

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Mears Park Centre, 230 E. 5th St., St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

Meeting of the METROPOLITAN AREA WATER SUPPLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

June 22, 2006

Committee Members / Alternates Present:	Peter Bell, Chair Bev Aplikowski Dennis Berg Tom Furlong Chuck Haas Joe Harris James Japs Greg Buzicky Peggy Leppik Linda Loomis Karla Peterson Barry Stock	Metropolitan Council City of Arden Hills, Mayor Anoka County, Commissioner City of Chanhassen, Mayor City of Hugo, Council Member Dakota County, Commissioner DNR, Assistant Director-Waters Department of Agriculture, Director Metropolitan Council Member City of Golden Valley, Mayor Dept of Health, Senior Engineer City of Savage, Administrator
Committee Members Absent::	Sheryl Corrigan	PCA, Commissioner

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bell called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Bell remarked that today's agenda primarily is the consolidated report from the three outreach meetings that were held in May and June and to bridge that information into some discussion into what the final report to the legislature will look like. Activities to date have been the information gathering phase - the Committee's next focus will be making some policy recommendations and starting the process of framing our report. The June 22, 2006 agenda and the May 25, 2006 minutes were accepted.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Chair Bell suggested that Committee members funnel media contacts, i.e. major daily newspapers, through his office. If notified, his office will assist Committee members with community newspaper contacts by providing press packets and talking points.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE SCHEDULE UPDATE

Keith Buttleman, Assistant General Manager, Environmental Quality Assurance, pointed out that the Committee is on schedule. The Committee reviewed the updated schedule, and noted that meetings will be held in August and October.

Mr. Haas asked if a draft legislative report will be available for review at outreach programs similar to the recent workshops. Due to time constraints, it was decided that the draft report will be emailed to those who attended the workshops.

WATER SUPPLY WORKSHOPS RECAP AND DISCUSSION

Trudy Richter, Richardson Richter & Associates, reported that the three workshops were attended by 115 people. Federal/state/county agencies, 32 communities, watershed districts, and several other organizations were represented.

Ms. Richter explained that at each workshop, small group discussions focused on current and future concerns relative to drinking water, safety/security, funding/cost issues, and the regulatory process. The groups also considered how the region could address these concerns. Participants identified the following as being of greatest interest: data and analysis, water conservation, safety/security/reliability, regulatory process, linking land use/water supply planning, and funding. Participants urged more conservation and education about water issues, interagency cooperation and water-sharing.

The Committee reviewed each issue as follows:

Data and Analysis Concerns:

Workshop conclusions: Improve collection, sharing and analysis of data. Look at system as a whole, rather than city-by-city. Need more information about groundwater and surface water interaction. Identify groundwater recharge areas in order to better manage the resource.

Committee/Staff Discussion: Christopher Elvrum, Water Supply Planning Manager, reported that staff activities in this first phase of the project consist of: collecting a large amount of data, much of it regional; developing a database to be used as a tool to evaluate systems; and looking at water demand projections/resource availability and whether or not there may be potential limitations based on the demand projections.

Mr. Elvrum stated that this will most likely result in the need for more focused data collection in many areas. The report to the legislature will include the data gathered, as well as identify the gaps (such as groundwater and surface water monitoring data gaps) and where improvements can be made. The plan for the next phase is to focus on areas of limitations identified in first phase. Funds exist for the ongoing effort, but funding is not unlimited. It is clear data should be collected, but who should do it and pay for it? One possible role for this Committee could be to designate the data collector. The report to the legislature may include funding recommendations and direction as to responsibility for the data collection. Discussion on this will continue in upcoming meetings.

Mr. Stock commented that if the report identifies gathering as critical and makes it a recommendation, we need to make sure that the studies do not interfere with getting something accomplished at a local level and in an adequate time period.

Chair Bell asked if the issue is that municipalities gather different types of data and sometimes do not gather data since they know it will be incomplete because an adjacent community is impacting the water source. One of the items in the report is to debate the question of should we have a centralized, regional data gathering point on drinking water issues.

Mr. Buttleman agreed with Chair Bell's assessment. At the workshops there was discussion about the role of individual cities performing individual studies on a case-by-case basis. City representatives acknowledge that this is not the kind of thing that can be done city-by-city very effectively because the aquifer does not end at the city boundaries. And to do an effective study, it is more than any one individual city can afford.

