

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA WATER SUPPLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAWSAC)

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

Committee Members Present:

Wendy Wulff, Chair; Jeff Berg; Mark Daleiden; John "Jack" Gleason; Valerie Grover; Mike Huang; Phil Klein; Susan Morris; Catherine Neuschler; Jamie Schurbon; Kevin Watson; Tonja West-Hafner

Committee Members Absent:

Sandeep Burman; Annika Bankston; Brad Larson; Michael Robinson; Patrick Shea; Lisa Volbrecht

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Wulff called the regular meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Council Water Supply Advisory Committee to order at 1:03 p.m. on Tuesday, May 18, 2021.

READING OF EXECUTIVE ORDER STATEMENT

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 meetings for reasons stated in the Governor's Emergency Executive Order. 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 JOINT COMMITTEE WORKSHOP NOTES

Without objection the agenda was approved.

It was moved by Klein, seconded by Huang to approve the workshop notes of the March 23, 2021 joint workshop of the Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee. Motion carried.

INFORMATION

1. Recommendations: Water Quality and Contamination

Emily Steinweg, Senior Engineer, Water Supply Planning shared a presentation of background information which supports committee member discussion related to water quality and contamination, both current and emerging. This presentation supports MAWSAC's responsibility to report to the Metropolitan Council and MN Legislature in 2022 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. The presentation introduced draft recommendations for MAWSAC describing the challenge, a high-level goal, and some recommendation for actions to achieve the goal. The language shared with MAWSAC was developed based on past committee and water supply stakeholder conversations as well as interviews with some MAWSAC and Water Supply Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members. The TAC reviewed the draft and provided input at their last meeting. As part of the presentation, MAWSAC member Catherine Neuschler spoke about their experiences related to the topic; a brief committee discussion followed.

Comments and Questions:

- Committee Member Larson was unable to join the meeting. In his absence Emily Steinweg shared his feedback. Savage has been doing evaluations of their water, with some PFAS detected in drinking water supplies, but within the regulatory guidelines. As such, they are working on the public perception of the nearby landfills and water quality. Additional information is available in the notes from the TAC meeting from April 20, 2021. Additional questions can be directed to Committee Member Larson.
- Committee Member Neuschler shared the MPCA perspective. Her overview centered on the conceptual idea about contaminants of emerging concern and the process by which they progress from emerging to being regulated. They currently do not have a systematic way to evaluate, monitor and make the decision to move a chemical of emerging concern to a regulated place.
- Committee Member Klein asked how we determine what a bad chemical is and if the chemicals tested intensively to determine if there is health risk to the community before their use. Committee Member Neuschler shared there is a Toxic Substances Control Act which provides the initial risk review of new chemicals as they come into commerce, and to rereview chemicals which have been complaints. There is complexity to the law, which, unfortunately, has loopholes and exemptions for chemicals that are not used on a large scale.
- Committee Member Klein posed the question of how much is considered unsafe for chemicals when being consumed by our community members. Committee Member Neuschler noted that the toxicity levels are chemical specific; and, that we must consider toxicity levels when going through the review process of new, and already in-use, chemicals.
- Committee Member Klein inquired about what other industrialized countries are doing to mitigate their infiltration of chemicals. Committee Member Neuschler was unable to answer that specifically noting that Europe has different chemical safety laws, utilizing a more precautionary regulatory framework where chemicals must be proven safe rather than unsafe. Committee Member Klein expressed that if we can prevent or mitigate toxic chemical presence in the system it would alleviate many of the problems we are encountering.
- Committee Member Huang explained there are two ways of how to look at chemicals that are potentially harmful. First, there are those chemicals which are listed or tracked by agencies such as the EPA or FDA; these agencies have built-in frameworks to gauge each chemical's toxicity which would inform our surveillance and how we track them in our ecosystem. The second category of newer chemicals are those which are not tracked or regulated by other agencies, and that we should create a framework by which we evaluate whether they are chemicals we want to manage.
- Committee Member Daleiden asked what results they have had with the lined versus unlined landfills. Committee Member Neuschler noted the Pollution Control Agency has done monitoring for PFAS, dioxane and newer contaminants, and are working on what makes sense in regard to monitoring active landfills. Committee Member Daleiden asked if the landfills were clay or membrane lined. Committee Member Neuschler said she did not have that information readily available.
- Committee Member Huang brought up a challenge one of his colleagues in Brooklyn Park is facing, which is that some water sources are relatively shallow and infiltration time of chemicals into the water supply is short. Not having funding available to build the necessary infrastructure to mitigate these factors in a timely fashion is of concern to this community.
- Committee Member Schurbon asked where we look for contaminants, in addition to the typical hotspots such as landfills and industrial sites; his concern being whether we need to be broader in our search. Committee Member Neuschler provided background information regarding the surveillance monitoring for surface water done by the EPA. They follow a 5-year cycle for their national aquatic survey, alternating between monitoring rivers and streams, lakes, and wetlands.

The statistical representation of contaminants of emerging concern in the surface water are documented. The EPA also tests the ambient groundwater network from around the state.

2. Group exercise using Mural, digital workspace for visual collaboration

Committee members participated in a feedback exercise related to water quality and contamination. Members reviewed a draft problem statement and were asked to share their level of support on a scale of 1-8 (1 = no support, 8 = full endorsement). In addition, they shared what would help them support the draft problem statement and flagged suggestions for prioritization. Finally, committee members reviewed the actions proposed as described in draft language that was provided. They made recommendations for proposed actions and organized them on a scale according to ease of implementation versus impact.

