

Minutes

Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee



Meeting Date: May 9, 2023,

Time: 12:00 PM

Location: 390 Robert Steet

Members Present:

- ✓ Chair, Wendy Wulff
- ✓ Annika Bankston
- ✓ Jeff Berg
- ✓ Sandeep Burman
- Jack Gleason

- ✓ Pat Shea
- ✓ Erik Smith
- ✓ Mike Huang
- ✓ Phil Klein
- Brad Larson

- ✓ Valerie Neppi
- Jamie Schurbon
- Lisa Volbrecht

✓ = present = absent

Call to Order

Committee Chair Wulff called the regular meeting of the Water Supply Advisory Committee to order at 12:01 p.m. No quorum was present.

Agenda

Committee members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda.

Information Items and Committee Work

1. Committee administration (Lanya Ross 651-602-1803)

New participants introduced themselves and summarized their backgrounds including Judy Sventek, Met Council Water Resources group manager; Greg Johnson, Met Council Water Resources principal engineer and TAC coordinator; Jen Kader, Met Council Water Resources senior planner and subregional coordinator; Met Council Member Gail Cederberg, District 12 and Met Council representative on the Clean Water Council; and Erik Smith, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Ross noted that there are several open seats on MAWSAC and applications are being solicited through the Secretary of State's Open Appointment website. Sventek gave an update on the appointment process with the goal of having seats filled by the August meeting. Ross noted that a subcommittee to fill TAC vacancies will be established after new MAWSAC members are appointed and noted that in the past there has also been a MAWSAC representative to TAC.

Ross provided background information regarding the MAWSAC charter and bylaws. She asked MAWSAC members to review these documents and provide suggestions for updates. She also reviewed the updated MAWSAC/TAC Work Plan covering both 2023 and 2024.

Bankston arrived at 12:19 p.m., creating quorum.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Klein and seconded by Huang to approve the minutes of the joint meeting of the Metro Area Water Supply Advisory Committee and Water Supply Technical Advisory Committee of

December 20, 2022. **Motion carried.** It was moved by Klein and seconded by Bankston to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee of September 8, 2022. **Motion carried.** It was moved by Huang and seconded by Klein to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee of May 17, 2022. **Motion carried.**

2. Forecasts (Todd Graham 651-602-1322)

Graham summarized the modeling process and timeline noting that local forecasts work is now underway and will be completed in 2023-2024. The goals of the Met Council's forecast process are to predict where and how much new development will occur in the metro area and to ensure that planning and systems investments by regional and local agencies share the same expectations.

Graham asked MAWSAC to consider what policies or assumptions should be intrinsic to the model. Council staff requested MAWSAC advice on policies that should be considered in regional planning, policies that could be considered in the local forecast work, and how best to represent climate change impacts. Johnson noted that this information has also been presented to the TAC. Ross noted that water supply sensitivities have not been included in the model and Graham responded that it's the Met Council's decision on whether to include those.

Chair Wulff noted that the legislature hasn't yet decided on what to do in the White Bear Lake area. Berg noted that the state demographer projections show Minnesota population will not grow much and most new residents will be the result of immigration.

Huang asked what was learned from the 2030 and 2040 plans about what happened that could be reflected in 2050 modeling. Graham noted that development patterns and location choices change between the decades. In previous decades approximately 40% of development happened in the urban core, 40% in 2nd ring suburbs, 15% on the suburban edge, and 5% in rural areas. Recent decades have been much more lopsidedly urban. He noted that there is no shortage of land allotted for development, but local governments often reallocate the land use.

Chair Wulff asked if the model accounts for lifestyle changes since the pandemic. Graham noted that there is good information about the share of the population that will fall in each demographic group and the preferences those groups have for household types. There are assumptions of reduced number of jobs at traditional worksites (ie. offices) and increased remote working. It is unclear how much that will affect population location choices.

Huang asked if the housing assumption is traditional or based on macro-economic cycles. Graham noted that models are based on equilibrium or steady-state economic functions. Housing will likely reflect the preferences and needs for seniors since this is the group with the largest economic change.

Klein asked how the water supply needs are being modeled. Johnson noted that different scenarios are being considered based on the potential court results, whether communities are expected to abide by limits, and levels of enforcement. Graham noted that most communities have municipal well permits allowing growth by double-digits but a few will reach their well permit limits sooner and Lake Elmo has already surpassed the limits. There are other areas besides White Bear Lake and scenarios will be presented to TAC and MAWSAC at a future meeting. Scenarios are being incorporated more and more into the regional planning work. MAWSAC is asked to consider if there are water supply planning scenarios that would be worthwhile to pursue (in forecasts or other planning work).

