

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

May 17, 2016
Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Water Planning Council Advisory Group (WPCAG or group) was held at the [Public Utility Regulatory Authority](#) (PURA), in New Britain, Connecticut.

Members Present:

Gil Bligh	City of New Britain
Virginia de Lima	USGS CT Water Science Center
Len DeJong	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
John Hudak	South Central CT Regional Water Authority
Vin Ringrose	Fisheries Advisory Council
Robert Silvestri	PSEG
Richard Sobolewski	OCC
Robert W. Wesneski	Avon Water Company
Maureen Westbrook	Connecticut Water Company

Members by Phone:

Karen Burnaska	Endangered Lands Coalition/CFE
Faith Gavin Kuhn	CBIA
Margaret Miner	Rivers Alliance
Bob Young	Middletown Water & Sewer Department

Other Attendees:

Steve Anderson	DoAg
Tom Caruso	PURA
Betsy Gara	CWWA
Gail Lucchina	PURA
Nick Neeley	PURA
Martha Smith	West River Watershed Coalition
Lori Vitagliano	South Central CT Regional Water Authority
Bruce Wittchen	OPM

Members Absent:

Curtis Anderson	Connecticut Irrigation Contractors Association
James Butler	SCCOG
Josh Cansler	Southeastern CT Water Authority
David Knauf	Darien Health Department
Denise Savageau	Town of Greenwich
Kevin Sullivan	Green Industry
Henry Talmage	CT Farm Bureau

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:37 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes – April 19, 2016

Bruce Wittchen noted an error in the list of attendees that he will correct and Virginia de Lima pointed out that that the motion described at the end of Sec. 3 is incorrect, since it is the Drought Plan Work Group that will review the updated drought plan after the inclusion of the WPCAG's suggested changes. Bruce said that will be corrected too. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes and the

motion was approved unanimously, with Gil Bligh and Robert Silvestri abstaining because they had not attended the meeting.

3. State Water Plan

a. Update on Project Management

Maureen Westbrook asked Gail Lucchina for an update on the contracting process discussed in recent meetings. Gail said a contract is not signed yet, but it should be next week. Maureen added the consultant, CDM Smith, did a presentation at this month's Steering Committee meeting. She noted that people seem to be reasonably confident moving forward with the proposed scope of work, with minor tweaks. Len DeJong pointed out that the proposed schedule was for CDM Smith to begin work on May 1, so we are already behind.

b. Steering Committee Activities

There was no further report.

c. Policy Committee Report

Margaret Miner said there was a discussion of interconnections and of the meaning of "emergency" at the recent Policy Committee meeting.

Margaret asked if anyone else who attended the Policy Committee meeting can add anything and Virginia said there had been a discussion of the geographic scale of planning. Margaret responded that the group had discussed using a regional scale, which would be ~40 basins. There are more than 300 subregional basins. Virginia commented that the consultant had said that water plans tend to be implemented at a smaller scale the scale at which data were originally analyzed. Bruce Wittchen clarified OPM previous reporting obligations and there was a discussion of the scale of planning and also of the WPCAG's outreach role.

d. Technical & Science Committee Report

Virginia de Lima said the committee remains on hiatus.

e. Discussion and recommendations from the WPCAG re State Plan/Process

Maureen said alternative language was approved in [HB 5540](#) to improve the plan adoption process. She explained the changes, including that the plan be returned to the Water Planning Council if the committees or the General Assembly do not approve it, the requirement that the legislature affirmatively adopt it, the adoption timeframe and what would be done if the legislature rejects the plan or fails to take action within 24 months.

4. Old Business

a. 2016 Legislative updates

Margaret Miner provided an overview of bills having lands implications. She explained the final language of [SB 300](#), which authorizes New Britain to study the potential impacts of allowing mining of some of its Class 1 and Class 2 water company land. Advocates are satisfied that the study will be adequate, but it passed with significant opposition. The Niagara bill ([SB 422](#)) failed.

Margaret said [SJ 36](#), the resolution to seek a constitutional amendment regarding land conveyances did pass, but not with the 75% super-majority necessary to put the resolution on

the ballot this fall. Instead, it will return to the legislature next year and, if it passes again, it will go to the public for a vote. There was a discussion of the proposal and its prospects.