Mr. Stock gave an example of adjoining areas conducting a joint water study and the concern that once the results are forwarded to the agencies, they will decide there may be impact beyond the study and a jurisdictional review process may say more studies are required, which could prevent the original communities involved from moving forward.

Chair Bell asked for clarification of our recommendations for studies. Would one recommendation be to conduct several types of regional studies, some done quarterly, some yearly, some every 3 years? Mr. Buttleman responded yes and, in addition, there will be a 'stitching together' of all the studies that have already been done.

Mr. Japs commented that having a central depository for the data is good. He requested that staff define what types of data are being looked at.

Mr. Elvrum responded that one of the most valuable things would be to develop a comprehensive database on which to base studies. Information from additional studies would be fed into the database to continue to improve it.

Chair Bell asked if study criteria should be standardized. Mr. Elvrum explained that the regional metro groundwater model developed by PCA is the basis for a lot of the studies and its use will continue.

Mr. Furlong questioned the economic benefit from studies. Mr. Elvrum responded that there should be an economy of scale. There is a need for more regional analysis upfront and that cost might be an extra, but necessary. Detailed analysis has not been done, but conceivably there would be some savings. Mr. Furlong suggested that when we get into the analysis, look at not just the costs but where the benefits are. Mr. Buttleman noted that in the legislative process leading up to

the authorization and the charge to do this study there were questions from legislators about the economics. They reacted positively to the idea of the economies of scale realized by a regional approach rather than a fragmented approach.

Chair Bell asked whether a local community loses something from a large geographic study. A regional study is valid only if it provides useful information for local entity. Mr. Buttleman compared it to state versus local road maps. Details are different in each, but both need to match up. The larger scale provides the context that needs more refined data and analysis on a case-by-case basis at the local level. Mr. Stock stated that parameters can be developed upfront by cities in all these studies for economy of scale. He expressed concern about 'analysis paralysis' developing when the studies are complete.

Ms. Aplikowski asked where watershed districts and conservation districts fit into the data collection and review, since they are who the city really interfaces with almost immediately on a planning case. Mr. Elvrum responded that every watershed district is contacted to coordinate efforts to create a database of all monitoring locations. Mr. Buttleman added that watershed districts and generally watershed planning will have a major connection when recharge areas are discussed.

Mr. Haas commented that the needs of individual communities need to be balanced as the process of sorting through and eliminating inefficiencies is undertaken.

Chair Bell stated that an important message for staff to include in the draft report is that needless redundancy or 'paralysis by analysis' need to be avoided. We also want to make sure other stakeholders are included in the review process.

Water Conservation Concerns

Workshop conclusions: There is a lack of consistency throughout the region, and perhaps a regional standard is needed. However, it should be region or state specific. Much of the conservation information and programming comes out of southwest U.S., i.e. Nevada. Regional needs should be concentrated on. Develop best management practices, re-use, rain gardens, and landscape plans. The attendees wanted to talk about conservation and are willing to look to this committee for guidance.

Committee/Staff Discussion: Staff is summarizing community conservation practices. Most have some type of education program, and roughly half have some watering restrictions (odd/even is most common). One-third have a conservation rate structure, charging more as water use increases. A few communities have a topsoil requirement, and/or tree ordinance. Staff is also compiling information about practices in other regions and is conducting a re-use study. Information will be summarized in the report. Mr. Elvrum suggested that

the Committee consider a variety of options including: make regional conservation recommendations/policy; pursue a funding source for education, retrofit or landscape replacement programs; or recommend that the state require every community to implement conservation measures.

Ms. Leppik asked for clarification of region-specific conservation guidelines. Were workshop attendees expressing a concern that a conservation program that was completely inappropriate for this area would be imposed? Ms. Richter responded no, but they want caution in any discussion with city individuals involved with water. They want to make sure that guidelines are appropriate for Minnesota. Mr. Japs said he noticed that there was discussion about uniformity of conservation measures from one community to the next and the need for local flexibility. The concept is that if conservation is good it should be good for all of us. There is a strong link between conservation measures and the regulatory part that the committee is considering streamlining.

Ms. Leppik commented on the variation in the seven-county area and questioned if it is appropriate to have a single water conservation program, or are tailored programs are needed. Mr. Japs commented that when looking a major component, i.e. lawn watering, where peaks in a system are evident, improving the efficiencies in that area is a best management practice. Per capita use and peak demands are starkly different between metro area and outstate MN and even the core cities versus the suburban areas.

