



Drinking Water Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

January 17, 2018

Keizer

Members Present

DJ Ezell, Special Districts Association of Oregon

Jenifer George, Oregon Environmental Health Association

Brian Ginter, American Council of Engineering Companies-Oregon

Lori Grant, Environmental Advocacy Groups

Jason Green, Oregon Association of Water Utilities

Bruce Hellebuyck, Privately Owned Water Systems

Beth Myers, Oregon Environmental Lab Association

Annette Pampush, Conference of Local Health Officials

Brian Rigwood, Pacific NW Section, American Water Works Association

Chris Wanner, Large Water Systems

Members Absent

Ed Butts, Oregon Association of Water Utilities

Jason Canady, League of Oregon Cities

Ray Johnson, Plumbers/Backflow Testers

David Phelps, League of Women Voters of Oregon

Guests

David Barnett, Infrastructure Finance Authority

Robert Funk, OCT Academy

Jon Unger, Infrastructure Finance Authority

Staff

Adam DeSemple

Kari Salis

David Emme

Diane Weis

To Do:

- Send fee restructuring notes to committee: Dave Emme
- Proposal on Operator Certification requirements: Workgroup

Welcome/Agenda Check:

DJ Ezell welcomed the group and led introductions.

October Meeting Minutes:

Beth Myers made motion to approve the minutes, Chris Wanner seconded. They were voted on and approved.

Member Update, Public Input:

No one had anything to report.

Program Update:

Rulemaking finalized – Two issues raised by Stakeholders and addressed.

Seismic assessment – The scope of the rule was defined to water systems in the Cascadia Earthquake Zone, generally west of the Cascades. Master plans will be required to include seismic assessments and mitigation plans for these water systems.

Special Samples – Systems that collect special samples will not be required to submit them. The lab reports are to be kept at the system and be made available if asked.

The rules have been adopted and are effective.

Fee restructure concepts –

Drinking Water Services staffing has been reduced due to funding, although core functions are getting done, and well. A minimum of five more positions are needed to meet the basic program needs.

The impacts of being short-staffed are data entry backlogs; compliance schedules are overdue; there is limited capacity on technical work, emergency response, and ability to make improvements; delayed plan reviews; non-EPA systems are not properly regulated; and training updates are being deferred.

Drinking Water Services contracts with county health departments and Department of Agriculture although they have financial restrictions as well. There is a workgroup that is addressing how to meet needs. Local partners have been flat funded for at least 10 years, with the value of this funding eroded by higher personnel costs.

There is at least a \$956K gap per year between what is needed and what is available in current revenue. Survey fees only provide 5% of program revenue and there are problems with current system. Funding received from survey fees is not sufficient, its use is not flexible, fee structure is inequitable, and the billing schedule is unpredictable for the water systems.

Some annual fee alternatives to the survey fee:

- Modify existing survey fee structure to be more equitable among systems by including costs for lab data processing, adding higher tiers for the survey fee and adjusting for inflation.
- Flat connection fee. Set a flat fee per connection, e.g. \$1.20 and also set a minimum amount and a cap.
- Connection fee with sliding scale. Have a range of connections and as the number increases, the price per connection goes down.

Dave will present this to OWUC next week. He has submitted a legislative concept and has until June to finalize the proposal.

Concerns from DWAC members:

- Large systems will pay almost the equivalent of an FTE, which will be taken from their budget.
- Operator Certification needs more administrative help.
- Purchasing systems need to be addressed.
- Alternatives must be identified if fees are not increased.

Dave will send notes to committee so members can take to groups they represent for their input.

Lead in Schools:

The 2017 Legislature passed a Bill mandating all schools in Oregon to be tested for lead in their drinking water. The Bill also stated that Oregon Health Authority needed to write a guidance plan for schools to follow, which includes how often they are required to test.

A stakeholder group was established, mainly consisting of school administrators, and Kari Salis is also a member. They are discussing a proposal to test every 6 years at every tap. There will be some exemptions, such as for taps purchased after 2014, previous results at a certain level, and schools that are public water systems. Mitigation would be required at 15 ppb.

Early Learning Division made a separate proposal so the two groups ideally would come to an agreement on their proposals. Rules will be finalized in June 2018.

Revolving Fund Update:

An EPA Award was given to City of Beaverton for Sustainability.

End of 2nd Quarter 2018 Combined Infrastructure PPL – Six new projects have been added, bringing the total to 64 projects at \$121 million. The public comment period is open online from January 17 to February 19.

End of 2nd Quarter 2018 Sustainable Infrastructure Planning Projects (SIPP) PPL – Three new projects have been submitted requesting \$60,000. The public comment period is open online from January 17 to February 19. There are new requirements for seismic master plans.

SFY2018 Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program – Letters of Interest for a grant up to \$30,000 are open from January 16 to March 9.

SFY2017 EPA's SRF Program Evaluation Report (PER) – Draft is being reviewed by management.

SFY2018 Financing Options – Principal Forgiveness needs to be reduced. Loan term is typically 20 years, but under certain situations, such as stressed or disadvantaged communities, a loan term can be for 30 years.

Jon Unger from Infrastructure Finance Authority reviewed their quarterly report listing the projects committed. There is \$27.2M available.

Operator Certification:

The workgroup, consisting of DJ Ezell, Jason Green, Chris Wanner, Brian Rigwood, Dave Emme and Tony Fields, are working on the certification requirements. A concern came up that Oregon is more stringent than neighboring states and that some people face difficulties getting the necessary experience credited to become certified or advance. The group plans to have a proposal by the April Advisory Committee Meeting.

Robert Funk operates a nonprofit training center for Operators in California and provided comments. He wants to encourage education first rather than experience to enable people to take the exam and become certified.

The committee talked about sending a survey to all types of systems asking how they feel the Operator Certification Program is run. Dave will work with the members to get the survey out.

2018 Meeting Schedule:

April 18, 2018 – Keizer

July 18, 2018 – Keizer

October 17, 2018 – Keizer