

Engineering and Planning Subcommittee Meeting

Date: Wednesday, July 8, 2009; 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Attendees: Joyce Nichols and Wes Jorgenson, City of Bellevue; Dennis Cheung, City of Issaquah; Bobbi Wallace, City of Kirkland; Ron Nowicki, Lakehaven Utility District; Laura Keough, Northeast Sammamish Sewer and Water District; Margaret Wiggins, Northshore Utility District; Arne Lind, Ronald Wastewater District; Mary Shustov, Sammamish Plateau Water and Sewer District; Trish Rhay, City of Seattle; Mark Buscher, Debra Ross and Laura Wharton, King County; Tamie Kellogg, Kellogg Consulting

I. Reclaimed Water Comprehensive Plan -

- Mark Buscher gave a brief summary of the Purpose and Need Statement and detailed planning process documents.
- Mark explained that two minor adjustments were made since the last E&P meeting to the planning process document: Step 1 of the document will be reviewed and approved by the King County Council; and decision point 6 is now a question instead of a statement.

Member Comments and Questions:

- A question was asked about the fluidity and flexibility of the planning process, Mark replied that the decision makers are identified at each decision point. The Executive and County Council would be the primary decision makers; the process includes time for input from MWAAC and other interested parties.
- A suggestion was made to include economic incentives for using reclaimed water; Mark said that issue can be explored in the plan (step 3 – economic analysis and step 6 – development of a financial plan). There was also a comment that reclaimed water-related costs should be allocated to benefited parties.
- Laura replied that the planning process will explore funding sources and cost allocation during development of the financial plan
- A suggestion was made to explore the possibility of local utilities receiving a LEED rating for utilizing reclaimed water.
- A comment was made, given the economic uncertainties the County is facing, whether it is prudent to proceed with a reclaimed water comprehensive plan at this time. There is also the concern that reclaimed water will diminish the water rights of others. Laura noted that the County receives requests for reclaimed water from various jurisdictions and entities, which was one impetus to conduct a comprehensive planning process to determine if, how, when, and where the county's reclaimed water program should expand.
- A comment was made that during the RWQC July meeting, one of the RWQC members raised the question about the County's authority to sell water and become a water purveyor.
- Several commented that there needs to be sufficient evidence of problems and these problems should be stated in the Purpose and Needs Statement. Mark clarified that the Purpose and Need Statement explains the reasons for conducting the planning process now. A question was asked regarding the County's negotiation on reclaimed water pricing, Mark answered that the County has been in conversations with the City of Redmond for the 60 Acres Park (soccer fields). The soccer facility is located partially in Redmond and partially in the County. The facility is currently drawing water directly from the river. The method of operation is that the County is the wholesaler and the local agency is the retailer.

- A question was raised regarding what's included in the comprehensive plan vs. what WTD is doing under the existing program. Mark replied that there is a distinction between the comprehensive planning process and the existing reclaimed water program. Under the existing reclaimed water program (Brightwater backbone system, South Plant and Carnation Treatment Plants), WTD will continue to make arrangements and negotiate contracts. Under the south backbone, which is considered the existing program, there is a WTD contract to provide water to Willows Run; but the County is working with Redmond to see if they'd prefer to be the purveyor. The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to see how and where it might or might not be feasible to expand the county's existing reclaimed water system. Laura also mentioned that WTD plans to include contract openers, for when future policies are adopted so that the contracts can at some point in the future reflect any changes made
- Some E&P members commented that that existing RWSP policies do not address cost recovery objectives. They noted the following:
 - The County is continuing to invest in the current reclaimed water system.
 - The County Council will review the cost recovery policy for reclaimed water.
 - The County is expanding markets, and waiting until 2013 to change policies is too far out in time, and suggested that reclaimed water financial policies should be revised sooner.
- A suggestion was made to add the term "collaboration" in Step 6 under regional involvement, as that is one of the most important steps.
- A comment was made that there can be an interested party that is not a retailer.
- A comment was made about the timing of the financial policies and the need for updating the Regional Wastewater Service Plan prior to beginning the Financial Plan for the reclaimed water comprehensive plan. If the policies are amended in the near future, the guidelines that are adopted can be used to steer us through the planning process.
- There was a suggestion to consider discussion during Step 3 on codes and regulations related to sustainable practices and that the County could begin by applying these to unincorporated areas.
- A request was made to provide the state legislation language to E&P that was referred to on Page 1 of the Purpose and Needs Statement.
- A comment was made that there will likely be a more stringent treatment and discharge requirement to Puget Sound.
- A suggestion was made that "if, how, when, where" should be expanded to read "to determine if, when, how, by whom, and at whose expense, and where it's reclaimed water should expand...?"
- A suggestion was made under recommended options that can provide the greatest value, considering costs insert... and cost allocation to those who benefit.
- A suggestion was made that another RW criterion should be: ability to obtain funding from benefited parties.
- A comment was made that the criteria of protecting water quality in Puget Sound on page 25 doesn't match the driver. Does removing the highest quality water in the discharge benefit the Sound?
- A suggestion was made to review how reclaimed water fits into GMA and other codes, policies.

- During discussion of the criteria, there was a comment made to consider prioritizing uses for groundwater recharge.
- A comment was made that localized use of reclaimed water should be a priority. Localizing utilities would promote better accountability.

There was agreement by E&P subcommittee members to forward the following recommendations to full MWPAAC. We will write them up and send them to E&P Subcommittee members for their review:

- In the Purpose and Need Statement:
 - Change the phrase "...to determine if, how, when, and where it's reclaimed water program should expand..." **with** "...to determine if, when, how, by whom and at whose expense, and where it's reclaimed water program should expand..."
 - Under the guiding principles listed in purpose and need statement, pages 23-24, 5th bullet, add the words in italics: Recommend options that can provide the greatest value, considering costs *and cost allocation to benefited parties*, the environment, and the community
 - Add the following bullet to the list under the Regional Wastewater System Planning criterion: *Ability to obtain funding from benefited parties*
 - Rewrite the bullets under the Protecting Water Quality in Puget Sound criterion to match more to how that driver is explained in document
- Given the economic climate, delay the plan
- Develop financial policies and guidelines in the near term, to guide the existing program and development of reclaimed water comp plan for King County Council consideration. A MWPAAC committee, possibly Rate and Finance, could develop these by the end of the year.