



MEETING NOTES 2050 WATER POLICY PLAN UPDATE ADVISORY GROUP March 19, 2024

ATTENDANCE

Members Present:

Scott Anderson
Bryan Bear
Charlie Howley
Laura Jester
Russ Matthys
Richard McCoy
Racquel Vaske

Absent:

Phil Belfiori
Andy Brotzler
Paul Carpenter
Brian Dodds
Tim Kelly
Jennifer Levitt
Paul Moline
Nick Tomczik
Tom Wesolowski

Bruce Westby
James Wisker

Staff:

Steve Christopher
Kyle Colvin
Jen Kostrzewski
Emily Schon
Shannon Skally
Judy Sventek

WELCOME

Steve Christopher welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda. Jen Kostrzewski outlined the next steps in the outreach and review process. She asked whether the group would be comfortable as a next step reviewing the complete draft of the Water Policy Plan and providing written edits, feedback, and approval to release the Draft Water Policy Plan for public comment. She noted that MAWSAC will also need to approve the Metro Area Water Supply Plan portion of the Water Policy Plan for public comment and the full Metropolitan Council will also need to approve it for public comment. The Council will approve the public hearing 45 days before it happens. Once the public hearing date is approved, the public hearing can be held thirty days after that date. The public record will remain open for 10 days after the formal public hearing. The hearing is expected to occur this fall. There will also be a public hearing at an Environment Committee meeting.

Jester asked what the engagement with cities and watersheds will look like. Kostrzewski responded there will be four workshops in different areas of the metro. The workshops will include a presentation and a gallery walk of all the policies. There will be breakout sessions for participants to provide feedback on a subset of policies. A virtual info session is also being planned for agencies and the public. Dates for all the engagements are still being determined.

DRAFT WATER POLICY PLAN POLICIES

Regional Wastewater Service Area

The Water Advisory Group provided the following comments:

- Howley noted that the top two were externally focused.
- Anderson noted that source water protection is shown as a desired outcome and asked if there should be something tied more specifically to water supply. There has been a lot of talk about looking at water availability when making decisions on development and redevelopment locations.

- Bear asked for clarification of what “source water protection” encompasses. He asked it if would be protecting the groundwater from contamination or from use. Kostrzewski responded that it would be protecting groundwater from contamination and also protecting groundwater recharge areas. He noted that source water could be argued to cover all water.
- Vaske asked if, tied to the OneWater concept, the idea here is to keep source water in mind as wastewater decisions are being made. Colvin noted that it is more related to land use and operational decisions.
- Vaske asked how the interests of the current service base are being protected as the system expands, particularly level of service and maintenance.
- Within the Urban Service Area section, the term ‘environmentally sound’ is used. Is this intended to be ‘sustainable’?

Regional Wastewater Operation and Finance

The Water Advisory Group provided the following comments:

- The definition of “resource recovery” was requested. Kostrzewski noted that the wastewater treatment plants are in the process of changing names. Vaske asked if the public will still connect with the main activity at the plants.
- Jester noted that there isn’t anything related to what is treated, treatment goals, etc. Kostrzewski responded that what is being treated for is an on-going and often changing conversation with MPCA and that information is found in the permits.
- A hyper-link to the SAC rules and other rules would be imbedded in the Water Policy Plan and these rules have their own task force reviews that happen before they are implemented.
- On the reconveyance item, Anderson asked if there are provisions that prevent recycling something past its useful life. Colvin noted that there is a provision in statute to prevent this.
- Howley asked what the metric is to evaluate customer satisfaction with the levels of service. Colvin noted that there have been past infrequent surveys and the annual budget review. Can link to the level of service survey.
- Liquid hauler disposal sites. Plan to provide more service in outlying areas.
- Expansion will be planned. When population and growth require it.

Inflow & Infiltration

Kostrzewski and Colvin gave a brief history of the need and development of the program. It was recommended to start a program that offers dedicated funding to address I/I for private property. The Water Advisory Group provided the following comments:

- Howley noted a missing key desired outcome – I/I is reduced from year to year
- Pull lead project out as a specific mention and instead use it as an example in the text.
- Vaske asked how Met Council would be removing 1500 lead lines. Colvin noted that prioritization of work on the wastewater system could be done if it was in conjunction with a water supply project.
- McCoy asked if the Met Council program is primarily concerned with the sewer system. Colvin noted that for the I/I program yes. McCoy noted that they’ve seen more problems with drain tiles/cross-connected drain tiles.

- Anderson noted that the private grant program is small compared to the need.
- Vaske noted that a partial grant could run into equity issues. Schon noted that there are some full grants that cities can award based on their equity criteria.
- “Deferment of capital investment” should be more along the lines of using investments wisely. Example language: ‘Better utilization of capital funds’.

Water Sector Workforce Development

The Water Advisory Group provided the following comments:

- Vaske asked what “policies” mean to the Met Council organization. Kostrzewski noted that a policy, internally, allows for further research and exploration. Externally, the cities’ comprehensive plans are reviewed and required to be in compliance with the policies of the Met Council.
- Kostrzewski asked if the Met Council should have a workforce policy. The consensus from attendees is that it should
- Matthys noted that Met Council could work in partnership with other entities that already have programs
- Howley noted that the messaging and selling the connection between the resource that people love and the work that needs to be done to protect it could be strengthened and promoted.
- Vaske noted that Met Council has the opportunity to bring many efforts together and she likes how it’s been left broad.
- Vaske notes that she’s worried that the policy sounds like Met Council is committing to fix the entire water sector when all it can do is collaborate and connect
- The word ‘stable’ within the policy statement implies that they will remain with the same organization.
- Change ‘water treatment operations’ to ‘water operations’ within policy statement.
- There is preference within the Desired Outcomes section to have some priority ranking.
- Within Desired Outcomes, include add collaboration with others
- Science Museum Summer Program was used as a positive example
- Regional hiring helps to match candidates with employment in the region. SPRWS has a surplus of applicants.
- Under Desired Outcomes, connect recreation love with job outcomes. ‘If you like to fish, maybe become an operator...’
- Amplify existing programs that target adults as well as get connected with kids and start younger.

Kostrzewski thanked the Water Advisory Group for its time, work, and feedback.

Bear noted that he felt that this effort hit the right tone. He said that the worry is always that the Met Council would be too overbearing and prescriptive to the communities.

Kostrzewski said that there may be some additional specific requests of a portion of the Water Advisory Group members (watersheds, water supply, etc.) and that there would be a follow up email with the entire Water Policy Plan draft.

Sventek noted that once the advisory group sees everything, if they feel there is a need for a meeting for further discussion before they are comfortable releasing the draft Water Policy Plan for public comment, then a meeting would be scheduled.

NEXT STEPS AND ACTION ITEMS

Kostrzewski noted that next steps include:

- Send out notes to other participants so others can add their comments or additional comments can be added.
- A draft of the Water Policy Plan will be distributed in the upcoming weeks

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:43 p.m.

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