

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Committee Members Present:

Peter Lindstrom, Chair; Kris Fredson; Phillip Sterner; Susan Vento, Wendy Wulff, Vice Chair; Raymond Zeran

Committee Members Absent:

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Lindstrom called the regular meeting of the Council's Environment Committee to order at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 with the following roll call:

Aye: 6 Lindstrom, Fredson, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran
Absent: 0

Chair's statement was read at the beginning of the meeting as follows:

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.

It was moved by Wulff, seconded by Sterner to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2022 regular meeting of the Environment Committee.

Aye: 6 Lindstrom, Fredson, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran
Nay: 0
Abstain: 0
Absent: 0

Motion carried.

CONSENT BUSINESS

None at this time

NON-CONSENT BUSINESS

2022-67: Joint Powers Agreement with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for the Watershed Outlet Monitoring Program, Contract 17G000

It was moved by Wulff, seconded by Vento, that the Metropolitan Council authorizes its Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute an amendment of contract 17G000 with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to extend

termination date to 12/31/2022 and accept Clean Water Funds from the Minnesota Legislature in the amount of up to \$100,000.

Aye: 6 Lindstrom, Fredson, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran
Nay: 0
Absent: 0

Motion carried.

INFORMATION

1. 2021 SAC Performance

Ned Smith, Director, ES Pretreatment and Finance provided an update on 2021 SAC performance. He stated 2021 was a strong year for SAC. With 26,085 units collected, it was the highest revenue ever, and the highest units collected in 35 years. The strength was led by residential development in the region, although Commercial units showed some signs of recovery from the 2020 pandemic slump. Residential growth was primarily driven by Apartments and Single-Family Home development. The high collections resulted in a year-end SAC reserve balance of \$127 million, which is more than double the minimum reserve target. The reserve will help the region weather the next recession with a delayed or no increase in per SAC unit fees (currently \$2,485).

Comments and Questions:

Chair Lindstrom commented since the SAC task force occurred, it seems like the process is working well. Staff agreed the task force occurred from 2016 to 2018. Biggest change was from net square feet to gross square foot and looking at the footprint of the building and changing the grandparent date for SAC credits from 1973 to 2009. Since implementation, phone calls have decreased. Remodels haven't resulted in any changes. Informal check ins have been done with customers at the budget forums and as we've worked through issues during the pandemic. We have met with approximately 10 communities and discussed outdoor seating. At the request of customers, we delayed charging additional SAC for temporary outdoor seating. It is anticipated this will be updated by the end of 2022.

Committee Member Wulff concurred with staff comment on outdoor seating. She stated she does not see any specific issues that need to be addressed.

Committee Member Wulff asked for clarification regarding residential development trends and whether it included rental townhouses. Staff indicated that SAC staff isn't made aware if a townhome, or other property, is built to rent or own. If the dwelling is a townhome, the unit is charged 1 SAC, even if the property is rented. It's about the number of dwelling units associated with the site. In addition, Committee Member Zeran asked if SAC changed when a mother-in-law flat or rental unit was added to a property. After the conclusion of the meeting, staff confirmed the following:

SAC Treatment of Accessory Dwelling Units (i.e., "Mother-in-law apartments")

- If stand-alone (separate, detached structure) and utilities are connected to the main home utilities and utilities are combined = no additional charge. Even if there are 2 addresses.
- If utilities are billed separately, then additional SAC is due.
- If separate structure has its own utility connection to the street, additional SAC is due.

Chair Lindstrom inquired about deferred SAC payments. Staff clarified this is still in effect. It is administered on a city by city basis and each city signs their own agreement. It is for small to medium businesses (25 SAC units or less). We have a residential deferral but is for a home that was not previously on the regional disposal system and while Lake Elmo signed up for the residential deferral program, they have not utilized it yet.

After conclusion of the meeting, staff confirmed the following:

SAC Deferrals:

- 20 cities have signed deferral agreements
- 130 current businesses have deferred SAC payments
- The median number of SAC Units deferred by businesses is 3

Committee Member Wulff stated there have been improvements in the SAC program that help customer needs, making the program fair and easy to understand. Staff has done a great job being a responsive entity. Environmental Services does a great job.

Ned Smith, Director, Pretreatment and Finance thanked Jessie Nye and her staff stating the transition to telework went flawlessly during the pandemic. There has not been any change in customer service. He appreciates Jessie's leadership and the hard work of the team.

General Manager Thompson stated we've brought flexibility to SAC within our industries related to our permitting process, what the industries are facing and finding a way to help them.

2. General Manager Report

General Manager Thompson provided a short update on the Covid wastewater research stating that we saw great potential in this work when we began; however, we didn't imagine setting such a high bar in an area of work that is breaking new ground and is so different from our normal analytical work. Establishing a great partnership with the University of Minnesota is also a great example of government helping government serve our communities better.

Interest and usefulness of this information continues to grow including the state and the Minnesota Department of Health. One of the fastest growing segments of interest is the public with another month of record-breaking for our external website in February:

- The Covid research page had 16,722 pageviews from 6037 users, far away the most visited page on the site.
- Even the homepage, which is typically the most visited page, followed by Metro Mobility and Employment- 'only' had 9867 views.

Committee Member Fredson asked if there is a plan to continue the testing program moving forward. General Manager Thompson stated interest in the data is being expressed by communities in the region, so we are looking at possibilities for future testing. If there is interest, we will take a closer look at maintaining the capability.

Additional information about the Covid wastewater research can be found at <https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Services/Wastewater-Treatment/COVID19-Research.aspx>

If Committee members have items they would like brought before this committee, please let leisa.thompson@metc.state.mn.us know.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Environment Committee Meeting of March 8, 2022.

Susan Taylor
Recording Secretary