Maureen Westbrook added that the freedom of information (FOI) bill, [HB 5263](#), never got out of the Public Health committee, but will form the basis for further discussion. Betsy Gara mentioned that [HB 5350](#) passed and links CT water utility fluoridation levels to federal standards. She also mentioned that a budget bill requires DPH to produce a report regarding drinking water program costs and funding, including fees (Sec 17 of [SB 501](#)). She said the water industry is concerned that fees collected for the program could be swept into the General Fund.

Betsy Gara said [SB 90](#), which also passed, modifies CGS 22a-471 to allow for DEEP funds to support a larger capacity water main extension to Tylerville. Maureen Westbrook said the wording of that bill is a broader expansion than the previous modification to CGS 22a-471 that supported an extension of water main in Durham and it can apply to additional areas, not just Tylerville.

Betsy Gara mentioned a technical revision bill ([PA 16-89](#)) that makes a change that is significant for water companies and others. Sec. 8 amends [CGS 22a-6g](#) to require applicants for a certain permits, including wetland permits to notify owners of properties within 500 ft of the property where the proposed activity will be. There was a discussion of the difference between that and of notifying only owners of land within 500 ft of the actual location of the proposed activity.

Nick Neeley said [PA 16-197](#) revises the [Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity](#) (CPCN) process to allow certain water companies to only apply to DPH, not to DPH and PURA. Betsy said the state still has not produced a bond package and there was a discussion of the impact.

b. Drought Plan update

Virginia de Lima said the draft was revised in accordance with the discussions at last month's WPCAG meeting and it has been sent to the Drought Plan Work Group along with a cover letter. She said some water company representatives have expressed concern regarding the desire to obtain more ground water information from companies. The work group will meet next week.

Virginia asked if any of the water company representatives in attendance had any suggestions for how the state might get some sense of when water companies are approaching a point where their individual water supply plans required they request or increase water use restrictions. She explained that it could be a simple, color-coded system and there was a discussion of how different companies can respond to dry conditions.

Robert Wesneski said his company, which relies on a number of wells, is able to make weekly measurements and shift its pumping among wells, which can avoid stressing any individual well. They avoid restrictions unless such restrictions are imposed by the state. Gil Bligh described his past experience with the Southington Water Company, which largely depends on ground water. He added that ground water levels should be measured in monitoring wells, not the production wells.

Maureen Westbrook asked Virginia if the drought plan group is looking for water companies to notify the state when they are approaching one of their system drought plan triggers. There was a discussion of various concerns about the variability between systems and geographic differences and how such information might be used

There was further discussion of the work group's interest in ground water information and of what ground water criteria might be appropriate. Gil Bligh noted that the state looks at the Southington system's reservoir levels, but the reservoir tends to only be used in summer and represents only 20% of the system's safe yield. There was further discussion of the potential

availability of additional ground water information from water companies and of [real-time ground water level data](#) available from the USGS.

Robert Silvestri mentioned that, at last month's meeting, there had been a discussion of using "days of supply remaining" as a drought measure and there was further discussion of using water company data for determining drought. Virginia de Lima noted that the draft drought plan has downgraded DPH's water company reservoir level measure to being a secondary indicator because of limitations in the data.

c. Other

Len DeJong asked if there is any information about DPH's efforts to convene the new Water Utility Coordinating Committees (WUCCs) and Maureen said a contract was signed for the consultant to begin work. There was a discussion of the schedule for meetings to begin in mid-June. Gil Bligh said information is available on [DPH's WUCC website](#).

5. New Business

a. Other

There was no new business.

6. WPC Work Group Updates

a. Small Systems Work Group

Maureen Westbrook said the group has not met recently, but PURA and DPH are reviewing the financial viability of small systems and the process for system acquisition via [Docket 15-11-33](#), which was initiated in response to [PA 15-89](#). She mentioned that meetings are ongoing and the agencies are aiming for a quicker and easier process. She noted that there will be a need for further legislation and this year's CPCN changes were part of this.

b. Drought Plan Work Group

The update was in #4b.

c. Green Industry Conservation Work Group

There was no update.

d. Watershed Lands Work Group

Margaret Miner said the group has not met recently but should meet again.

7. Public Comment

There was further discussion of the state's drought plan and whether the state's Interagency Drought Work Group has adequate authority to implement the plan. Maureen Westbrook asked if a more formal approach is required and Virginia de Lima noted that the group makes recommendations to others who have the necessary authority.

8. Future Meeting Date

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 21st, at PURA.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:27 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM