

Meeting Title: Master Water Supply Plan Community Technical Work Group Meeting #5

Date: May 12, 2015

Time: 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Location: 390 Robert St., St. Paul - Room LLA

Members in Attendance:

Mark Maloney, Shoreview
Klay Eckles, Woodbury
Bob Cockriel, Bloomington
Dale Folen, Minneapolis
Jim Graupmann, St. Paul
Michael Thompson, Maplewood
Steve Lillehaug, Brooklyn Center

Members Absent:

Brian Olson, Edina
Jennifer Levitt, Cottage Grove
Steve Albrecht, Burnsville
Bert Tracy, Golden Valley
Russ Matthys, Eagan

Met Council Staff in Attendance:

Marie McCarthy
Leisa Thompson
Jeannine Clancy
Sam Paske
Ali Elhassan
Lanya Ross
Brian Davis
Anneka Munsell
Deb Manning
Kyle Colvin
Angela Mazur

DNR Staff in Attendance:

Jason Moeckel
Joe Richter
Carmelita Nelson

Other Attendees:

Barb Huberty, Legislative Water Commission

Meeting Notes:

Welcome & Introductions

Jeannine Clancy opened the meeting with introductions and a brief overview of the agenda. She asked if anyone had feedback on the Meeting #4 minutes. One correction was requested to a comment at the

top of page four regarding conservation not making as much sense for Minneapolis because they put most of what they take out of the river back in. There were no other corrections, so Jeannine moved on to the discussion of the revised draft Master Water Supply Plan (MWSP).

Discussion of draft Master Water Supply Plan

Lanya introduced the new MWSP draft by highlighting some places where changes were made, and confirming that she tried to address all the comments from the last meeting, including calling out the importance of conservation, discussing infrastructure differently, and presenting the information more clearly. She showed a few representative wording changes in her presentation, and Jeannine asked if the group had questions or feedback.

A member asked what the term “water conservation” encompasses in the plan, pointing out that sustainable use can include a variety of practices, and that we should keep our thinking broad in terms of potential solutions. Lanya replied that there is more information about this topic in chapter 7, and that Brian Davis would also discuss it later in the meeting. She mentioned a few other aspects of sustainable use, such as water efficiency – getting more value out of the water we use – and reducing unaccounted-for water use. Leisa commented that it sounded like making sure innovation is encouraged is a concern, and that we may want to work innovation into this thought.

Jason Moeckel said that he thought the intention was that where projected demand would exceed the limit, we'd look at a range of methods to solve that projected problem. He agreed that conservation is becoming a term that's meaningless because it means too many different things.

Ali Elhassan asked whether it's better to use the term “water conservation” or “efficient use of water,” since the latter is applicable at any time, even when demand doesn't exceed supply. Carmelita Nelson suggested that we insert another sentence stating that water conservation and efficiency will be promoted at all times. Other group members commented that it was important to differentiate between when the plan was discussing conservation in the context of demand reduction vs. alternate supply.

A member suggested that it could be helpful to define what we mean at the beginning of the plan, whether by creating a new term or clearly stating what is meant by the term we use, and then to use that same term throughout the document. He emphasized that the term should be as broad as possible to include options that might not be practical today, but could be in the future. Another member agreed and added that the plan shouldn't need to be reworked in a few years if options that aren't currently feasible become so, specifically mentioning gray water as an example of this.

Referring to a revised statement in the draft that “strategies like water conservation can begin immediately,” a member asked whether Met Council staff thought there was still a lot of low-hanging fruit in this area. Lanya said that yes, there was still a lot of potential. Another member commented that there's a need to include both the entry-level water conservation approach that some may need and a next-level approach for communities that have already been working on the issue. Lanya referred him to chapter 7, which had more information on this topic, and requested that group members send her additional strategies they thought should be added, if they knew of one not yet in the draft.

Lanya continued to discuss plan changes, explaining that based on feedback received from the group, the new draft clarified roles and responsibilities, highlighted key partners, and put an emphasis on cooperation

Members called out topics on which they would like to see additional content in the MWSP. These included Department of Health finished water requirements in the plan, and potential issues related to private wells, and especially their water quality. Several group members related that even in cities where they knew there were private wells, there was a lack of information about where they are, and that these were not regulated. Some mentioned having heard about county-level programs to help homeowners pay for testing in private wells. Lanya pointed out a few places in the MWSP draft where wells were brought up, in chapters 7 and 8.

Jeannine asked whether the group felt it would be beneficial to the plan to call out this potential challenge. They agreed that it was conspicuously absent, but had doubts that this was a topic the plan could do much to address in practical terms, either from the perspective of consumption or well contamination. Lanya asked whether this was a place the Met Council might have an education or outreach role. Ali added that the Met Council was not implying that it wanted to become a regulator of these wells, but would like to encourage conservation strategies and the use of testing programs.

Members agreed that this was a challenge that should be addressed at some point, but that the MWSP might not be the right place for it. They brought up that one possible approach could be to call out this issue without necessarily having to present solutions in the MWSP.

