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STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
PUBLIC UTILITIES REGULATORY AUTHORITY

STATE WATER PLANNING COUNCIL

Special Meeting held Via Teleconference on
April 29, 2022, beginning at 1:03 p.m.

H e l d B e f o r e :

JOHN W. BETKOSKI, III, CHAIRMAN,
and PURA VICE-CHAIRMAN

1 **A p p e a r a n c e s :**

2 **WATER PLANNING COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:**

3 **JOHN W. BETKOSKI, III, CHAIRMAN (PURA)**

4 **MARTIN HEFT (OPM)**

5 **LORI MATHIEU (DPH)**

6 **GRAHAM STEVENS (DEEP)**

7
8 **ALSO PRESENT (on record):**

9 **VIRGINIA de LIMA**

10 **DAVID KUZMINSKI**

11
12 **Staff:**

13 **LAURA LUPOLI**

14 **ALYSON AYOTTE**

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1 THE CHAIRMAN: So I'm going to call the special meeting
2 of the Water Planning Council to order for
3 April 29th. There is one item on the agenda and
4 it's to look at our priorities as a Council. Of
5 course, we'll be meeting on Tuesday the 3rd as
6 well, but I thought this would kind of give us an
7 opportunity to just briefly see where we're at
8 from our own respective agencies.

9 I would like to thank Martin and Graham, and
10 Lori and Denise Savageau for working to get the
11 grant in on time, the grant application -- which
12 was great.

13 And with that, why don't we start? Martin,
14 why don't we start with you in terms of what you
15 think we ought to be looking at, at this
16 particular point in time?

17 Why don't you just tell us what you're
18 thinking of what are the things we ought to be
19 doing at this particular time?

20 MARTIN HEFT: Sure. So my thought process on this, as
21 we know -- (unintelligible) --

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Hey, Martin --

23 MARTIN HEFT: -- we do have an application
24 (unintelligible) the past couple of months, if you
25 will, and particularly -- yeah?

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Martin, you're kind of coming in and
2 out. So why don't we come back to you?

3 MARTIN HEFT: Okay.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: We'll come back to you in a minute.

5 MARTIN HEFT: (Unintelligible) -- I'm almost home. So
6 let me just -- (inaudible).

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Why don't you come back on when
8 you're home?

9 Okay. Lori, would you like to?

10 LORI MATHIEU: Sure, Jack. Thank you. I think that
11 the last time we spoke of this I had brought up
12 the priorities that we had noted back in 2018, way
13 back when. And then the plan is passed, and since
14 that time we've done a lot of great work on
15 drought. We've done a lot of great work on water
16 conservation.

17 A few things from the Department of Public
18 Health's point of view is understanding water
19 quality and quantity impacts due to climate. And
20 that is directly connected with the GC3 work, and
21 also connected with the WUCC water supply planning
22 regional planning effort.

23 So understanding impacts of quality and
24 quantity due to climate, there there's a lot of
25 good information within our state water plan.

1 But making sure that moving forward we have
2 sufficient water supply, but that we can also
3 provide a balance -- and that's what this plan is
4 meant to do. Right? So overall, like a big
5 picture.

6 Another item which I know is really important
7 to everybody is moving forward with more details
8 on water conservation. And the idea of the
9 fixtures, really looking at fixtures -- I know
10 we've been working on that, but I want to continue
11 our good work on that item. So quality, quantity,
12 water conservation, water fixtures.

13 My other item that I bring up constantly is
14 this, the ethic of water conservation and the
15 two-day watering for irrigation, and that to sort
16 of follow the lead of what Aquarion has been doing
17 in many towns, which I think is a very good ethic
18 to follow and how we can sort of stretch that out
19 across our state. So it's just sort of following
20 along on that water conservation ethic and keeping
21 that moving forward.

22 There's a lot going on with infrastructure.
23 Right? We all have a lot -- we have funding and
24 it's so different and new -- just in November.
25 Right?

1 So I think there should be some sort of
2 effort there, but I'm not quite sure. It is a
3 priority. It's a priority of everyone who has
4 those pots of money. And so within our group we
5 have the drinking water SRF, and I think that
6 that's going to continue to be highlighted over
7 the next many years. So you know infrastructure,
8 infrastructure funding.

9 And as a matter of fact, I'm just looking at
10 some of the key findings in our little one-pager,
11 and some of the topmost important items that we
12 thought were really important were these, some of
13 the basins. And I know this is outside of our
14 lane in the Health Department, but looking at some
15 of the basins that are stressed, and are there
16 still some that are out there that go dry?