Huang asked if there was a water capacity plan/model that could be overlaid with the other models or climate trends and noted that it would be useful. Graham responded that if there were a limit, cities would be the lowest unit that could be used and that population is added in annual steps to the forecasts. Huang noted that the demand is well-considered in the model but there doesn't seem to be a lot of consideration of the supply side and that modeling on the



supply side is critical to proactive planning. Kostrzewski noted that there is a policy research paper that will be discussed at the next MAWSAC meeting related to this. Nepl noted that it's always a tension between which comes first, the build-out or need. Huang noted that having grown up in CA and experiencing those water issues that he doesn't want to be reactive here in this area. Sventek noted the current model does not incorporate water supply.

Bankston asked if there was a model that represented all the DNR appropriations permits and the effect on water supply if the appropriations were maxed out. Chair Wulff noted that it's not a closed system and if the metro area water supply is squeezed too much then people could potentially move out to other areas and create water problems there. Ross noted that there is a groundwater model using the optimization approach in the 2015 Master Water Supply Plan. This is a valuable tool to frame thinking and could be an approach to give a high-level regional picture. Setting clear regional goals and objectives for water supply and a clear tracking process is something in which MAWSAC and TAC have indicated interest.

3. **Metro Area Water Supply Plan update and subregional input and TAC discussion (Lanya Ross 651-602-1803)**

Ross summarized the water planning framework in the metro area and the focus of MAWSAC and TAC. The March 15th subregional workshop kicked off work to begin drafting the subregional chapters of the Metro Water Supply Plan with the goal of integrating the subregional perspective into everything. She summarized the main points of feedback received at the workshop and explained how this input will be used by Met Council. Ideas of success and potential roles for MAWSAC and TAC members in the subregional groups were also summarized. Ross noted this document is one of the key sources for the Metro Water Supply Plan content.

Sventek noted that supporting conversations with subregions was a major takeaway from the workshop and working with these groups over the next year will help accomplish that goal. Nepl asked if MAWSAC members should be generating support at the subregional level. Ross noted that MAWSAC/TAC member participation would be very helpful, but also needs to include land use managers, watershed managers, and agriculture. Help in identifying key partners who are most credible is key. Nepl noted that this engagement would need to be done outside traditional working hours. Kader noted that an engagement plan is being developed for what the approach should be for each subregion. Huang noted that one of the challenges is that we don't have relationships with those stakeholders. County Commissioners do and could be powerful intermediaries to bring people together. Soil and Water Conservation Districts can also be trusted voices. Sventek noted that we should expand our existing subregional groups and build on the work of the Water Atlas. There may be opportunities to achieve goals and recharge opportunities in non-traditional spaces like land beneath solar farms and wind turbines. Water supply benefits may be advanced through land use authorities. Huang noted that stakeholders would have to be engaged consistently for the entire journey, not just once every 10 years when updating the plans.

4. **Water policies proposed in *Water Quality and Protecting Source Water Areas* policy research papers (Jen Kostrzewski 651-602-1078)**

The Water Resource Policy Plan purpose and content was summarized. For the 2050 update, a series of seven papers exploring water resources issues is being developed. They will be posted on the following Met Council website and feedback on their content is welcomed from MAWSAC members and others: <https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Planning/2050-Water-Resources-Policy-Plan.aspx>

The issues in the Water Quality paper were outlined, primary drivers and crucial concerns identified, and recommendation areas and key messages summarized.

Bankston asked why manganese and VOCs were paired. Kostrzewski answered that they were grouped together and categorized as local water supplier concerns. PFAS is also in this category but was a large enough issue that it warranted its own section. Burman asked why there was a focus on manganese. Kostrzewski noted that water suppliers are operating



without regulation of manganese and that it is a known concern. It is included to elevate it to the legislature level. Nepl asked if lead was off the table. Kostrzewski responded that lead is a local issue and staff was trying to identify regional concerns in the policy papers.

MAWSAC was asked what, from their perspective, the Met Council should be doing to address water supply issues. Burman noted that it's not one size fits all in terms of policy and Met Council may play a different role for each contaminant. There are universal concerns and some subregional concerns that can be elevated.

The issues in the Protecting Source Water Areas paper were explained, primary drivers and crucial concerns identified, and recommendation areas and key messages summarized.

