



MEETING NOTES 2050 WATER RESOURCES POLICY PLAN UPDATE ADVISORY GROUP November 6, 2023

ATTENDANCE

Members Present:

Scott Anderson
Bryan Bear
Phil Belfiori
Paul Carpenter
Becky Christopher
Charlie Howley
Laura Jester
Jennifer Levitt
Russ Matthys
Richard McCoy
Paul Moline
Pat Shea
Vanessa Strong

Tom Wesolowski

Absent:

Andy Brotzler
Bryan Dodds
Bruce Elder
Tim Kelly
Nick Tomczik
Bruce Westby
James Wisker

Staff:

Walter Atkins
Steve Christopher

John Clark
Kyle Colvin
Emma de Villa
Maureen Hoffman
Henry Holcomb
Jen Kader
Jen Kostrzewski
Henry McCarthy
Sam Paske
Lanya Ross
Emily Schon
Shannon Skally
Judy Sventek
Laura Wagner

WELCOME

Judy Sventek welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda. Steve Christopher was introduced as the new co-lead for the group. General introductions were made.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDE CONTENT

Jen Kostrzewski provided an overview of the development process for the current working versions of the regional values, vision, and shared goals.

The Regional Values that guide all aspects of the Regional Development Plan:

- Equity
- Leadership
- Accountability
- Stewardship

The Regional Vision includes the following aspects:

- Orderly development of the region
- Infrastructure and services are economical and support a high quality of life
- Resilient to a changing climate
- Natural resources and parks are abundant and preserved for future generations

The Regional Goals with which the Water Policy Plan team is trying to align policies and objective:

- Our region is equitable and inclusive
- Our communities are healthy and safe

- Our region is dynamic and resilient
- We lead on addressing climate change
- We protect and restore natural systems

Met Council is working with Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) to integrate an equity framework into the Regional Development Guide:

- Creating solutions that are commensurate with what cause the inequity
- Ensuring solutions address systemic inequity
- Working with the population negatively affected by inequity to co-create solutions

The authoring team was introduced and the context of other input avenues with Met Council were summarized.

WATER POLICY PLAN DRAFT TABLE OF CONTENTS AND OBJECTIVES

Jen Kostrzewski shared the background and purpose of the Water Policy Plan and the more integrated approach being taken with the Water Policy Plan for this update. This includes integrating the Metro Area Water Supply Plan into the Water Policy Plan. MAWSAC is still the approving body for the Metro Area Water Supply Plan. The proposed table of contents includes:

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| • Introduction | • Goals and objectives |
| • Regional Development Guide connection to water | • Policies and strategies |
| • Metropolitan Council Environmental Services principles and roles | • Regional wastewater system plan |
| • Regional water context | • Metro Area Water Supply Plan |
| • Problem identification | • Local water plan requirements |
| | • Data appendices |

Vanessa Strong noted that there have been questions from citizens and other local leaders regarding misconceptions that Met Council wants to take more direct oversight of water supply planning. She noted that this confusion seems to be springing from this integration effort with the plans.

Foundational Work upon which the Water Policy Plan will be built:

- Actions in the Water Policy Plan will be presented through the Partner, Plan, Provide framework articulated in the Environmental Services Mission Statement.
- Feedback from Water Advisory Groups
- Water Policy research papers and feedback: <https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Planning/2050-Water-Resources-Policy-Plan/Research.aspx>
- MAWSAC/TAC goals

Six objectives from which policies in the Water Policy Plan will be developed:

- Achieve sustainable waters
- Reduce climate impacts
- Maximize and identify regional water infrastructure investments
- Sustainably fund water protection and planning efforts

- Protect public health and ecosystem health
- Ensure that equitable water benefits and service are accessible and shared among all residents and communities

Participants were asked to share their impressions and feedback on the six objective areas in a [Mural brainstorm](#).

Discussion included the following:

