

**Minutes of the  
MEETING OF THE Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory COMMITTEE**

May 22, 2013

**Committee Members Present:** Barry Stock, Jamie Schurbon, Randy Ellingboe, Tom Furlong, Chuck Haas, Glenn Skuta, Steve Schneider, Susan Morris, Trisha Yearwod

**Committee Members Absent:** Sandy Rummel, Sandy Colvin Roy, Dan Stoddard, Michael Robinson, Lisa Vollbrecht, Elmer Eichelbeg

**CALL TO ORDER**

There not being a quorum at 9:35 a.m., Acting Committee Chair Barry Stock called the meeting of the Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee to order at 9:35 a.m. on Wednesday, May 22, 2013.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

No quorum.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

William G. Moore, MCES Deputy General Manager, reported that bills were passed as follows:

1. The sunset date of this committee has been extended to 2016.
2. Money has been appropriated for the Clean Water Fund and the Parks and Trails Fund:
  - a. \$2 M for Met Council water supply activities
  - b. \$ 537 K for Met Council to pass to USGS to study Northeast Metro groundwater- surface water interaction
  - c. \$3 M for DNR groundwater management areas development

**NORTHEAST METRO WATER SUPPLY AND LAKE LEVELS UPDATE**

Ali Elhassan, MCES Manager of Water Supply Planning, reported that collaboration and partnership meetings have been held, as well as educational workshops. Metropolitan Council (MC) staff developed a "Groundwater Digest" booklet to explain to the public how groundwater works and why it is important to the region. Additional workshops will be held in the future. Elhassan said the Lake Level Resolution Committee Report to the White Bear Lake Conservation District Board discussed two options to address lake level decline, one being augmenting White Bear Lake in a variety of ways (including using water from the Saint Paul Regional Water System (SPRWS)) , and conservation measures to reduce the use of the Prairie du Chien aquifer. Plans for the future include a feasibility analysis of those options, working with USGS on surfacewater/groundwater interaction study, and continuing to foster inter-jurisdictional collaboration.

Haas hopes that the NE study includes parts of Hugo – the western side is abundant with water; the eastern side is similar to the White Bear Lake situation. Would also be helpful if the study includes suggestions/input in the development forecast for eastern Hugo based on these water issues.

Elhassan response: Working with six cities, including Hugo, and plan to incorporate them in this study. This is a regional issue, and White Bear Lake (WBL) is only a symptom of the problem.

Schneider suggested that when this work is being done, the affect on the region from climate change is taken into consideration. Stock asked the distance between SPRWS and WBL. Schneider responded that the main source of water is drawn from the Mississippi River in Fridley, then to North Oaks/Pleasant Lake area. From there it's 3-4 miles to WBL. Biggest concern and expense is the zebra mussel issue. Pumps and pipes are a minimal cost compared to the filtration system.

Schurbon: WBL good example of what's happening elsewhere. It's a dramatic situation, so to the extent this can be an example study for the rest of the metro it's a good thing, and we can extrapolate at least some direction for elsewhere. As the DNR begins to work on the groundwater management areas is there some interplay or later connection with what is happening here and what the DNR will be starting?

Yearwood: DNR has been involved with these communities and is looking at the NE as a potential groundwater management area where we could monitor and observe more.

Stock commented that this is not the first area where we've had surface water impact. The SW side (Savage) has experienced it, and he was happy to hear that there are partnerships being developed on the front end because that's what going to be necessary to make it work in the long term.

Elhassan mentioned that the communities in the SE are invited to the next session to share experiences.

Ellingboe: Staff who attended the April 4 session passed along favorable comments about the information that was presented and how it was done. Discussions and focus should continue on the various issues, not only in WBL but on a broader scale. There are quite a number of discussions going on about these issues, and the DNR has been very good about asking for input from other state agencies.

Furlong commented that he's happy to hear that cities are getting together and addressing the issue; that's ultimately because the cities provide the municipal water and he's pleased to hear that the MCI role is to provide technical support and advice, and the role of cities is to work together, as Savage and neighboring communities did. Sometimes there is a tendency to over plan 30,40,50 years down the road, and there are many cities that over planned in 2005 – 2007 and put in a lot of infrastructure on what was going to happen and they're still dealing with that. He liked what he heard in terms of the supporting technical role of MC, and the cities taking the lead, and cautioned not to over plan and over invest as part of the solution.

## **WATER SUPPLY AND A THRIVING REGION**

Libby Starling, Manager of Regional Policy and Planning, provided brief overview of Thrive 2040, and informed the committee that there are ongoing opportunities to provide input.

Water supply / quality was concern of Thrive session attendees.

During the Thrive sessions, four policy areas came up consistently:

1. Regionally significant economic places
2. Water supply and a thriving region
3. Land use / transit
4. Affordable housing priority, locations, need.

It was evident during the work sessions that attendees were very aware of water supply. Comments heard relating to water supply during the work sessions include:

- Build differently
- Control usage
- Price to incent usage behavior
- Educate for awareness and options
- Convert to surface supply
- Council involvement

The Thrive MSP 2040 Status Report included three discussion questions relating to water supply and a thriving region:

1. How could the region build differently?
2. How could the region expand the use of surface water, and who should be involved?

3. How should water supply strategies align with other activities to achieve local and regional goals?

Committee members were asked for feedback on goals, policies, and three questions. .

Comments included:

Relative to goals, the water supply issue is not clearly stated. Should be something more directly stated.

Relative to the preservation goal. What types of activities or approaches were discussed? Starling: specific strategies not discussed.

MC role should be as active participant as facilitator, advisor, collaborator creating partnerships - not as active manager and regulator.

The 2005 statutory responsibility included streamlining the regulatory process. Focus of MAWSAC changed from regulatory to planning. Membership originally a lot of regulatory agencies. Developing collar counties have been added to the membership. Need to consider expanding the membership in regards to the planning focus. Need more municipal participation, a business component, chamber of commerce rep. As we go from regulatory to planning, need membership change that can respond to the discussion questions more effectively. DNR and MC need to have a closer working relationship as it relates to population and development forecast, and then come to the cities with a charge or a mission.

Need to talk about the cost of switching to surface water.

Stormwater reuse should be considered.

MN has abundant water supply, but things are changing, and we need to take a comprehensive long-term look at water supply planning. Look at all options that are available. Not in favor of regulatory water supply agency. Need water for viable community.

Interest in storm water management and reuse has developed over the last several years. One of the things that keeps coming up is what impact might changes in storm water management have on the ground or surface water supplies.

There are different levels of urgency. Providing some framework for how to deal with that would be a good starting point, e.g. building differently; compensate communities for sacrifices.

Equity will be huge challenge in metro area. State has to have role financially to have a strong metropolitan area, which is critical to the State of MN. The state needs to pay role in partnerships to establish equitable baseline.

Outcome-based equity scenarios rather than an opportunity-based equity – are the opportunities available versus is the outcome equitable. Caution – different areas/regions have different issues, including water, to deal with.

Water is factor, but not determining factor in terms of development.

A lot of people use the planning process to tell other people what to do. You'd be surprised at how many farmers came up with the idea of using drain tile in agriculture use.

Do not need single direction for the region. Do not need top-down regional regulations.

Some issues cross municipal lines, and cities need to work together.

MC play facilitator and technical/advisory role.

In addition to considering using water from rivers, examine other options.

Need cost analysis of using surface water, storm water, treated water, etc.

Need planning process before coming up with solution.

Plan has to be flexible to deal with unforeseen events.

Be careful that plan does not become specific and dictatorial.

The water supply plan approved by this committee and MC recognized that it is up to cities to recognize how it will deal with issues.

Relative to 3<sup>rd</sup> question. Each area is different. Can't tie ourselves to one thing for entire region. Opportunities arise from new information for planning, but each community knows itself best.

Balance – what is it? How is the balance found between transportation, housing and natural resource protection?

Good planning – what is it?

The metro area is economic driver of region. However, if farmers quit farming tomorrow, it would affect the metro area in short order. How is it determined what's more important? All is important, all have to work together. . Treading on thin ice – have to be very, very careful how we move forward with these issues because the impact that these decisions could have devastating effects to the farming community.

Farmers are very responsible from a land use standpoint, and conservation conscious. Trying to balance that with doing what they need to do to run their business. Region is prosperous in so many ways. Have to be careful assuming that this plan will create this prosperity. Caution that a plan is not created that looks like region is failing in so many ways and this plan is going to get us to this equity situation. Recognize the benefits and assets that we have.

Also, transit is too narrow a focus. It should be Transportation system. Should be beyond transit – many people use transit and we have good system; there are opportunities to make it better in some areas if it's done cost-effectively. But the vast majority of the people in the metropolitan area get to and from their destinations not by transit, but by roads. Looking at land use and transit is too narrow. Should be looking at the broad transportation system.

A plan is a plan – not concrete. Needs to be flexible.

Be careful of what's put in writing.

Revise second question. It's too targeted on using surface water. Better if something like “How could region optimize water supply management system?”

Surface water use expensive compared to groundwater. Need to recognize costs as we go through process. Regional cost sharing needs to be part of discussion.

Groundwater system. Water softeners – costs are at least as expensive as cost of surface water.

Softened water at home increases salt in treated water which makes it harder to re-use.

These discussions bring interconnected issues into planning process. Equity issue critical.

The ground water management planning areas compare to watershed organizations in '80s. Not always been a great success. Now watershed orgs are their own entities, separate from the cities.

Collaborations and partnerships are handled well through joint powers agreements.

Staff stated that Thrive is a regional development framework. A lot of the topics discussed today are very particular topics. Language coming out of Thrive will look much more generalized. Intended to provide an overarching umbrella. Policy language will be developed this summer, and there will be more outreach in the fall. Plan is to have this mostly finished by end of 2013, and adopted spring 2014.

MAWSAC would like follow up on Thrive this fall.

**DRAFT TECHNICAL WORK PLAN FOR 2013-2015** – deferred until July meeting

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Susan Harder  
Recording Secretary