17 And I think of the Quinnipiac.

18 And also it dovetails with the idea of
19 quality and quantity, because there's a lot of
20 public water supplies within that basin, and it
21 serves a big population in a central core of our
22 state. And it sort of dovetails with the idea of
23 understanding the quantity of water.

24 And when the quantity starts to go down and
25 that river dries up, what happens to the quality

1 of that water?

2 So for me those are the things that I'd like
3 to focus on. I think those are priorities
4 definitely for the Department, water quality and
5 quantity, water conservation, fixtures, irrigation
6 and the bill, the infrastructure, the bipartisan
7 infrastructure funding that's coming our way.

8 The last thing I'll add is source protection,
9 which we're already working on and it's already
10 been a priority of the subgroups and the watershed
11 team that we have working on it, but I think we
12 never want to forget about protecting sources of
13 water. That's it, Jack.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: No -- and that's a lot.

15 Martin is back. So why don't we go over to
16 Martin?

17 MARTIN HEFT: Sure.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Lori. I think those are
19 really great areas. I mean, I know we really
20 wanted to get moving on the fixtures and water
21 conservation, but it was a short session. And
22 Graham and you -- we had to have some dialogue
23 with the appropriate agencies, but it will be
24 priority for next year, for sure.

25 Martin?

1 MARTIN HEFT: Sure. And thank you.

2 Apologies for earlier. I was going through a
3 dead zone driving, and so I kind of cut out. But
4 I was able to hear all of Lori's comments. And so
5 I appreciate those.

6 So yeah. As I started saying earlier, as you
7 know, we have the application in for the state
8 water plan for kind of an update of that. We've
9 talked about a couple larger items over the past
10 couple of months. And I think really for a focus
11 for the Water Planning Council as looking at
12 goals -- is really that our main goal is a
13 five-year update to the state water plan for that.

14 Whether it be through the federal funding, or
15 we propose funding in the next biennial budget; to
16 make sure that happens statutorily, that's our
17 requirement to do for that. So we do have the
18 statutory background, the legislative piece that
19 allows us to do that.

20 Of course, we've got to have the funding
21 there for it. We've also discussed about making
22 sure that we have a budget. So I think those are
23 two big items that we have to do as our goals.

24 I think a lot of the other things of looking
25 at those items, as Lori started saying, those are

1 all going to become part of the updated water
2 plan.

3 You know those are the specifics of it.
4 Personally I'd rather see us say, okay. These are
5 our two main focuses; we're going to update the
6 state water plan, which is going to encompass all
7 these other smaller priorities, if you will, and
8 not to minimize them at all on that; as well as
9 doing a budget for the Council itself; and that
10 those should be our main priorities.

11 We know these other pieces are going to fall
12 into it as we progress and go through, because
13 that's going to be part of that whole planning at
14 the end process of everything.

15 So that would be my recommendations.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: And they're good ones. I mean, we're
17 making progress with the funding.

18 I should say that Martin and I spoke, and
19 that we had talked about using WICA funds. It
20 would be difficult for us to use WICA funds
21 because the way the statutes are written, it's
22 really under the auspices funding under OPM.

23 And so it would be a challenge for us to do
24 that, but I do have -- again, I know we'd like to
25 get some money for at least the twelve months

1 beginning July 1 of 2022, through June 30, 2023.

2 I do have some ideas still -- but I don't want to
3 share them just this second until I talk with my
4 Chair again on Monday and see if it's something
5 realistically we can do.

6 So Martin, thank you again for all of your
7 work on this.

8 And no update on the bonding money?

9 MARTIN HEFT: No, and unfortunately because of we're
10 trying to get the budget implementor stuff done
11 and everything, the staff that would look into
12 that is all tied up right now, so.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Understood. Okay.

14 Thank you.

15 Graham? Graham is in the office today.

16 GRAHAM STEVENS: I'm in the office.

17 How are you, Chairman?

18 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm doing well.

19 GRAHAM STEVENS: Good. So the way we've looked at our
20 list before of the priorities that were in the
21 previous, that were previously pulled from the
22 state water plan and used for prioritization
23 purposes.

24 And the way that I'm looking at this is, what
25 should we be focusing on as a Council for the next

1 three to five years? And I kind of put it into
2 four buckets; one is strategic action, one is
3 data, one is water protection, and the last is
4 overarching lenses through which we should analyze
5 all of our actions.

