

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

February 18, 2015
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:

Curtis Anderson	Irrigation Industry
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
Margaret Miner	Rivers Alliance
Robert W. Wesneski	Avon Water Company
Maureen Westbrook	Connecticut Water Company
Bob Young	Middletown Water & Sewer Department

Members by Phone:

Karen Burnaska	Endangered Lands Coalition/CFE
Josh Cansler	Southeastern CT Water Authority
Bruce Rich	Fisheries Advisory Council
Denise Savageau	Town of Greenwich
Robert Silvestri	PSEG
Henry Talmage	CT Farm Bureau

Other Attendees:

Tom Callahan	(by phone)
Eric Lindquist	OPM
Gail Lucchina	PURA
David Murphy	Milone & MacBroom
Martha Smith	West River Watershed Coalition (by phone)
Glenn Warner	UConn (by phone)
Bruce Wittchen	OPM

Members Absent:

Eric Brown	CBIA
James Butler	SCCOG
David Knauf	Darien Health Department
Richard Sobolewski	OCC
Kevin Sullivan	Green Industry

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:40 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes – January 19, 2016

A motion was made and seconded to approve the January minutes and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. State Water Plan

a. State Water Plan – Project Management Plan Update

Tom Callahan said the [request for qualifications](#) (RFQ) for state water plan consulting services has been distributed and described the expected two-step review process. A review team will assess submittals, identify some for further review and select one for negotiation.

Tom noted that a decision was made to state that \$880,000 will be available for the full project. Doing so will establish the level of expectations and, based on the responses received, we will find out if that amount is adequate. Tom said the RFQ has been posted on more than 20 sites and distributed to disadvantaged firms and to 20-25 firms considered to have expertise. There is a 2/24 deadline for submitting any questions and submission must be received by 3/4/2016.

Vetting of those submissions is expected to require 3 – 4 weeks and the review team anticipates that the consultant will be able to start in late April. Tom mentioned that WPCAG member Len DeJong is part of the review team and said Len had been instrumental in the decision to issue an RFQ instead of a request for proposals. Tom asked Len if there was anything that he could add to this update.

Len DeJong noted that PURA's Gail Lucchina, also at this meeting, is also part of that group and said the group had incorporated some of the suggestions provided by the WPCAG. There was further discussion of RFQ distribution and of qualifications-based selection and it was noted that this will be a difficult budget year for the state.

b. Steering Committee Activities

Maureen Westbrook provided an update on the recent Steering Committee meeting. She mentioned that OPM's Eric Lindquist had done a presentation on the new water planning website and said he can do that again today for WPCAG members who had not attended the Steering Committee meeting.

Margaret Miner said she is concerned about how late the Steering Committee receives documents it is expected to review. How can we break out of this habit? She added that, while she thinks the selection committee has done a good job, the Steering Committee should be involved in the process too. There was a discussion of the Steering Committee's role.

c. Policy Committee Report

Bob Young said someone from the [CT State Data Center](#) did a presentation about their population projection capabilities at the most recent Policy Committee meeting. They can provide projections at different geographic levels that would be of interest in the planning process. There was a discussion of options for addressing drought and of the role of conservation in limiting future demands. Bob noted that we are already benefitting from conservation of water for indoor uses. There was a discussion of the water demands for irrigation systems. Margaret Miner said the data center can help with such analyses and there was a discussion of the need to do more about water demands for lawn watering.

d. Technical & Science Committee Report

Virginia de Lima said the group continues to meet and the homework assignment for the next meeting is for people to suggest what the group should do next. She noted that items in the group's data needs spreadsheet are being matched back to water planning statutes and described the group's approach. She mentioned the [USGS' Precipitation Runoff Modeling System](#) (PRMS), which has been used for the Pomperaug River basin. PRMS can model results of various climate change scenarios, but Virginia noted some concerns about attempting to work at too small a geographic scale. There was a discussion of how to handle climate change monitoring.

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

Maureen Westbrook provided an overview of concerns previously raised about the plan adoption process. She said that some WPC members had spoken leaders about such concerns with legislative leaders, and the WPC suggested waiting rather than trying to address those concerns this session. She mentioned that the [Public Health Committee](#) is expected to raise a concept bill as requested by the Connecticut Water Works Association that would address some concerns raised by the WPCAG. She added that Margaret had indicated her support and joined with industry representatives in talking to legislative leaders to let them know that there is a broad commitment to the change the approval process now and not seek other changes if corrections are to be made to the approval process. Maureen will distribute any legislation that is raised.

Maureen said the group is keeping Outreach and Communications on the agenda and noted that some of this is also addressed by the RFQ. There is some interest in making presentations to [regional Councils of Governments](#) (COGs) or other entities that might play an important role in the process. Margaret suggested the group wait and see what the consultant will propose to handle. Len DeJong said this is addressed by the RFQ's Section 4. Maureen asked what organizations should be included on the outreach list and there was a discussion.

