

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA WATER SUPPLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, November 16, 2021

Committee Members Present:

Phil Klein (Chair-delegate), Annika Bankston, John “Jack” Gleason, Valerie Neppl, Catherine Neuschler, Jamie Schurbon

Committee Members Absent or Partial Attendance

Chair Wendy Wolf, Jeff Berg (partial), Sandeep Burman, Mark Daleiden, Mike Huang (partial), Brad Larson (partial), Susan Morris, Michael Robinson, Patrick Shea, Lisa Vollbrecht, Kevin Watson (partial), Tonja West-Hafner (partial)

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair-delegate Phil Klein called the regular meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee (MAWSAC) to order at 1:03 p.m. on Tuesday, November 16, 2021.

READING OF NOTICE

NOTICE: The Metropolitan Council Chair has determined it is not practical or prudent to conduct in-person meetings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, committee members will participate in this meeting via telephone or other electronic means and the meeting will be conducted under Minnesota Statutes section 13D.021 at the date and time stated above. We encourage you to monitor the meeting remotely. If you have comments, we encourage members of the public to email us at public.info@metc.state.mn.us. We will respond to your comments in a timely manner.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Without objection the agenda was approved. Without objection the minutes for the September 21, 2021 of the regular meeting of MAWSAC were approved.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

Staff and guests gave presentations on the following:

- a) Recommendations: Infrastructure
- b) Draft problem statement and recommended actions
- c) Regional information: Drinking Water Security and Resiliency Study

As part of the presentation, MAWSAC members were invited to speak about their experiences related to the topic.

The Council must consider MAWSAC's work and recommendations as it prepares its regional development framework, and TAC's role is to inform MAWSAC's work by providing scientific and engineering expertise (M.S. 473.1565).

Discussion and Local Perspectives:

After the presentation regarding Drinking Water Security and Resiliency, Committee members provided the following perspectives:

- Chair-delegate Klein shared concerns with interconnections of the water supply: different water pressure(s) and/or pipe sizes at connections, differences in water treatment (chemical compactivity). He also raised the sentiment of communities not being recognized for their water savings and environmental protections efforts.

- Committee Member Larson shared an issue Savage is encountering regarding getting water as they are near the Savage fen (peat-accumulating wetland fed by mineral-rich ground or surface water). The fen impacts their ability to utilize the aquifers near them as they must drill deeper so as to not disrupt the fen. His community currently partners with Burnsville for water but would like to be self-sufficient in the next few years.
- Committee Member West-Hafner raised concern for the idea of all communities changing water source and using the Mississippi River for drinking water supplies, especially when considering the drought over this past summer.
- Committee Member Annika Bankston noted at even at the peak draw rate from the river during the drought they were not concerned about the water intakes going dry. With the long-term water conservation efforts all agencies and partners have been enacting, our average day draw(s) from the river is even lower than the targets set with the drought planning in the 1990s.
- Committee Member Huang raised the concept of accumulative impact on the water system of the Mississippi River and being deliberate to diversify from where we draw our water. Aging infrastructure and the costs and planning related to rehabilitating it are also a large challenge.

Group exercise using Mural, digital workspace for visual collaboration (Staff Member Lanya Ross)

The committee members engaged in a process using Mural, a digital workspace for visual collaboration. Committee members shared their suggestions to strengthen their support for the draft problem statement. Comments included:

- Changing the language around “Examples of unplanned events like contamination, new regulatory limits...” It does not recognize the limitations surrounding regulatory limits.
- Suggestion to make the statement more concise, and shared suggested rewording.
- Suggestion to look for common groupings for the categories shared in the statement.

When asked what would make support for the problem statement stronger, committee members shared the following comments on the Mural board:

- Firm examples of these areas would provide more substantive grounding on directional intent
- Provide open-ended examples of solutions with directional guidance of where we are going
- Is essence of the problem statement, “How to maximize the value the region receives from existing and future water supply infrastructure investments...” Somehow collaboration and coordination lead to the whole being greater than sum of the parts?
- Or is the essence the need to have more local stakeholder support for infrastructure investment funding.
- Cull enough language from the original statement to illuminate the complexity of the challenge.

The following were suggested as existing efforts that could be used as a model or be expanded upon:

- Creation and sharing of educational materials related to water sources.
- American Water Works Association (AWWA), Water Environment Federation (WEF), National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) August 2019's: Developing a New Framework for Household Affordability and Financial Capability Assessment in the Water Sector
- Building coalitions/stakeholder groups to advocate topical issues such as funding, equitable water distribution, etc.
- Inform residents on the importance of conserving water and give examples on how to do it. Ask for their help to achieve goal.
- Review and validate Minnesota Department of Health's (MDH) project prioritization rating system as it relates to distribution of federal monies (and grant eligibility).
- Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) newly released funding integration tool for source water

The following were suggested as potential leaders and critical partners in these efforts:

- City water departments
- Minnesota Rural Water Association
- City Councils and County Commissions (for information sharing)
- Local communities that have already implement conservation projects that have shown results
- MDH's Drinking Water Revolving Fund and Clean Water Revolving Fund

Other comments shared on the Mural board include:

- Impact of education is building a steppingstone to garnering broad support for initiatives and funding.
- Building coalitions will allow communities to coordinate and to lobby for funding.
- Coalitions can also serve as a way to share knowledge/experience on how to address issues such as funding projects.
- The federal infrastructure bill has money coming, is there a place to provide recommendations to use that money?

Drafting MAWSAC report (Staff Member Lanya Ross)

The purpose of the MAWSAC report is:

- To provide a set of recommendations and supporting information around high-priority water supply topics.
- Policymakers and influencers will be better informed to develop and implement policies that achieve multiple benefits and reduce unintended impacts to water supplies.
- Per Minnesota Statute 473.1565, the Council will consider MAWSAC's work and recommendations as it prepares its regional development framework.

The goal is to build upon the [2017 MAWSAC report](#). We are currently asking for volunteer reviewers and drafting the report. The following proposed milestones were noted:

- Fall 2021: MAWSAC & TAC provide input at meetings, and committee volunteers work with staff to write and solicit review of draft report
- Winter 2021: Review comments incorporated into final report, guided by committee volunteers
- Jan. 18, 2022: Approval by MAWSAC
- Jan. 25, 2022: Present final report to Environment Committee
- Feb. 9, 2022: Present final report to Council
- Feb. 15, 2022: Submit final report to Legislature

COMMITTEE PERSPECTIVES

With no additional committee perspectives to share, Chair-delegate Klein moved to the next steps.

NEXT STEPS

1. Report drafting and review
2. Joint MAWSAC/TAC and Sub-Regional Workgroup meeting proposed Tuesday, December 7 at 1 PM
3. MAWSAC and TAC will meet on January 18th to approve the final draft

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:46 p.m.

Tessa Wegenke
Recording Secretary