

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

August 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes

A telemeeting of the Water Planning Council Advisory Group (WPCAG) was held by Zoom

A video recording is available at:

https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/2021-08-17_WPCAG_Video.mp4

Members Present by video or phone:

Aaron Budris	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Josh Cansler	Southeastern CT Water Authority
Alicea Charamut	Fisheries Advisory Council
Virginia de Lima	USGS CT Water Science Center
Eric Hammerling	CT Forest and Park Association
Sean Hayden	Lake Waramaug Task Force
Patrick Kearney	Manchester Water & Sewer
Fred Klein	CT Power and Energy Society
Margaret Miner	Rivers Alliance
Jeff Pugliese	Middlesex Chamber of Commerce
Denise Savageau	CT Association of Conservation Districts
Tom Tyler	MDC
Lori Vitagliano (alt.)	South Central CT Regional Water Authority

Other Participants:

John Betkoski	PURA
Jude Carroll	Operation Fuel
Corinne Fitting	DEEP
Peter Galant	Tighe & Bond
Alexandria Hibbard	DEEP
Iris Kaminski	
Dave Kuzminski (alt.)	Portland
Christine O'Neill (alt.)	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Charles Vidich	WestCOG
Karen Weeks	
Bruce Wittchen	OPM

Members Absent:

Karen Burnaska	Save the Sound
Carol Haskins	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
David Knauft	Darien Health Department
Dan Lawrence	Aquarion
Joan Nichols	CT Farm Bureau Assoc.
Brenda Watson	Operation Fuel
Vacancy	CT Nursery & Landscape Assoc.

1. Call to Order

Alicea Charamut called the meeting to order at 1:32 and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of draft 7/20/2021 Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [7/20/2021 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously, with Aaron Budris, Josh Cansler, Virginia de Lima, and Denise Savageau abstaining because they had not attended the meeting.

3. Water Planning Council Update

a. Water Planning Council Update

Virginia de Lima said the WPC accepted the reports of the drought and private well water quality topical subgroups.

b. Implementation Work Group (IWG) Update

She said DPH's Dan Aubin and DEEP's Corinne Fitting will chair a water plan implementation/tracking work group and a brain storming session is planned for 9/28. She said it is hoped that WPC members will attend if possible and designate staff with expertise in that area to participate. She provided further background regarding expectations.

Virginia said the IWG also discussed the [workshop](#) presented in March by the [Alliance for Water Efficiency](#) (AWE) and decided it would be appropriate to survey participants six months later to learn how information they learned has been used. Iris Kaminski will lead that effort.

c. Structures for State Water Planning and Implementation

Virginia described the IWG's discussion of water director position, as has been discussed previously, and she added that Corinne Fitting and Ali Hibbard of DEEP are drafting possible job duties. Virginia noted the balance between authority and responsibility in such a role and also noted the question of where such a position would be housed.

Jack Betkoski said this will be successful if it is approached correctly and suggested that the position could be funded through an assessment, as PURA is. Alicea Charamut said she believes this work regarding implementation is appropriate, but said we are not done with the planning. There was further discussion of the job description being drafted and Corinne Fitting encouraged people to email any ideas to Ali Hibbard and her. Virginia de Lima mentioned the MDC's consumer advocate being one possible model.

Alicea Charamut pointed out that ongoing climate change work includes planning dollars and Virginia said a reliance on 1-shot funding is troubling. There was further discussion of potential funding options, including the [CT Green Bank](#).

d. Other State Water Plan matters

There was no further discussion.

4. Old Business

a. Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC) update

There was a brief discussion of a [Water Utility Coordinating Committee](#) (WUCC) implementation meeting being scheduled to be Wednesday, August 18th, but it apparently will not happen that day.

b. [Interagency Drought Work Group](#) update

Bruce Wittchen said [Interagency Drought Work Group](#) members and other agency staff have received and are reviewing the drought topical subgroup report accepted by the WPC earlier this month. They intend to meet in September even if conditions are not dry.

c. Nominating Committee

Josh Cansler said this committee needs a new chair and the goal is to provide a list of nominations to the WPC in September or October. He offered to be chair if needed and there was further discussion of the schedule.

d. Hydrilla update

There was no update

5. WPCAG Work Groups

a. Watershed Lands Work Group

Margaret Miner said she and Karen Burnaska have made progress and highlighted that they met with the clerk of the legislature's [Government Administration & Elections](#) (GAE) Committee.

Margaret provided background regarding this work group's efforts to correct deficiencies in the questionnaire that legislators submit to the GAE Committee when requesting the conveyance of state lands to municipalities. She said they were told committee cochair Sen. Flexer would be delighted to include an addendum with the questionnaire addressing natural resources.

Margaret noted that it is unclear if completed forms will be available to the public and recommended that the WPCAG or work group send a follow-up letter and include that question. Alicea Charamut recommended confirming that the version of the addendum blessed by the WPC is available online and Jack Betkoski agreed with the WPCAG being the appropriate group to send the letter suggested by Margaret.

b. Source Water Protection Work Group –
[Source Water Protection Outline](#)

Alicea Charamut mentioned the source water protection outline discussed in previous meetings. She requested that any comments be provided by mid-September. There was further discussion and Denise Savageau said the planned white paper will be important.

c. Solar Siting Work Group
[Draft Solar Siting Recommendations & Work Plan](#)

Alicea said there is no new news about this work group but noted that different groups continue working on various aspects solar siting and still accepting d mentioned a listening session to be held next month. Margaret Miner mentioned DEEP's [client concierge group](#) and Fred Klein asked if the WPC will be stepping back with DEEP taking the lead for this. Alicea said she and Josh Cansler had been deputized to participate and noted that John Hudak subsequently replaced Josh in that role. There was further discussion and Denise Savageau mentioned DEEP's [Sustainable, Transparent and Efficient Practices for Solar Development](#) (STEPS) process and the [concierge group solar siting fact sheet](#).

6. New Business

Denise Savageau recommended the group discuss the federal funds coming down to the state and towns and Alicea Charamut provided some background. She also highlighted that there are many demands for it and noted it can only be used for eligible work. She added that funding should be accessible to those who will put it to good use and added that she advocates for projects to be at the scale of a watershed.

Denise Savageau said it will be a lot of funding, so we should pay attention and consider forming a work group. She described how much funding is expected and outlined its allocation, noting that final eligibility rules are not yet available. She added that funds are expected to come through existing programs. Denise also pointed out that the state's allocation plan does not include water and sewer systems, but the state could use funds for private well and septic system work. She noted that open space is important for COVID and for source water protection. Iris Kaminski said she shared Denise's interest in addressing septic systems.

7. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

8. Next Meeting Date

Alicea read the schedule of upcoming meetings:

WPCAG:	September 21, 2021, 1:30
WPC:	September 7, 2021, 1:30
IWG:	September 14, 2021, 1:30

Alicea added that the IWG brainstorming session discussed earlier is expected to be 9/28.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:41 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM