Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA WATER SUPPLY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

Committee Members Present:

Mark Maloney (Chair), Scott Anderson, Kristin Asher, John Dustman, Robert Ellis, Dale Folen, Lih-in Rezania, Jim Stark, Jim Westerman, Ray Wuolo, and Jason Moeckel (DNR Liaison).

Committee Members Absent:

Crystal Ng, Matt Saam, Jaime Wallerstedt, and Bruce Westby.

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Maloney called the regular meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Area Water Supply Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to order at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 20, 2021.

Governor Walz's notice was read at the beginning of the meeting as follows:

NOTICE: Governor Walz has declared a peacetime emergency (Emergency Executive Order 20-01) in response to COVID-19 and the Metropolitan Council Chair has determined it is not practical or prudent to conduct an in-person Metropolitan Council meeting for reasons stated in the Governor's Emergency Executive Order. Accordingly, Metropolitan Council members will participate in this meeting via telephone or other electronic means and the Metropolitan Council meeting will be conducted under Minnesota Statutes section 13D.021 at the date and time stated above. This *meeting will be streamed live*. We encourage you to monitor the meeting remotely. If you have comments, I 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.

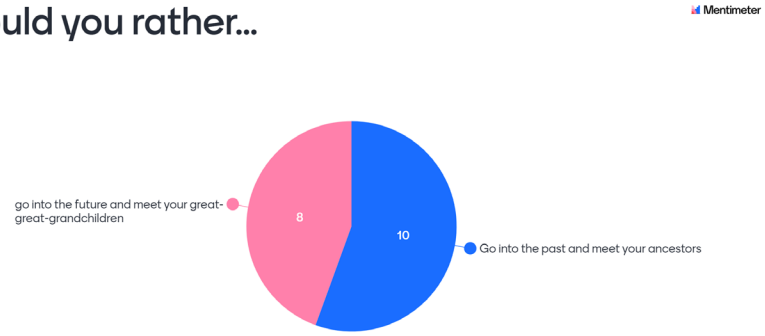
APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Without objection the agenda was approved by consensus.

Without objection the workshop notes of the March 23, 2021 Joint Workshop the Metropolitan Area Water Supply and Technical Advisory Committees (MAWSAC and TAC) were approved.

INFORMATION

1. Warm Up and Mentimeter Testing
   Committee members were invited to join a Mentimeter survey to test the tool using an ice-breaker question. This is a new tool that will be used at future meetings. Survey results:



METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

2. Information Item: Recommendations – Regional Context
Emily Steinweg shared a presentation of background information and the request to the committee. This presentation supports MAWSAC's responsibility to, in 2022, report to the Metropolitan Council and MN Legislature about water supply planning activities and water supply needs of the metro area. The Council must consider MAWSAC's work and recommendations as it prepares its regional development framework. TAC's role is to inform MAWSAC's work by providing scientific and engineering expertise. Emily asked TAC members to share information for MAWSAC to consider at their next meeting, related to potential recommendations in the area of water quality and contamination, both current and emerging. Wendy Wulff, MAWSAC Chair, has clearly expressed to staff that her intention is to approach the development of MAWSAC recommendations by working directly with TAC throughout the process to ensure local concerns are consistently understood and considered. She added that this meeting is also a space to pool TAC's collective expertise to address the region's increasingly complex water problems that require a collaborative approach to tackle. The presentation introduced a first draft of recommendations for MAWSAC describing the problem/challenge, a high-level goal, and some recommendation for actions to achieve the goal – the current draft is based on past committee and water supply stakeholder conversations as well as individual interviews held with MAWSAC and TAC members. She also provided some regional information to help set some context.

3. Information Item: Recommendations - Local Perspectives
Bruce Westby and Brad Larson informally shared their experiences with contamination in their communities (Ramsey and Savage). They spoke briefly about their perspectives around the following questions:
    - What was the problem or challenge, and what impacts were most concerning?
    - What regulatory trade-offs or tensions shaped the work?
    - What was needed to be better prepared?
    - What is the level of consumer confidence in different groups?
    - How could the Council and/or organizations represented on TAC help?

    Bruce shared that in early 2019, MDH after reviewing water tests contacted the city and said manganese (Mn) concentration exceeded secondary standard and asked for short term and long-term solution to meet standards. The short-term solution was to switch to only use wells with low Mn levels and manage water use in the city. A letter describing the change in Mn standards, the issue, and short-term solution was drafted by City Council and sent letter to all property owners. The MDH helped form that letter and put a good message out to public so consumer confidence wasn't' eroded. City also hosted a public workshop and had MDH come in to provide information. The long-term solution is to build a new water treatment plant. Bruce said MC or other TAC members can help and be impactful is to create a space to share information in unforeseen events. Having a peer network to bounce ideas off is helpful.

    Brad Larson in Savage spoke about beginning a partnership with Burnsville in 2009 for a drinking water supply to save sensitive environmental assets that both cities share. Savage's pumping from Jordan aquifer was draining the water source for the fen and degrading those environment assets. Burnsville had an agreement with Kraemer Quarry to supply surface water to supply both communities, thus began the partnership. The concern with the area is that quarry is surrounded by multiple landfills – some permitted with liners, some without liners, and an unregulated, unlined dump. Recently, a test showed the Freeway Landfill leaching PFAS chemicals. Savage does not have to test for them regularly but every couple of years the city tests and the levels are within safe range. Based on hydrology, Brad thinks the public water supply is ok, but there is the challenge is public perception about safety – this issues is in the news. It is possible that a change in pumping regime or flood could change the area's hydrology

and lead to contamination. The landfill is existing and a problem and it seems the only solution is to dig out the landfill and remove it. The challenge is the money/costs to do that.

Committee questions and discussion

Committee members had some exchange in the WebEx meeting chat:

- Jim Stark asked Bruce if blending water will work, given future growth? Bruce responded noting that, unfortunately Ramsey's water is drawn from a single aquifer and the city doesn't have any significant interconnections with other cities, so blending was not an option.
- Jim Westerman asked Bruce how Ramsey handled funding for a long-term solution and what was the impact on rates? Bruce responded noting that Ramsey has been charging its water users for a future water treatment plant for almost 20 years, so that will pay for most of the needed water treatment plant.
- Ray Wuolo highlighted MPCA's Closed Landfill Program

Mark asked Bruce to share more about the city's approach to funding a new treatment plant. Bruce shared that the city had been exploring the possibility for a surface water plant for years. About 20 years ago, as Ramsey was applying for water appropriation permits, DNR requested that the city look at surface water treatment as an alternative to more groundwater pumping. That was when the city started collecting funds for water treatment plant.

Ali asked Brad if there has been testing to see if there are increasing or decreasing trends in the levels of PFAS? Brad responded that there is a plan to do a test this year (Burnsville leading). There have been some past tests, too, in 2016 and 2019. It's Brad's understanding that levels were well within the accepted range. We know that in the past water has been safe. Due to the hydrogeology and the way pumps are working, the public water supply system is avoiding water in contact with the Freeway Landfill. A real concern at this time is if something were to happen, like an unforeseen catastrophic flood or event at the quarry, that caused source water to come into contact with the landfill. The other big concern is the public concern with unlined landfill and public confidence.

Emily asked if either city noticed decreased in water use by customers due to lower consumer confidence. Brad has not seen a decrease in use related to water quality issues. The city is getting close to full buildout – they have seen water use per capita go down over time, but likely because the city is getting to be a mature community. Bruce noted that in Ramsey water use has been pretty constant; they have not noticed a decrease in water use.

Mark noted similar things happened in Lino Lakes, where the city went through a process to blend water when Mn levels were creeping up. He is not sure what their plan is going forward, but they had extensive public outreach to do.

Mark asked the committee: Are we finding cities getting caught off guard by Mn levels in water, or is it a natural progression from using water in the aquifers we're using? Dale Folen shared that looking around MN, there are many communities with Fe/Mn removal. Mn is unique, because has always been a secondary standard that water utilities pay some attention to, but now it is being elevated by the changing standard.

Ali highlighted additional examples of nonpoint source contamination. He noted that nitrate is a concern to keep in mind, for example. Metropolitan Council invited Hasting to share information (as they did to MAWSAC some years ago), but they were unable to attend today. He also

called attention to Elko New Market and the arsenic issues they are working to address. He asked the committee to consider impacts on water rates, consumer confidence, and public health.

Jim Westerman share a challenge related to Fe/Mn issues in the East metro. Communities there are experiencing the intersection of two contaminant issues: Fe/Mn and PFAS. What they have found in the process of addressing PFAS through treatment (GAC, ion exchange) is that the Fe/Me mixes in with that. When Fe/MN precipitates, it clogs the PFAS filters. So planning to address one constituent should include consideration of how other constituents interfere or relate.

Lih-in Rezania highlighted that about 70% of Minnesota's public water supply wells contain some level of Mn. MDH has sampled all community wells and have tried to ID % exceeding the health risk limit. MDH also has a CEC program that works to set health risk levels, health-based values. The MDH Drinking Water Protection section recently came out with a model to address both issues together. The agency has a drinking water risk toolkit for communities facing challenges, where residents' perceptions of risk vs. acute and chronic contamination are emerging or already exist. Karla Peterson is a good person to talk about it further.

Mark wondered if the information MDH shared will lead to changes in PWS' consumer confidence reports (CCRs); will it change or replace that? Lih-in noted that MDH will support communities to monitor water quality, share results, and help communities shape language to include in their CCRs. Even if a constituent is found just at detection (way below risk values), communities are expected to disclose the test results and MDH can help with messaging.

4. <u>Information Item: Recommendations - Group Exercise</u>

Committee members were invited to join an online Mural board.

Consider the problem statement. Committee members reviewed the problem statement and were asked to share their level of support on a scale of 1-8 (1 = no support, 8 = full endorsement). Seven committee members voted. Two (2) votes were full endorsement. Four (4) votes were to endorse with a minor point of contention. One (1) person voted in disagreement.

