

Water Planning Council

Special Meeting

June 23, 2016

Minutes

Attendees: Jack Betkoski, WPC Chairman, David LeVasseur, WPC Vice-chairperson, Lori Mathieu, WPC Member, Betsey Wingfield, WPC/DEEP, Paul Zagorsky, City of New Britain, Karl Wagener, CEQ, Nick Neeley, PURA, Gail Lucchina, PURA, Tony Mitchell, Rivers Alliance, Margaret Miner, Rivers Alliance, Rebecca Ahearn, City of New Britain, Leah Schmalz, CT Fund for the Environment, Tyra Peluso, PURA, Lanette Macaruso, Robert Mathis, Charles Rothenberger, Michael Doyle, Gaffney, Bennett & Associates, State Senator Terry Gerratana

Chairman Betkoski convened the meeting at 3:01 p.m.

Chairman Betkoski stated that a special meeting of the Water Planning Council (WPC) was being held on Thursday, June 23, 2016 to consider and vote on the acceptability of the four firms the City of New Britain is considering to conduct a study pursuant to Section 1 of Public Act No. 16-61, An Act Concerning an Environmental Study on a Change in Use of New Britain Water Company Land. The Chairman referenced an email from the CEQ stating that they found the proposals acceptable. He stated that correspondence regarding the matter would be posted on the website. Chairman Betkoski then asked if there was any public comment. Paul Zagorsky of New Britain stated that he is a lifelong New Britain resident and he is concerned about Mayor Stewart's letter referencing an aggressive timeframe. He is also concerned with her use of the word expeditious. He contends that what is proposed is more engineering than environmental. He stated that the need for additional water supply was considered in 2014 and it was determined that there was adequate water supply. Mr. Zagorsky wholeheartedly agrees with CEQ's comments and he thanked Karl Wagener for keeping him abreast of what is going on.

The Chairman advised that this is the beginning of a process. He said that at this initial stage, the WPC is to approve and recommend, in consultation with the CEQ, the firms sent to us. They were reviewed yesterday by the CEQ. The CEQ made recommendations and these comments dated June 22, 2016, will be included in the record. PA 16-61 specifically states in Sec. 1 that the City of New Britain shall commission an environmental study, to be conducted by an independent third party acceptable to the WPC in consultation with the CEQ.

Senator Gerratana appeared in person. She thanked the WPC for the wonderful work they are doing. She advised that she is the author of the legislation. She stated that she is a native of New Britain and is familiar with previous legislation. She stated that she is happy about the CEQ's

comments. She touched upon the criteria such as local hydrology. She stated that while the City of New Britain has provided the firms, they do not put the environment first. Senator Gerratana stressed that this is not an engineering design or commercial study. She stated that the experience of the firms seems ancillary to the “need for speed.” She went on to say that the City of New Britain has plenty of time.

Margaret Miner stated that she is familiar with all these firms. She is concerned about the typical way a rapid assessment is done. The habitat and wildlife must have a complete accounting of what is there. Finally, she mentioned that there is a major disconnect between New Britain and a lack of enthusiasm for commenting with only 24 hours notice given.

The Chairman was asked if it was possible for the WPC to require the firm to hire an academic research group to do an environmental research study that is not connected to a commercial endeavor. Chairman Betkoski stated that the WPC is fulfilling its statutory responsibility. He advised that the WPC is not hiring the consultant and he stressed that is ultimately a City of New Britain decision. He reassured that there are going to be checks and balances and oversight. He responded to the question stating that he does not know if such an independent study would be entertained.

Karl Wagener stated that they discussed and reviewed the firms the day before and subsequent letters from Gil Bligh. He advised that Lenard would like to hire a team of consultants. Betsey asked if all four firms were still under consideration or if Lenard is being chosen. Karl responded that it was not clear. Chairman Betkoski stated that they are not voting on a consultant and that the WPC’s charge is to review the qualifications of the firms.

Margaret asked if they were approving the four firms or were they approving the new configuration under Lenard? Karl advised that originally all four firms were stand-alone but now Gil Bligh indicated that Lenard with subgroups is the preferred configuration. Vice-chairperson LeVasseur stated that the first letter concerned hiring CDM Smith but the WPC was concerned about a conflict with the State Water Plan. The City of New Britain withdrew that request and the subsequent four firms listed would probably all put together a team for the study. Dave clarified that the expectation is that any of the firms chosen will ultimately put together a team of environmental experts.

The Chairman moved that the May 31, 2016 and June 15, 2016 letters from the Mayor be included in the record and the Vice-chairman made a motion to state that the WPC wants the CEQ’s June 22, 2016 comments to be included as well. Betsey seconded.

Council member Mathieu stated that is difficult to do over the phone. She recommended face to face meetings in the future. She expressed concern that there is new information that the WPC has not seen. She would have liked to have seen Karl’s information beforehand. Council

Member Mathieu stated that it calls into question what they are voting on. Also, she stated that Senator Gerratana said that environment is primary focus and a resident stated concerns about supply. Council member Mathieu stated that DPH is concerned about the impact to water quality. She added that DPH is concerned about the impact to water quality and quantity, supply and the environment. She expressed some confusion and the Chairman agreed noting that Mr. Bligh and Mr. Wagener had a conversation that the WPC was unaware of. Karl replied that the CEQ got the letter listing the four firms and a subsequent email and that there were no behind the scenes discussions.

Betsey added that the correspondence that we do not have is apparently from Lenard Engineering to Gil Bligh. She stated that the City of New Britain is asking us if the four firms are acceptable. Betsey stated that her opinion is that all four firms are qualified. She added that where the rubber meets the road is the scope or work and that the consultant selection by New Britain should not be guided by price and she stressed that the scope and the team put together is what is important.

Chairman Betkoski asked if the WPC found the firms acceptable. All four members responded in the affirmative and the motion carried.

Chairman Betkoski asked for a motion to adjourn. It was so moved by the Vice-chairperson and seconded by Council member Mathieu. The meeting adjourned at 3:43.