemic that brought modern life to a standstill.

While these macro-economic and cultural storms raged, Brent Ekwinski provided something rare in public service: an unwavering "conservative and holistic" approach that ensured YBSD remained an island of stability.

### **Protecting our Landmark: The Fox River**

Brent understood that while markets may fluctuate and political climates may shift, the health of the Fox River is the lifeblood of our community's identity. His leadership was rooted in the belief that local collaborative stewardship is the best defense against future uncertainty.

While the world wrestled with shifting environmental priorities, Brent championed a planning model that looked decades ahead. He navigated increasingly complex federal and state unfunded mandates with a pragmatism that favored lasting, sustainable results over short-term reaction. The Fox River remains a flourishing landmark where pollution-intolerant fish thrive, which is a living testament that in a changing world, our local environment can remain a constant source of beauty and recreation.





*The YBSD Board of Trustees, (left to right) R. Brent Ekwinski (Treasurer); Lawrence Gardner (Clerk); Ellsworth Windett (President); and Dallas Ingemunson (Attorney) [Circa1993]*

## **Financial Foresight as a Community Shield**

Brent drew on his expertise as a local banker to see past the housing boom of the mid-2000s that saw Kendall County named the fastest-growing area in the nation. While others were overextending, Brent helped secure neighboring land (the YBSD west property) at pre-boom prices. He was also a driver in moving YBSD to a user-fee-only funded entity by removing the Ad Valorem property tax.

When the Great Recession arrived in 2008, paralyzing development across the country, YBSD was uniquely prepared. YBSD had a shovel-ready project and secured critical ARRA funding with a 50/50 split of 0% interest loans and grants during a time when capital had vanished for most. A global crisis became a local opportunity for prudent investment in planned infrastructure.

## **The Culmination of Collaboration and Experience**

By fostering a culture where staff and domain experts were empowered to collaborate rather than work in silos, Brent ensured that the largest

investments at YBSD were also its most efficient. Over decades of constructing major process improvements, the status quo was often set aside for a properly vetted, more creative, and cost-effective path. Examples include the first full-scale Autothermal Thermophilic Aerobic Digester (ATAD) in North America, the first full-scale Membrane Aerated Biofilm Reactor (MABR) in the world, and the first full-scale Super-Intensification liquid treatment process in the world.

Much of this came back to how Brent approached the Board Meetings. He was unfailingly reflective and able to take in what was presented, then compare the options in front of him to weigh the caveats of each. This habit encouraged dialogue rather than shutting it down, and it had a way of cutting straight to the trade-offs. It is no small thing to make highly technical decisions coherent to the community they serve, and Brent did it with ease.

The final major construction project of Brent's tenure has yielded two significant financial victories for the community:

*Raising the grade while razing costs:* YBSD collaborated with area municipalities, construction firms, and businesses to utilize excess spoil (Clean Construction Debris, or CCD) for fill operations on the YBSD west side property. This rare win-win provided an avenue for reduced disposal fees and a free source of fill material, saving approximately \$3 million.

*Risk managed, savings delivered:* By championing the Construction Management At-Risk (CMAR) approach, YBSD worked closely with the design engineers and the construction manager to identify construction, design, and operational efficiencies. Phasing in the O&M Garage early allowed the contractor to buy equipment ahead of schedule, store it on-site, reduce insurance markups, remove inflationary markups, lower handling costs, and save approximately \$3 million.

Brent would be the first to tell you that these wins weren't his alone; they are the result of the trust and faith he placed in our high-caliber staff. This collaborative environment helped to prevent high-cost change orders that so often burden communities.

## Lasting Stewardship

Brent takes great pride in the fact that YBSD remains largely "invisible" to most residents. At this moment, we want to be **very visible** in recognizing the sustainable impact Brent has had on YBSD and the community.

Brent has often said that "it has been a privilege" to work with YBSD staff, Executive Directors, Trustees, and community members over his terms as Trustee. We believe the privilege has been ours. To have worked with and learned from such a high-caliber Trustee, environmental steward, and friend. Through Dot-com, 9/11, the housing crash, and the pandemic, Brent has proven that with a steady hand, a "conservative and holistic" approach, and trust in talented teams, a community can flourish through uncertainty.

Signed,

The Board of Trustees &  
Executive Director of the  
Yorkville-Bristol Sanitary District



Cyrus W. McMains, PE  
Executive Director



Sarah Allen  
President



Mark Luettich  
Vice President /  
Treasurer



Kurt Muth, PE  
Clerk