Share suggestion to strengthen the problem statement. Committee members shared their thoughts for what would help them support the draft problem statement more strongly. They were then asked to flag suggestions they want to prioritize (each person had 5 'stickers' to vote on comments to elevate them). Their comments:

1. Nine (9) votes were placed on the comment "Funding, Funding, Funding. All this is good but, in the end, funding needs to be part of the discussion"
2. Eight (8) votes were placed on the comment "Other agencies are already working on the sampling and analysis of CEC's. Met Council efforts may be redundant."

3. Seven (7) votes were placed on the comment “The word "logistically" needs to be better defined”
4. Seven (7) votes were placed on the comment “What does "support a framework" mean? How is it defined?”
5. Five (5) votes were placed on the comment “Sources are one thing but the nature of the contaminant itself is important and unpredictable”
6. Five (5) votes were placed on the comment “I'd suggest that TAC study/evaluate the UM Future of Drinking Water report for thoughts on Water Safety Planning”
7. Four (4) votes were placed on the comment “Remove "changing" before communities”
8. Two (2) votes were placed on the comment “Add sustainable to last sentence”
9. Two (2) votes were placed on the comment “How can the region be proactive vs reactive?”
10. No votes placed on the comment “Concerned about reactionary rush to regulation before contaminants are fully understood and even establish contaminant guidelines”

Prioritizing solutions. Committee members reviewed the actions proposed to address the problem as described in the draft language (discussion document shared before the meeting). They then added their own proposed actions and organized them on a scale of ease of implementation versus impact.

a. Relatively easy to implement with more immediate or smaller impact:
    - Leverage emerging technologies to better understand groundwater flow directions and impact of drawdown on fate and transport mechanisms (added by TAC member in meeting)
    - MAWSAC/TAC input on re: rules and guidance on key contaminants
    - Evaluate interconnections (agreements, functionality, etc.)
    - Regional campaign re: value and quality of treated water, customizable to communities
b. Relatively easy to implement with medium-term or moderate impact:
    - Support multi-community tabletop emergency response exercises
    - Provide a framework and support to different sized communities for remediation
c. Relatively easy to implement with longer-term or bigger impact:
    - Augmented funding to plan and respond to uncertainties (unexpected contamination)
    - Local leveraging of state/regional resource to fill gaps in monitoring
    - Develop exploratory research framework to ID regional+subregional water quality patterns and trends
d. Moderately easy to implement with medium-term or moderate impact:
    - Support and contribute to legislative recommendations
e. Relatively hard to implement with longer-term or bigger impact:
    - Regional policy to pool collective expertise to address complex water problems
    - Survey to understand range of citizens' views of their water
    - Regional policy to support monitoring and analyzing quality of surface, ground-, and waste- water
    - Develop streamlined protocol/procedures for new contamination and responses
    - Funding for private well testing
f. Relatively hard to implement with medium-term or moderate impact:
    - Support and leverage contamination prevention and mitigation programs (MnTAP, Tax Base Revitalization Grants, etc)

g. Relatively hard to implement with more immediate or smaller impact:
    - Enhance monitoring and publish data re: drinking water contaminants in metro
    - Encourage private well owners to regularly test water quality (point of sale?)

5. Information shared by committee members at closing of the meeting:
Before closing the meeting, Mark asked each committee member to share any closing thoughts.

Scott Anderson stressed that content is important. He expressed concern that he is still unclear about where Met Council will go with this topic (water quality and contamination). He feels there is a very large land use component that will come into play. For him, the technology piece was good. He did get bumped out of Mural a couple times, but still feels it is an efficient way to get input for remote meetings. The polls are telling, as well.

John Dustman appreciated the technology, the polling, and the whiteboard. He acknowledged that people may have had trouble voting the first time, but practice makes it easier. He highlighted that the Mn/Fe/Mg issue plagues a lot of people across the state and comes down to education of well drillers and better science when wells are drilled, because often these elements are coming from/through different parts of the wells. Nonpoint contamination is also important. He expressed appreciated for the direction this is headed.

Lih-in Rezania stressed the value of talking to Karla Peterson around different health-based limits and MCLs and visions to approaching communication issues.

Jim Stark shared that the remote meeting process needs more practice, but it has potential and allows us to discuss a lot of things we need to be thinking about.

Bruce Westby shared that he liked the content and agreed with John's points as well. Although Mural was hard to use the first time, he liked it. In a virtual environment, it can be hard for people to get their point in without people talking over each other. Mural allowed for people to share their ideas.

Ray Wuolo proposed that point source contamination is out of the Met Council swim lanes and is covered best by other agencies. However, nonpoint contamination is really in Met Council's wheelhouse, related to land use and worth pursuing.

In the chat, Jason Moeckel shared that he is not a huge fan of Mural, though it is okay. Jim Westerman commented thanking Mark, staff, and all attending and shared his appreciation.

Next steps

- TAC perspectives will be shared with MAWSAC
- TAC input will be used to begin drafting MAWSAC's report
- Next TAC meeting will focus on the intersection of land use and water suppl

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Jinger Pulkrabek
Recording Secretary