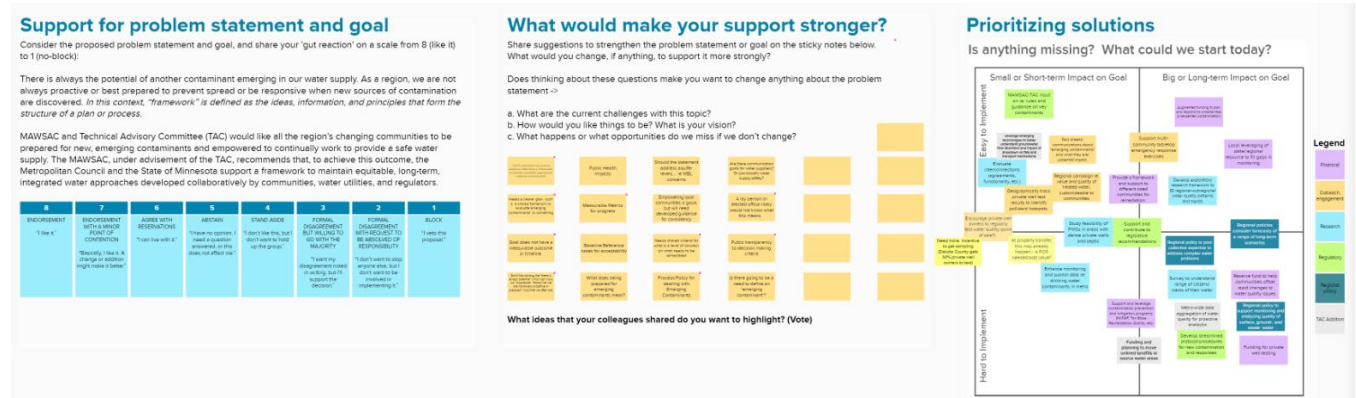


Figure 1: Illustration of MAWSAC Mural board supporting group discussion

Committee members were asked to read the draft problem and goal statement. In a sticky dot exercise, they were then asked to share their support for the current wording on a scale of 8 to 1 (8 = strong support, 1 = against it). 10 members participated, although 3 members selected text instead of the number scale.

- 3 members selected 8: Endorsement, "I like it"
- 2 members selected 5: Abstain "I have no opinion, I need a question answered, or this does not affect me"
- 1 member selected 4: Stand aside, "I don't like this, but I don't want to hold up the group"
- 1 member selected 2: Formal disagreement with request to be absolved of responsibility "I don't want to stop anyone else, but I don't want to be involved in implementing it"

Committee members were then asked what they would change to make their support stronger. Then they were asked to use sticky dots to highlight comments they want to focus on. They offered the following suggestions:

- Process/Policy for dealing with Emerging Contaminants (highlighted by 3 members)
- Goal does not have a measurable outcome or timeline (highlighted by 3 members)
- Needs a clearer goal - such as "a shared framework to evaluate emerging contaminants" or something (highlighted by 3 members)
- A lay person or elected official likely would not know what this means (highlighted by 2 members)
- Don't like wording like "there is always potential" which can imply low importance. Words like "we are not always proactive or prepared" imply that we often are. (highlighted by 2 members)

- I don't understand the second sentence. How does a "framework to maintain equitable approaches" relate to contaminants? (highlighted by 2 members)
- Measurable Metrics for progress (highlighted by 1 member)
- Needs shared criteria for what is a level of concern on what needs to be remediated (highlighted by 1 member)
- Public transparency to decision making criteria (highlighted by 1 member)
- Public Health Impacts
- Baseline/Reference cases for acceptability
- What does being prepared for emerging contaminants mean?
- Should the statement address aquifer levels.... i.e. WBL concerns?
- Empowering local communities is good, but will need developed guidance for consistency
- Are there communication goals for water suppliers? Or just actually water supply/safety?
- Is there going to be a need to define an "emerging contaminant"?

Comments and Questions:

- Committee Member Berg did not have further feedback and stated it looks good.
- Chair Wulff as well as Committee Members Gleason, Huang, and Morris did not have further feedback.
- Committee Members Grover, Klein and Schurbon noted funding concerns, as well as policy and procedures to test for and mitigate contamination.
- Committee Members Neuschler and West-Hafner noted the need to get clear on definitions (emerging contaminants, new contaminants, and a clear scope of work for the committee).

NEXT STEPS

1. Staff begin drafting MAWSAC report using committees' input (due early 2022)
 - Email Catherine Neuschler (catherine.neuschler@state.mn.us), Brad Larson (blarson@ci.savage.mn.us), Lanya Ross (Lanya.Ross@metc.state.mn.us), or Emily Steinweg (Emily.Steinweg@metc.state.mn.us) with further questions.
2. MAWSAC members update agency leaders to expect a report with this information
3. Plan for 7/20/21 meeting (topic: intersection of land use and water supply)

Several committee members expressed that the Mural platform was a useful tool during today's session.

Current Recording Secretary, Susan Taylor introduced Tessa Wegenke who will be taking over the role of Recording Secretary for this committee going forward. Susan Taylor will be stepping back to focus on other initiatives and appreciates the lift this will bring to the support of this committee. Thank you to Susan Taylor who has supported this committee for the past 7 years.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Susan Taylor
Recording Secretary