Len DeJong said this might be an appropriate time for an update on the [Water Utility Coordinating Committee](#) (WUCC) planning process. Dave Murphy said the dates have not yet been confirmed, but they plan to convene the three WUCCs in March. There was a discussion of the scope of the work and of how funding will be distributed and Dave said he will check with DPH.

4. Old Business

a. 2016 Legislative Initiatives for Consideration

Margaret explained [Senate Joint Resolution \(SJ\) 5](#), which is intended to provide greater oversight of the transfer of protected lands for non-conservation purposes. She said it is too easy to transfer such land and said the proposed process is similar to but less strict than the process in New York, where the legislature must vote to approve the transfer for two consecutive years. Margaret also said the resolution could be improved by adding a requirement to hold a hearing in the affected town and described a [fact sheet](#) prepared by the [CT Forest & Park Association](#)'s Eric Hammerling.

Margaret said this resolution would only apply to state-owned land, not to transactions such as New Britain's recent proposal to allow Tilcon to quarry rock from public water supply watershed land. Maureen Westbrook said the wording of SJ 5 is broader than some expected and might raise concerns.

Henry Talmage said agricultural interests are concerned that the resolution's statement regarding the "*the right to clean air, pure water, freedom from excessive and unnecessary noise and the right to the enjoyment and preservation of the natural, scenic historic and esthetic qualities of the environment*" might be interpreted to limit the use of state conservation lands for agriculture. He noted that DEEP owns 7000 acres of agriculturally-leased land. He considers the wording of SJ 5 to be too broad.

Margaret Miner said that, without such a constitutional amendment, such lands could be transferred to others and agricultural access could be lost. There was a discussion of the likelihood that the resolution's preamble will be removed and of how to interpret the clause, "*Any state land or easement held for conservation purposes shall not be used for other purposes...*" Does that require a 2/3 vote to change from one conservation use to another or even from one crop to another? Henry Talmage said there is interest in increasing the agricultural use of state lands and that the committee hearing will be tomorrow. Margaret Miner said a change of crop can be significant.

5. New Business

- a. Other

There was no new business.

6. WPC Work Group Updates

- a. Small Systems Work Group

Maureen said the group has not been active recently and noted that DPH does not have a bill this session but PURA maintains a generic docket for this topic.

- b. Drought Plan Work Group

Virginia de Lima said the group is making a lot of progress and will be getting the updated draft out to a larger group soon. She noted that an irrigation industry representative is only getting involved now, but input from a golf industry representative might have covered most of their concerns. There was a discussion of next steps for the plan update.

- c. Green Industry Conservation Work Group

There was no report.

- d. Watershed Lands Work Group

Margaret Miner said the group has continued the discussion of the Kinder Morgan Tennessee gas pipeline expansion. She added that she has asked DPH to explain its criteria for what energy projects can be approved on water company lands. The group will meet again within the next couple weeks and will also discuss [New Britain's proposed lease of water company lands](#) to allow quarrying. Margaret said there had been a public meeting in New Britain the previous night and people want more study.

Gil Bligh provided an overview of the proposal, describing the amount of land involved and the size of reservoir expected to be developed in the future. He explained the advantages of expanding the water system's storage capacity and benefits for the regional supply.

Gil noted that the water department's emergency access to water stored at the Nepaug reservoir is at the shallow end and the city has only used that once. He mentioned Bristol's Coppermine Brook, which went dry last fall, in the area of New Britain and Bristol wellfields and said increased reservoir storage capacity could prevent that.

Gil said the Bristol Water Dept. has not yet done Level A Aquifer Protection Area mapping for the aquifer serving the nearby Mechanic St well. He added that there are also flooding concerns along Coppermine Brook and interest in constructing berms to impound flood waters on New Britain Water Dept land. He noted the potential benefits of flood skimming and there was further discussion of the situation at Coppermine Brook.

Margaret Miner said this is a regional, multi-town issue and compared it to Aquarion's plans in the Bethel area and the Niagara water bottling proposal in Bloomfield. She said DPH's FOI proposal is not adequate for assessing such proposals because of data being aggregated at the town level. There was further discussion of Coppermine Brook, including the impact of the trout management area and on spawning in the fall.

There was a discussion of the Mechanic Street well's proximity to the brook, testing to determine the stream's influence on the well and of the fact that recent pumping was well below the

amount authorized by the water departments' diversion registrations. There also was a broader discussion of diversion registrations and interbasin transfers.

7. Public Comment

There was a discussion items that people would like to see included on the next WPC agenda and Gail Lucchina said she would add them.

Eric Lindquist provided a brief overview of the updated WPC website, demonstrated how it is organized and requested people offer any suggestions they might have after using it.

8. Future Meeting Date

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 15th, at PURA.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:06 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM