

Minutes of the

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, November 15, 2016

Committee Members Present:

Sandra Rummel-Chair, Marie McCarthy, Harry Melander, Edward Reynoso, Lona Schreiber, Wendy Wulff-Vice Chair

Committee Members Absent:

None

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Rummel called the special meeting of the Council's Environment Committee to order at 4:04 p.m. on Tuesday, November 15, 2016.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

It was moved by Wendy Wulff, seconded by Harry Melander to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Wendy Wulff, seconded by Lona Schreiber to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2016 regular meeting of the Environment Committee. **Motion carried.**

BUSINESS

2016-235: Unsolicited Community Solar Garden (CSG) Subscription Agreements

It was moved by Wendy Wulff seconded by Lona Schreiber that the Metropolitan Council authorize its Regional Administrator the discretion to sign or delegate the authority to sign unsolicited Community Solar Garden (CSG) subscription agreements with developers that meet the Council's defined parameters as shown in Attachment A of the business item with **amendment of the criteria** in item 1 to read CSG subscriptions in the total will not exceed ~~4/3~~ 25% of the division's total energy load. **Motion withdrawn after discussion.**

Motion by Edward Reynoso, second by Wulff to **postpone** business item and hold a special meeting on Tuesday, 11/29/16 to reopen discussion on business item 2016-235. Aye votes by Edward Reynoso, Wendy Wulff, Harry Melander, Lona Schreiber. Ney votes by Sandy Rummel and Marie McCarthy. **Motion carried.**

2016-236: Assessment of Reliability and Sustainability of Water Supply in Metropolitan Region

It was moved by Harry Melander, seconded by Wendy Wulff, that the Metropolitan Council authorize its Regional Administrator to award and execute five (5), \$400,000 engineering services Master Contracts, totaling \$2,000,000 with CDM Smith, HDR, SEH, Stantec, and TKDA for Phase 2 assessment of reliability and sustainability of water supply in the Metropolitan Region, Contract #16P135A, B, C, D, & E. **Motion carried.**

INFORMATION

1. Citizen-Assisted Monitoring Program for Lakes:

Brian Johnson, Senior Environmental Scientist in Environmental Quality Assurance provided an overview of a Citizen-Assisted Monitoring Program for Lakes (CAMP).

He stated regional lake monitoring is in accordance with the principles and goals of Thrive MSP 2040 as well as the 2040 Water Resources Policy Plan. Outcomes for Thrive include providing for available and high-quality water resources for fishing, swimming, and supporting aquatic life and terrestrial habitat, promoting the protection and restoration of water resources for recreational use, and in partnership with other in the region, assess and evaluate the quality of the region's water resources. According to the Water Resources Policy Plan, regional water quality is part of the implementation strategies for assessing and protecting regional water resources, regional water quality monitoring provides a comprehensive water quality database of the region's lakes and their condition, and the Council fills gaps in monitoring and assessment of the water quality of area lakes in cooperation and consultation with many partners.

CAMP provides scientifically valid data for effective lake management and water resources decision making. The Council has regional lake information to further its regional mission. Volunteers develop more awareness of water resources issues: seasonal nature of lake water quality, ecological relationships, gets them out on the lake on a regular basis, water level awareness, wildlife observations, algal bloom awareness, etc. Volunteers become advocates for lake improvement in their local communities (engage with local governmental officials and staff, engage neighbors). Some volunteers serve on local governmental boards or citizen advisory committees.

The program began in 1980 and has been operating consistently since 1993. There has been 24 years of monitoring and has encompassed 332 lakes that have been monitored since the start of the program with 168 lakes monitored in 2016.

CAMP relies on several areas to be successful. The Metropolitan Council is responsible for managing the overall program, preparing the final report, pickup and delivery of samples to the lab, training volunteers, managing quality assurance and quality control, and providing sampling equipment. Sponsors pay fees for participation and monitoring equipment, do volunteer recruitment, ensure volunteer participation and pick up samples from volunteers. While volunteers monitor the lake on schedule, store samples, record field data, attend trainings and following the monitoring protocol that has been established.

CAMP's focus is on eutrophication which is the natural process of nutrient enrichment and cultural eutrophication which is the acceleration of the delivery of nutrients beyond which would occur naturally. CAMP measures trophic state which is a means to monitor eutrophication. Cultural eutrophication is undesirable because it:

- causes green lakes,
- more frequent and abundant algal blooms,
- visually unpleasant,
- odor problems,
- negatively affects swimming and recreation,
- increased probability of harmful algal blooms (human and animal health concern),
- reduces biodiversity,
- fish kills,
- loss of cold water fisheries (oxygen depletion, loss of cold deep water habitat),
- changes in fish and invertebrate communities toward low-oxygen tolerant species.

The MPCA uses CAMP data in their impaired waters assessments and listings, e.g. TMDL 303(d) list.

- Impaired Water = a water body that fails to meet a state water quality standard.
- 303(d) list is an Impaired Waters Inventory of water bodies that require a TMDL.
- The Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is the maximum amount of a pollutant a body of water can receive without violating water quality standards, and an allocation of that amount to the pollutant's sources.