One member added that since the plan's main audience is water suppliers, any help it could give them to deliver a message about water conservation, that "water is water, regardless of the source," would be helpful. He didn't expect residents to read the plan, but thought it could help local government convey the message to them. Jeannine agreed, and mentioned that as a resident with a private well, she had not heard from her city on the topic. Joe Richter suggested also getting counties involved so they could work with unincorporated areas.

A member made a suggestion for a change in wording, pointing out a section of the plan where it says that we have challenges, and then immediately mention the state laws protecting our water supply. He felt that the phrasing essentially said that state laws that are helping us are a challenge.

A member asked who the intended audience was for Table 1, and Lanya said that it could be useful as a starting point for people who aren't as familiar with the technical details, including city council members and legislators. Ali asked whether members would find this helpful. A member said he didn't think it would be useful for public water suppliers, but if elected officials were the intended audience, it could be useful in that context. Jeannine said she thought the audience was a combination of water suppliers and elected officials, and pointed out that some smaller townships in the region have more limited staff than larger cities, and so may not be as familiar with some of the technical information.

In reference to the Water Quality slide in Lanya's presentation, Carmelita asked whether the Department of Health had reviewed this information, and Lanya replied that they had. In response to another member's question, she clarified that she was talking about source water quality rather than finished water quality.

Lanya commented that she knew the perceived bias toward surface water vs. other solutions was a big issue for the group, so she made changes to that throughout the new draft, and hoped it did a better job of showing that there are a variety of options.

After Lanya briefly discussed next steps and the planned timeline, Jeannine asked if Mark Maloney could share his thoughts on a MAWSAC meeting he had attended. Mark commented that the meeting being held in LLA rather than the Chambers may have contributed to a less formal environment that seemed to encourage more dialogue. He was pleased to hear that the work of the CTWG was being acknowledged, and said that “based on what I saw at MAWSAC, this group matters.” He said he heard more meaningful interplay from members and more pointed questions being asked than he had at other MAWSAC meetings, and that he was really encouraged by it.

Jeannine then explained that Met Council staff would like to begin the process of making the draft MWSP ready for public review, with the CTWG reconvening in September to discuss changes and comments that come up during the public review process. She asked how the group felt about this.

The feedback was generally favorable, and the group was comfortable with the plan being made available for public review at this state.

Remaining requests or concerns were:

- Wherever there are opportunities to define roles in the plan, it should do so
- Uncertainty over what the practical impact will be to specific cities; concerns remain over how those not present for CTWG discussions might interpret uses of model
- The CTWG would like to reconvene and look at the plan after the public comment period.

Several group members felt the CTWG had had a positive impact on the process of developing the plan and ensuring diverse viewpoints were represented, and that they felt better about it than they had at earlier meetings. Specific areas of concern that had been effectively addressed included taking the emphasis off surface water and changing the tone to one of partner and third-party facilitator rather than another regulator. One member pointed out that many of the potential solutions communities look at aren’t easy to accomplish, and that the Met Council could play an important role in helping communities get to those solutions.

Carmelita questioned whether the one week shown on the timeline for the DNR’s approval would be sufficient. Jeannine said that MCES staff would work with the DNR on the scheduling, and that the DNR would be given a copy of the plan at the same time it goes out for public review, so they would have more time to review it.

Per the group’s comments, Jeannine said that the plan would go forward for public review, with the intent that the CTWG would reconvene in September, and she invited CTWG members to attend public meetings during the review process. Ali said that he wanted to emphasize that this meeting was not the end of the road for the Community Technical Work Group, and that MCES staff would continue to seek input.

There was one follow-up question from the group about something in an older draft of the MWSP that had caused concern. The older version had discussed the Met Council allocating wastewater expansion and potentially limiting this if there were identified groundwater issues. Lanya explained that this was one of many changes made when revisions were made to the Water Resources Policy Plan.

Shifting to the water supply profiles in Appendix 1, Lanya gave an overview of some of the changes that had been made, comparing the old and new cover pages, which were revised to be more clear in their description of where the information is coming from. She explained that the process for local water

supply plans starts with the DNR template, which Carmelita would talk about later, and that then there are a number of different tools available, designed to help with this.

A group member expressed appreciation for the technical detail being presented and discussed, and that it was attempting to show water use in a broader sense in community, rather than just municipal use.

In response to questions about a part of the community profiles that list potential surface water impacts, such as to trout streams, Lanya explained that one way this information will be shared is on an interactive map, and that it's intended to make it easier for planners who may find it helpful to see potential impacts as they guide future development for specific parcels in their communities.

Members were still uneasy about the way the sensitive resources were identified; the primary concerns were that the five miles number used seemed arbitrary, and could keep people from looking at places farther away that are still causing impacts. A member said that municipalities are going to do what they need to do to protect resources, but was concerned that the information might be used by other parties to create more unneeded bureaucracy.

DNR Template

After a short break to serve lunch, Carmelita presented the revised DNR template and thanked the group for the input they have been providing. She explained that the length of the document is due to its contents being required by law, and gave a little background on the other agencies that have reviewed it, such as the PCA and MDA.