Committee members considered what constitutes a conservation measure. Some members believed odd/even watering restrictions qualify; others called that a demand management method, and considered limiting watering to a couple of times a week as a true conservation measure. It was clear that one size does not fit all, and each city tries to find its own level. Setting a regional standard that would fit everybody will be a problem.

Ms. Leppik pointed out that deciding on recommendations to take to the legislature is really presenting a challenge for the committee because it sounds as though the people who came to the workshops were very interested in having some kind of standardization of guidelines for water conservation and yet at this meeting, concerns are being voiced about standardization.

Chair Bell stated that best management practices result in financial incentive / benefit. Ms. Peterson replied that it is difficult because when less water is used it results in less income for a community, so it would probably have to charge more per gallon. However, even though the charge per gallon is more, the cost may be less, depending on usage.

Ms Aplikowski asked about the affect on commercial properties, including schools, churches, etc. They all need a lot of water, so the study should also include a point system, and education needs to get out to these groups.

Safety/Security/Reliability

Workshop conclusions: One key issue is interconnections or back up systems. Concerns expressed that some communities may not be prepared to deal with drought and that redundancies are needed. Also discussed vulnerability of water supply, identifying contaminated areas, and supply recharge.

Committee/Staff Discussion: Mr. Elvrum said that staff, in conjunction with the Department of Health is currently consolidating mapping of known contaminant plumes in region. They are looking at nonpoint or naturally occurring contaminants, i.e. arsenic and radium. Staff is also gathering information about interconnections as far as backups. Topics not brought up in the workshops that staff is examining are emergency response and quality monitoring. Safety and security will be discussed in detail at the July meeting. Most communities in the region have some interconnection with an adjoining community. However, Minneapolis and Saint Paul do not. A bonding request for interconnection between Minneapolis and Saint Paul was put on hold temporarily last year after the Governor requested that this committee review the issue. The report to legislature will include interconnection information, what communities are doing for safety and security and emergency response, what other regions have done, and best management practices. This committee could discuss a policy for interconnections, and whether should there be funding sources for safety and security issues.

Mr. Japs said another major issue to talk about is groundwater contamination mapping, particularly investigating treatment and re-use of contaminated groundwater, rather than just treatment and discharge as generally happens today. Mr. Berg suggested also looking at the value of on-site septic as a conservation measure, as water taken out of the ground is put right back through the septic system.

Regulatory Process

Workshop conclusions: Consistency and coordination among communities is needed, as well as a definition of the roles and partnership of the agencies (Met Council, DNR and MDH). Streamline the process upfront, and do not add another layer. Investigate the impact of groundwater withdrawals and understanding the consequences. There is an equity issue that needs to be dealt with – equal opportunity for limited resources.

Committee/Staff Discussion:

Further discussion clarified that the participants are looking for one process for decisions, sort of a one-stop shopping concept. It was suggested that the permit process be re-evaluated with the aim of consolidating or rearranging the steps involved to improve the speed of getting through the process. Land use / water supply planning should be linked and moved to the beginning of the process.

There is no formal guide or assistance provided for municipalities to get through the process, however, MDH and DNR are helpful.

Link Land Use/Water Supply Planning

Workshop conclusions: Standardize the balance between environmental and growth objectives.

Committee/Staff Discussion:

Mr. Haas pointed out a DNR publication that relates to the issue. Copies will be distributed at July 27th meeting.

Funding

Detailed discussion to be held at a later date.

Next Steps

Safety/Security/Reliability will be the main topic at 7/27 meeting.

Staff will: 1) capture committee discussions and present ideas to the committee for its response and revisions; 2) prepare segment on conservation, presenting options/alternative the committee might want to recommend, and 3) prepare a series of best practices that would fit this region, to be followed by a series of opportunities for the committee to respond and form policy decisions.

Mr. Berg noted that the topic of land use planning comes up quite a bit and asked if it will be part of legislative report. Mr. Elvrum responded that the committee's task is to address water supply, not land use.

Ms. Aplikowski suggested the purpose of this committee be noted on the agenda.

William Moore, General Manager, mentioned that the packet of material for today's meeting includes a draft outline of the report to the legislature, and provides a sense of the types of issues the committee will deal with in the next six months.

Mr. Elvrum reported that the consultants are on schedule and plan to have a draft report at the September meeting.

Mr. Berg suggested that the report include what is already in place, as the public does not have a good understanding of what has been done to date.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:05