Example Kaizen recommendations (a Japanese word meaning Continuous Improvement):

- Survey of sponsors and volunteers,
- Dedicated staff to assist CAMP coordinator,
- Leverage technology,
- Improve internal sample processing and coordination with the lab.

Kaizen Team was comprised of:

- MCES Environmental Quality Assurance
 - Water Quality
 - Water Resources Assessment
- MCES Support Services
 - Analytical Services
 - Performance Excellence & Analytics
 - Continuous Improvement
- Information Services

Comments and Questions:

The process of evaluating water clarity for trophic state begins in mid-April depending on when ice melts. Evaluation concludes in mid-October. Monitoring occurs every two weeks or 14 times per monitoring season. The monitoring process is completed by approximately 115-120 volunteers.

In looking at the report on line, there are large portions of the region where the lakes do not have representation. Are they doing something on their own? Staff stated these areas are being monitored by the other monitoring programs such as Minneapolis Park and Rec board, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Three River Park District, Anoka Conservation District, and Ramsey County all have their own monitoring programs. Rather than duplicating efforts, we collaborate with them to complete the monitoring process.

Do they go beyond monitoring and try different treatment options such as barley straw to improve water quality? Staff stated some of the other programs as trying different treatment options. Varies by location.

Do the independent groups report to a central database? Staff believes most report through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's database called EQuIS.

CAMP process has been occurring for 24 years. Seems that trophic state deterioration is still accelerating. Staff stated this is a question that it is desired to be answered through the monitoring process. Studies to assess trends in lake water quality and regional lake assessments are future goals and actions. It is unclear if the DNR utilizes this information.

2. Establish 2016 Sewer Availability Task Force, Appoint Chair and Members

Ned Smith, Director of Finance and Revenue provided an update regarding a business item that will be brought to the November 30, 2016 special Council meeting by Chair Duinick. The business item will introduce the 2016-2017 Sewer Availability Charge Task Force. As needed, a customer group is convened to examine and evaluate general and specific issues surrounding MCES' Sewer Availability Charge (SAC) process, policy, and procedures. In 2016, there was a bill introduced in the Minnesota House and Senate to exclude outdoor seating from SAC Charges. The bill did not pass. In response to the proposed legislation, MCES committed to convene a task force to review the policy with SAC customers. While this issue was examined and completed as part of a 2009 SAC Task Force, it is a valuable exercise to check in with SAC customers again on the outdoor seating policy currently offered at a 75% discount. In addition, there are several other policies that have risen that merit customer review.

The 2016 SAC Task Force (Task Force) will be convened by a joint effort of MCES and Metro Cities. Task Force members were selected to ensure representation across the region and include business and various city functions. The Task Force will review current policies, examine different approaches, conduct financial and other impact analyses, and make final recommendations. MCES will then work with its staff and the Council as needed to implement the Task Force recommendations.

The planned scope of this Task Force is to:

- Review the current outdoor seating policy
- Review discounts for manufactured homes
- Request evaluation of conversion to building-code criteria for SAC Determinations
- Implement historic rate payment in lieu of Long Continuous Demand Credits

Comments and Questions:

- Committee members thanked staff for responding quickly to aid constituents.
- Chair Rummel thanked Committee Member Wulff for her knowledge regarding SAC.

3. General Managers Report:

Mike Mereness, Acting General Manager in Leisa Thompson's absence, indicated there was nothing new to report. However, he introduced Sam Paske, Assistant General Manager, Environmental Quality Assurance to provide a summary of the full-day Council member workshop that occurred on October 27, 2016. He stated the purpose of the workshop was to begin exploring regional challenges and opportunities in water quality, quantity and infrastructure for a thriving region. The goal was to identify ways that the region's many water stakeholders (state agencies, municipalities, watersheds, non-profits and every citizen) could work together better for water sustainability and regional prosperity and growth.

Council members, the executive team, and staff explored water supply planning, water quality planning, and water resource reclamation (aka wastewater treatment) through four focus areas:

1. Aligning regional growth with water availability
2. Wastewater reuse
3. Nitrate reduction strategies
4. Wastewater resource recovery (raw material and energy production)

The workshop concluded with these takeaways:

1. This initial conversation was a successful first step engaging policy makers with the complexity of managing water resources.
2. The Council called for a unified vision and a sense of urgency around the challenges as a starting point.
3. The Council endorsed furthering deeper discussions in the region to share leadership – and accountability – for good water sustainability outcomes.
4. The Council will prioritize informing and educating the public about the value of water to our region and to our state.

Comments and Questions:

- Committee Member Wulff indicated there was discussion at the workshop regarding the price of water. She stated in her time on the Lakeville City Council, the City kept the base water rate low by going to tiered pricing to encourage conservation. Instead of increasing the price of water, they added on a water quality fee to water bills.
- Chair Rummel stated she reviewed the 2014 Freshwater Council report on fresh water. She has reviewed the messages from the report and they are consistent with what we have been discussing.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Susan Taylor
Recording Secretary