- Scott Anderson noted that what the communities responsibilities are and what the Met Council's responsibilities are is a little fuzzy. He's looking to discern what the community will have to do. Jen Kostrzewski responded that there will be more detailed actions presented at future meetings, but this is a preliminary high-level framing of the plan.
- Paul Moline asked for clarification about what Met Council considers a "significant investment in stormwater". Jen Kostrzewski noted that with the wording sometimes 'we' means the region and sometimes 'we' means Met Council. The authors will work to make a clear distinction because stormwater is different than wastewater. Being clear about roles as the policy language is written is important to know who is accountable for what and who to contact for follow up in a specific area.
- Laura Jester is struggling to figure out where surface waters belong. The phrasing 'sustainable waters' feels like water supply. Ecosystem and public health contains wording about sustainable waters. Jen Kostrzewski noted that the objectives are high level so if not seeing it there they can be refined but it will become clearer with actual policies.
- Phil Belfiori agrees with separation of the objectives for #1 but would like more specifics. He suggested considering separating 'sustainable waters' into two objectives to bring that forward - groundwater quality and quantity. Lanya Ross requested clarification on why it would need to be split. Laura Jester noted that "sustainable" indicates groundwater and drinking water but doesn't connect with surface waters and asked if "water quality" could be a replacement for the word "sustainable".
- Charlie Howley noted that using sustainability for surface waters is possible but is a challenge and requires more thinking. He also noted that localized flooding needs to be addressed with climate change. This relates to safety and transportation systems for heavy rain events. Additionally, "Infrastructure" and "Funding" seem to be the same thing. He suggested looking at infrastructure with an asset management focus as opposed to an investment focus (which would fall under the Funding objective).
- Vanessa Strong noted that drinking water and wastewater are specific products and water resources encompasses something more, so including them all as a list it doesn't jibe for her. Climate is large and multi-limbed. She noted that they can't always talk about 'climate change' to their committees. It would be useful to identify barriers and how we can facilitate having those conversations. Sustainability/protecting our water resources need to address those outside of the state as well (i.e., those that want to take the water outside of the state). The plan should address this somewhere in the objectives in some way.
- Russ Matthys suggested adding 'surface' in front of water resources to address Vanessa's concern and agrees with Charlie Howley's other points.

- Becky Christopher noted she was happy to see climate show up at the high levels. She noted that the objectives feel like the right things to prioritize and the picture will become clearer when the plan gets down to the actions.
- Scott Anderson elaborated on the infrastructure and funding approach – asset management, infrastructure renewal, funding needed. He noted that as we get better tools and a handle on infrastructure renewal, what becomes apparent are dramatic dollar needs. He cautioned not to underestimate these costs as they are huge and going up. He also noted that as we promote conservation and look for ways to reduce water use to be mindful that this is the revenue stream for cities, so that revenue must be recouped somewhere else. He was glad to see equity reflected in the plan. He is hoping Met Council can help figure out the equity piece on a regional level because without granular data, it's difficult to figure out. He asked how to deal with affordable drinking water considering the competing priorities.
- Jennifer Levitt noted that they don't need help with tools, it's just that the rate that the end user pays is contingent on infrastructure needs long term. Most funding assistance is towards new or improved infrastructure but there's not much funding/support to maintain what is already there. If water resources are being thought of as assets, how can we maintain them? We should think broadly about this.
- Russ Matthys noted that they consider assets as lakes, wetlands, and surface water resources. Often infrastructure gets installed by developers or someone besides the LGU who then becomes responsible for them. Practitioners are reactive and don't have time to think about them. Few people fully understand all the assets they are responsible for and once they get a handle on that, there is no way they can afford to take care of them all.

Jen Kostrzewski noted that the Mural will be open for a couple of weeks for any additions advisory group members may wish to add and that input via email and phone calls is also encouraged. She acknowledged that it's a struggle that we stopped at the objective level today and that when we get to policies and actions, we can really clarify who will be doing what.

NEXT STEPS AND ACTION ITEMS

Kyle Colvin summarized the progress made and overall project timeline. He noted that the next step is to continue drafting policy and actions through 2023 and into 2024. In June 2024, we will begin to revise and finalize content to go out for public comment.

- If there are any upcoming events or gatherings that would be good forums as outreach for the Research Papers, please contact Jen Kostrzewski (jennifer.kostrzewski@metc.state.mn.us) or Shannon Skally (shannon.skally@metc.state.mn.us).
- The Mural will remain open for additional feedback. (<https://app.mural.co/t/metcouncils5702/m/metcouncils5702/1684879169687/745cb3d042bce2d23254da00057c17b779573db7?sender=jenniferkostrzewski2240>)
- Research Papers will continue to be posted on the website as they become available, so please share widely with contacts in your networks and encourage them to provide comments. (<https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Planning/2050-Water-Resources-Policy-Plan.aspx>)
- The next meeting will be in-person in late January or early February to review draft policy. A Doodle poll will follow this winter to identify a date.

Action Items:

1. Need for Council to clarify role in water supply area of WPP in response to concerns expressed
2. Get additional information on where concerns voiced by Vanessa Strong are coming from and their context
3. Developing distinction in use of the word “we” regarding regional vs. Met Council
4. Developing a better definition of word “water” regarding surface and groundwater
5. Sustainability related to climate

Paul Moline suggested that the authors consider adding another objective concerning collaboration. A strong statement, up front, to make water planning and coordination as simple and straightforward as possible.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:57p.m.

Shannon Skally
Recording Secretary
Shannon.Skally@metc.state.mn.us