

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

Committee Members Present:

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

Committee Members Absent:

None

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Lindstrom called the regular meeting of the Council's Environment Committee to order at 4:01 p.m. on Tuesday, June 23, 2020 with the following roll call:

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

It was moved by Wulff, seconded by Vento to approve the agenda.

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

Motion carried.

It was moved by Sterner seconded by Wulff to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2020, regular meeting of the Environment Committee.

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

Motion carried.

CONSENT BUSINESS

None at this time.

NON-CONSENT BUSINESS

1. 2020-179: Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Minneapolis

It was moved by Fredson, seconded by Zeran that the Metropolitan Council authorizes its Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Minneapolis for the construction of storm sewer improvements as part of the MCES East Isles Forcemain Replacement project.

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

Motion carried.

INFORMATION

1. Odor Control Update

Jeff Schwarz, Project Manager, Technical Services Interceptor and Lisa Wolfert, Principle Environmental Scientist, Support Services summarized progress the Environmental Services Odor Management Team has made since the Fall of 2018.

The purpose of the team is to develop new resources and procedures to improve our customer level of service. This requires communication with our customer communities, consistent odor management performance, improvement in odor complaint response procedures, and staff education on odor related issues within our system.

Questions/Comments:

Committee Member Zeran inquired how we get volunteers for the odor panels. Staff stated we have a contract with private odor lab, St. Croix Sensory in Stillwater, MN who provide certified and trained odor panelists.

Committee Member Vento asked if there are state statutes that have guidelines for odor control. Staff stated there is a state standard for hydrogen sulfide. But no longer any odor rule on the books in the state of Minnesota. The PCA handles some odor complaints but it primarily directs calls to the counties and local units of government to handle.

Chair Lindstrom asked if there are still city ordinances that need to be adhered to. Staff stated Minneapolis, Cottage Grove, and South St. Paul have specific ordinances. We are aware of and keep on top of any new ordinances that are implemented. We work with the communities to meet the ordinances.

Chair Lindstrom asked what the process was to report issues by the public. It is preferred that the public contact their city first before contacting the Council as many times the odor does not result from the Council sewer system. The [Contact Us](#) page on the external Metropolitan Council website contains a phone number the public can call for odor complaints. Staff have a list of questions they ask to help address the complaint.

Chair Lindstrom inquired if the action from the St. Croix Valley fire has been resolved successfully. Staff stated all three odor control devices have been rehabbed and two are back online. They are currently undergoing performance testing. Odor control unit #2 is currently undergoing performance testing, with #3 up next.

Committee Member Sterner asked if there was specific information on lift station 74. Is there specific information on the odor circumstances and solutions that were taken. Staff stated testing showed the unit was in need of a carbon change. It has been changed. We are now adjusting the testing schedule and working around COVID requirements for people in the field. Staff investigated for fugitive odor emissions upstream of L74 by walking that stretch and checking structures. A contract is in place that allows staff to purchase carbon media on an as-needed basis speeding up the resolution process.

2. General Manager Report

Information shared regarding the 100th day of the pandemic response. Larry Rogacki, Assistant General Manager, SSBU and ES Incident Commander and Kate Nyquist, Senior Outreach Coordinator, Technical Services presented.

March 16, 2020 – June 23, 2020 = 100 days

In this time, we have had no compliance issues, no significant staffing shortages, no impact to safety incidents. ES has had only 3 confirmed COVID cases and 3 close contacts with family members. Testing availability and CDC guidance updates will continue to help going forward.

Lessons learned during this time:

- Onsite employees must feel safe and protected
- We appreciate the “social” value of the workplace
- Developed flexible telework and leave policies
- Existing Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) and pandemic plans were good to have
- Frequent, timely focused communication is critical
- Collaboration among multiple departments, obtained perspectives and roles
- We have well-positioned technology to support the telework practices

New Ways of Working:

- Social distancing and mask wearing protect employees, co-workers and families.
- Pre-entry screening protects our staff.
- An online tool is used for mass communication.
- Pandemic-specific newsletters keep people informed.
- MS Teams and WebEx are more accepted for meetings.
- Town Halls have been scheduled and offer great opportunities to connect with employees.
- We have opportunities to conduct more video communications that are yet to be discovered.

It’s all about the people. ES has been recognizing efforts of staff during the pandemic. Examples were shared. One way to think of Environmental Services is “Pipes, Pumps, and People.”

Chair Lindstrom is amazed at the work we do.

Committee Member Zeran stated he would expect a reduction in accidents as staff have a heightened sense of safety. The culture is positive and comes through in the presentations. It’s bringing people in and supported in their jobs.

Committee Member Zeran asked if the additional use of disinfectants has had an impact on the influent what is coming into the plants. Does it change the chemistry? Staff stated it is insignificant and no impact.

Leisa shared that she has gratitude and pride in our workforce. It persisted through the chaos experienced and shown up in a great way with support of each other. Communicating with each other is central and important. We are in a good place to do good things in the Council and Region.

Several staff participated in a webinar on efforts to increase diversity and inclusion within Environmental Services. It was at maximum capacity for participants. We will queue it up as an information item at an upcoming meeting. Eight to ten of our employees presented at the webinar called, “Utility Workforce Diversity.” Chair Lindstrom shared highlights for him including Suidi Hashi, Assistant Outreach Coordinator who was part of the Urban Scholars Internship program and has now become a fulltime employee.

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 5:04 p.m.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Environment Committee Meeting of June 23, 2020.

Susan Taylor
Recording Secretary