Berg noted that identifying the Met Council's niche amongst all the levels that are involved is important and recognizing whether there is a specific role or if it can just influence the connections.

Klein noted that generally people are only interested in things that directly affect them and wondered how policy can be created so that people pay attention to the effects on others outside their area. Off-site user considerations should still apply even when working with contaminants on their own property, but it's a heavy lift to get people to do so.

Ross noted that water is very cheap and if others are paying for the treatment of contamination (ie. 3M) then how do you make the argument that everyone should be concerned, especially for those on private wells. Sventek noted that there is still a need to inspect and test private wells and the areas around them need to be protected from contamination. Tapping into the information from the program requiring testing before a sale to secure financing for the home would be very useful. Huang noted that the reasoning behind tying it to financing would be good information to help identify the motivation for stakeholders with varying degrees of interest in water supply. For most people in this area, water is assumed to be available and cheap, so until there is an issue, they don't care. Education needs to be in place.

Nepl asked what the role could be for Met Council and where the expansion of existing wastewater systems makes the most sense in relation to water quality concerns. There is a disconnect between Met Council and cities regarding chloride treatment at wastewater treatment plants. The city is concerned with getting clean water to residents but has no incentive to soften the water because that is considered a Met Council problem. Lakes are becoming impaired due to regional decisions on salting, but the supply, stormwater, and wastewater treatment systems are separate. Johnson noted some cities are looking at a regional softening approach – it's expensive but there are benefits. Nepl has looked at the cost of softening or treating wastewater, but the biggest issue is chloride in the wastewater effluent. Smith noted that Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has looked closely at costs for centralized softening and it is the way to go to address the chloride problem. Thompson noted that wastewater plants don't remove salt, so that wouldn't address the chloride problem. Behavior must be addressed first.

Chair Wulff noted that people don't talk about snow removal effects on the environment and the water quality impacts of that decision. Huang noted human drivers around politics in this area. Kader shared that there was a private well forum discussion on strategies yesterday. MDH is exploring what can be done to transform what drinking water looks like over 10 years. There is a lot going on in this area right now that we can look at and learn from. Kostrzewski noted that the research papers will be going out for presentations at conferences and committee members are encouraged to share them widely from the website.

The Metro Area Water Supply Plan must be approved by MAWSAC. Committee members were asked to share with their organizations and identify any red flag items early on so the Water Resources Policy Plan has policies that work through shared feedback that occurred early.

Nepl said that wellhead protection areas incorporate much of the drinking water supply management areas, which is where we want to encourage infiltration. She asked about revising policies with technical treatment to encourage infiltration with relation to water quality



and water quantity issues. Burman noted that all stormwater is not the same and wise management goes back to the need for interagency coordination. The policy highlights that there are some regulations that overlap and are synergistic and others that overlap and get in the way of each other. There are ways to work those out and leverage that for positive impact and stormwater is one of those areas. He asked what we can do to have cleaner stormwater to start with and what can be done to allow infiltration in the areas in most need. This balance has not been figured out yet.

Policy papers have the advantage of allowing neutral highlighting of where contradictions and opportunities lie and should include lots of examples of things that work both for and against source water protection.

5. **Government Affairs and Legislative Update (Judy Sventek 651-602-1156)**

Sventek noted that \$3.75 million was requested for water sustainability and water efficiency grants and this has moved intact through conference committees. Another \$1.5 million was requested for water efficiency grants. McCarthy provided additional details on the expansion of the efficiency grants. Bankston noted that Minneapolis may be interested. St. Paul administers their program through the water utility, but Minneapolis would need to leverage it through the housing authority.

Sventek noted that there is a proposal for \$1 million for Met Council to lead a study with the Department of Health, Department of Natural Resources and affected communities determining next steps in the northeast area affected by the White Bear Lake water level issue with a deadline of 2027.

A third proposal to help communities with climate resilience was zeroed out in conference committee, so Met Council is looking for other ways to continue this work.

Next Steps

- Review by-laws, charter, and work plan and share any questions or suggestions with staff
- Share issue papers widely with colleagues and provide feedback via the website: <https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Planning/2050-Water-Resources-Policy-Plan.aspx>
- Next meeting is August 8, 2023, from 12:00-3:00pm at Metropolitan Council

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:59 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee meeting of May 9, 2023.

Approved this 8th day of August 2023.

Council contact:

Shannon Skally, Recording Secretary
Shannon.Skally@metc.state.mn.us
651-602-1011