Carmelita gave examples of some revisions and additions, such as a section on the benefits of completing the template, which included its making the grant process easier and helping with the development of an emergency plan. She asked the group for their input on how a table in the draft referred to populations, particularly the difference between total population and total population served. Members asked about whether these categories took into account customers beyond municipal boundaries, since service area boundaries and municipal boundaries are not necessarily the same. A member suggested that specifying different categories could help; he suggested population, population inside city served, and population outside city served, and said that communities already update those numbers annually for Met Council documents.

Carmelita reviewed eight main objectives from the newer draft:

1. Reducing unaccounted water loss to less than 10%
2. Less than 75 residential gallons per capita demand (GPCD)
3. At least a 1.5% per year water reduction for Business, Industrial and Agricultural GPCD for the next 10 years
4. Decreasing trend in total per capita demand
5. Reduce peak day demand so that the ratio of average maximum day to the average day is less than 2.6
6. Implement a water conservation rates and/or program
7. Additional strategies to reduce water use
8. Tracking success over ten years

Members commented on a few aspects of this section. They suggested that, for Table 25, having a column called "results" may need some qualification, as having actions taken and results seen doesn't

necessarily tell you which effects were due to which causes, especially in the short term. Another question had to do with whether cities would be expected to work with water users in their communities, such as manufacturers, even if those users weren't on city water. There wasn't a firm yes or no to this question, but DNR staff said, "Probably not."

A member asked who was the primary audience for the information they were giving, such as the DNR or the public, as whether this was an internal conversation among regulatory agencies or whether there was a public outreach aspect could affect how he would respond. Carmelita said that it was part of an increased focus on conservation at the DNR, and that it does impact permitting decisions. Joe added that plans were first required in response to droughts in the 80s as a way to get communities to manage their systems in a more thorough way, start thinking about conservation, and consider emergency plans.

The potential conflict between attempts to reduce per capita demand and planned growth was a concern for some. One member asked whether these goals were just not allowing for growth, and Carmelita said that that was not the intent. She explained that the DNR just wanted people to be aware of the reasons for the increase in demand, but not necessarily prohibiting it. Another member requested a residential trend line separate from the total.

Carmelita asked the group to send her feedback within a week after the meeting, as she hoped to move forward with the template in June, and roll it out statewide in September.

Water Conservation

Brian Davis gave a short presentation on water conservation and a recent regional water billing analysis. He discussed the cost of water in the metro area, explaining that water is relatively inexpensive here, with the highest local costs in small communities. He gave examples of other metropolitan areas with higher monthly equivalent bills, such as Indianapolis and Tucson. He explained that lower prices are associated with greater water use and particularly greater summer water use, and that wealthier households use more water in the summer.

Brian described the local rate structures, of which 33 out of 126 were uniform, with the rest being tiered. He pointed out that inclined block rate structures are not necessarily water conservation rate structures, despite those terms often being used synonymously, and that there was actually greater per capita water use in local communities with tiered rate structures compared to those with flat rate structures.

Brian then discussed improvements that have been made to the online water conservation toolbox, such as making it more visual and reviewing links for usefulness, and explained that it was structured for different users (residents/businesses, suppliers, etc.).

Shifting to water use, Brian presented new data from MNTAP. He explained that they had looked closely at industrial water use, and determined that 18 individual industries are responsible for 85% of industrial groundwater use. They did one-day site assessments for five of those industries, and will be sponsoring water conservation internships. Brian encouraged group members to contact MNTAP if they have industrial water conservation needs. Carmelita mentioned that she thought MNTAP was mostly targeting the NE metro this year.

Showing a graph comparing water use and seasonal peaks in 2008-2012 with that in 1990-1994, Brian discussed how changes in the way people use water, such as more convenient automatic irrigation, have

had a large affect on water use in the metro area, and that there is significant opportunity for conservation in addressing this change in behavior. He pointed out that reducing water use through conservation is much cheaper and easier than creating new infrastructure for increased water usage.

Brian explained the conclusions he had reached: that there are significant residential water conservation opportunities, that there are strong incentives for industrial water conservation, and that tools exist to help communities meet their water conservation goals. He anticipated that the report would be completed in about a month, and could be sent to the group at that time

Other comments/evaluation/ conclusion

Leisa thanked everyone for the time they had invested in the CTWG meetings, and thanked the Council for allowing the group the flexibility to convene informally. She described the group as a missing ingredient that the plan is better for having had input from, and reiterated the need to explore issues together and create a safe environment discuss different perspectives.

Leisa said that the Met Council staff think there is a benefit to the group continuing to meet after the plan is published, and asked whether, if the opportunity presents itself, they saw value in that. She mentioned that there is a legislative proposal to make a Community Technical Work Group a formal requirement, but that Met Council staff would still like to do so even if the requirement doesn't pass. Members were supportive of this; one person commented that it was a great idea to continue the relationship building and include a local perspective, even if it was from different communities. Another agreed that the group had been beneficial, adding that he felt the group members and the Met Council staff were moving together now, which he could not have said a couple of months ago.

Jeannine thanked the group for their input and requested that they fill out the meeting evaluation forms in their packets.

Adjournment

1:00 p.m.