

Minutes

Environment Committee



Meeting Date: August 23, 2022

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members Present:

Chair, Peter Lindstrom D11
 Vice Chair, Wendy Wulff D16

Raymond Zeran, District 9
 Susan Vento, District 11

Kris Fredson, District 14
 Phillip Sterner, District 15
 = present, E = excused

Call to Order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Lindstrom called the regular meeting of the Environment Committee to order at 4:00 p.m.

Agenda Approved

Approved by consensus.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Vice Chair (VC) Wulff, seconded by Committee Member (CM) Sterner to approve the minutes of the August 9, 2022 regular meeting of the Environment Committee. **Motion carried.**

Consent Business

- 1) **2022-236: Uniform Rental Services Program, Contract 22P097** (John Young, 651-602-8281)
Proposed action: That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute contract 22P097 with City Laundry Company to provide uniform rental services at MCES facilities for an amount not to exceed \$647,633.
- 2) **2022-229 JT: Bayport Comprehensive Sewer Plan, Review File 22164-1** (Kyle Colvin, 651-602-1151)
Proposed action: That the Metropolitan Council adopt the provided Review Record and take the recommended actions provided by the Community Development and Environment Committees.
- 3) **2022-230 JT: Willernie Comprehensive Sewer Plan, Review File 22226-1** (Kyle Colvin, 651-602-1151)
Proposed action: That the Metropolitan Council adopt the provided Review Record and take the recommended actions provided by the Community Development and Environment Committees.

It was moved by CM Fredson, seconded by VC Wulff. **Motion carried.**

Non-Consent Business

None at this time.

Information

- 1) **The Heart of the MCES Vision & Mission** (Deb McKinley, 651-602-1035)
Deb McKinley, manager of programs and administration, presented on behalf of a 40-person, cross-divisional team which was called to the task of updating the MCES Mission and Vision.

Mission: We partner, plan and provide services to protect our region's water.

Vision: Clean water for future generations

Team members spoke toward the impact of participating in this undertaking, and how they and their team

members can see themselves and their work reflected in these updated statements. Guest speakers:

Mark Gardner, business unit coordinator, Treatment Services - Seneca Operations

Mark has worked at the Seneca Plant in Eagan, having moved up through the organization. He was honored to be part of the committee and appreciated the variety of roles represented. Through this work, he now sees himself in the mission and vision; it's not about meeting the permits – the complexity of the work is about meeting the mission. He commended his crews for the incredible and selfless work while when they waited for a replacement serpentine belt, having to manually remove solids and debris from the grates.

Don Kiserow, lead electrician, Maintenance & Security

Don volunteered – rather than having been asked – to be part of the committee. He wanted to acknowledge the shift toward having all voices represented at the table for the important revisioning work, especially our trades personnel (electricians, machinists, pipe fitters, painters, etc.). He was honored to be a bridge between our trades people, managers and leadership of the organization; the interchange of knowledge is valuable and allows us to continually improve our work and impact.

Mallory Vanous, assistant manager, Lab Services - Operations Support Services

Mallory noted that passion brought forward by those who participated was inspiring; the use of the action words made the mission alive and made her able to see herself and her work, along with her colleagues, reflected within it.

Questions and Discussion

VC Wulff asked if the workers who had selflessly stepped-up at the Seneca plant during the equipment failure knew how appreciated their work was. Staff replied that they had been recognized by everyone via emails, newsletters, and other communications.

CM Sterner expressed gratitude for the work our operators and other trades people accomplish daily, and how important their work is to the health of the region.

General Manager Leisa Thompson noted that servant leadership is the model we are trying to stand up and use more within our organization, and how the work of those who presented in the meeting is inspirational.

CM Fredson thanked the members for sharing their stories. He was heartened by the culture of connection and commitment, to the work and the sense of family.

VC Wulff noted she is the longest sitting Council member (ca. 2009). Since her appointment to the Council, Environmental Services (ES) and partaking in this committee have been the highlights of her work. She wanted to let the presenters know how honored she is to be working with all of ES.

2) **Regional Chloride Trends on Metro Area Streams** (Cassie Champion, 651-602 8745; Hong Wang, 651-602-1079)

Cassie Champion and Hong Wang, principal environmental scientists, provided an in-depth overview of their research on chloride trends in Metro Area Streams. Data collected by the Met Council over the last two decades was used for this assessment. Results clearly show that chloride levels have increased in the Twin Cities streams that were part of this study. The data studied annual chloride concentration levels and trends for 18 streams in the seven-county metropolitan area. The recently published report, Regional Assessment of Chloride in Select Twin Cities Metro Streams (1999 – 2019), reveals that nearly all the streams are experiencing rising chloride levels. A quick-reference fact sheet (appendix to minutes), Rising Chloride Levels in Local Streams, was also created by this team. Some highlights from their research:

- a) Chloride is a permanent and pervasive pollutant.
- b) The majority of chloride comes from de-icing salt
- c) Chloride naturally exists in low concentrations; humans have caused a huge influx in a short amount of time
- d) Although some water pollutants have subsided in the last 20 years, chloride has increased (except in Carver Creek)
- e) In order to inspire action to alleviate chloride pollution, the Metropolitan Council shared this information with our partners and stakeholders.

Questions and Discussion

VC Wulff asked:

- If a homeowner has a water softener would the outdoor sources for watering lawns and gardens would also be softened. Staff replied softened water is usually only directed to the appliances to which it is relevant; it would not include their irrigation systems.
- What are the efforts being taken to improve water softening pollution, and if centralized softening is one approach. Staff agreed that there is a two-pronged approach, with homeowner efforts and centralized softening. Centralized softening occurs in 11 communities in the region.

CM Fredson inquired regarding the objective of outreach efforts to cities and counties, whether they were to make changes to their public works processes or to educate homeowners to use alternatives. Staff replied that given the issues has been identified both options are a great start, noting there are additional state and local initiatives:

- Smart Salt Training
- Using less and different products for de-icing products
- Limited liability legislation (to reduce the risk of lawsuits on private property if someone slips and falls. If properly trained, liability would be limited which encourage business owners not to over salt to avoid slips)

CM Sterner noted the trend is slowing down over the last 5 years and inquired as to if the researchers saw a similar trend continuing given the data until 2019 was the last year included. Staff replied there are variables which may have impact the data in future studies such as for drier years, like we have seen in the last few, we may be seeing a smaller impact of chloride due to the reduced use of salt for deicing.

Chair Lindstrom asked about the negative ramifications to the flora and fauna in the region. Staff noted that when we reach levels of impairment, which we have in areas, it is toxic to many animals. An example of what takes place is that amphibian eggs are dry up and in the worst-case flora and fauna die; it affects different groups in various ways.

Although lakes were not included in this research, the impact to lakes – as their bodies do not flow – is severe. The chloride sinks to the bottom and given we do not have the technology to remove chloride from our water(s) cost effectively it will continue to accumulate and impact the health of fish and their food sources in our lakes. Given the attention being directed at this pervasive issue now we can take precautions and work toward finding innovative solutions.

Reports

General Managers Report

General Manager Leisa Thompson noted that the situation with the sewers surrounding the University of Minnesota is considered well under control. We are leading the investigation with MPCA. We are also working with the Governor's Office, surveillance, and quick-response teams. They are all petroleum-based sources that are unique to each instance.

Nneka Onah, executive assistant to the general manager, will become the recording secretary to the Environment Committee.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Environment Committee meeting of August 23, 2022.

Council Contact:

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