6 So under strategic actions I think we've all
7 agreed we need to hire a water chief. We need to
8 monitor and plan. Monitor for plan
9 implementation, which is a big part of what the
10 water chief is going to be doing.

11 And we need to continue our efforts, which
12 has been really spearheaded by our amazing
13 stakeholder and volunteer groups on education and
14 outreach. So those are really our strategic
15 actions.

16 And then with respect to data, you know I
17 think it's important to really double down and
18 find better and more sustainable funding for USGS
19 monitoring. They do a lot for us. We rely on the
20 information that they collect to the benefit of
21 everyone, whether that be water companies, DEEP,
22 DPH, you know, PURA, or OPM or others. Right?

23 So they kind of are a partner here -- and
24 maybe aren't at our meetings, but a lot of what
25 they do is kind of the backbone for information

1 that we utilize.

2 And then water protection; we definitely need
3 to take further steps in the short term on water
4 conservation. And then also -- and this is a
5 broad group of actions and not, like Martin said,
6 not meant to minimize them -- but source water
7 protection. I think there's seven or eight things
8 that we have on this previous list that fall under
9 that category.

10 And then the lenses by which I think we
11 should be looking at all of these are, of course,
12 climate change, environmental equity and health
13 equity.

14 And if we focus and are able to accomplish
15 actions under those, under those points in the
16 next three to five years I think we're going to be
17 doing amazing work for the State of Connecticut,
18 and for all the various stakeholders who are
19 interested in its waters, and who use its waters.

20 And so that's the way I've been looking at
21 this, but I have agreed with everything that
22 everyone here has said thus far. And it doesn't
23 seem that we're really that far apart. I think we
24 kind of share similar opinions.

25 **THE CHAIRMAN:** I agree with that. And of course, my

1 priority is always to look at how we're going to
2 get some money and working with our sister
3 agencies to do that. And we're kind of -- as the
4 financial regulator we're in somewhat of a
5 position to do that and spear that.

6 You know we did -- for example, when we did
7 the conservation workshop we did during a rate
8 case -- I'm sorry, during a merger -- get some
9 funds from Connecticut Water. And I believe that
10 they paid our consultants for that directly.

11 And I just have to study the mechanics of
12 that moving forward seeing if we might be able to
13 replicate that. And it won't be a whole -- when
14 you look at the number of water customers we have
15 in the state of Connecticut, you're looking at a
16 whole lot of money. So stay tuned with that.

17 Now I'm going to open it up to the --

18 LORI MATHIEU: Jack, just listening to Martin and
19 Graham and yourself -- so there's some buckets, as
20 Graham laid it out into these buckets. You know
21 there's the administrative functions that we need.
22 You know there's the money. We need to pursue
23 funding, and we're doing that.

24 Those are important items -- and to be able
25 to find the funding the hire a chief. Right? To

1 help us as it was envisioned in the plan. I see
2 those as administrative function, and those are
3 priorities because we can't do anything else.
4 Without it we're really going to struggle.

5 But then there are the action items
6 implementation topics, the keys of what we need to
7 narrow ourselves and our focus in on for year one,
8 year two, over a five-year period of time.

9 So I think it's worth maybe in a different
10 meeting talking about the details of sort of
11 breaking it out and writing it down for ourselves
12 so that we can nail down what we want to do over
13 the next twelve months. What's important to do
14 over the next twelve months for implementation
15 items and administrative function?

16 Because we have a lot going on. You know
17 there's a lot of balls in the air right now, and
18 we've got to keep track of it all. So I think it
19 would be helpful to us to sort of map that out so
20 that we have a pathway forward.

21 **THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes, and we've got a chat -- I don't
22 know if you all got the same chat I got from
23 Virginia -- about the account modeling that was
24 started in the plan, that they could have formed
25 quantity questions as well as climate change,

1 which is something -- I mean, in this process --
2 which you're absolutely correct, and it's a good
3 recommendation moving forward.

4 I mean, our Water Planning Council advisory
5 group and the implementation workgroup have been
6 phenomenal in terms of helping us push things
7 through. Our drought plan with Martin's
8 leadership is coming together.

9 But to your point, I think -- and we'll have
10 a meeting Tuesday -- is that we ought to
11 categorize these, all these things we're talking
12 about this afternoon, and goals and objectives and
13 timeframes moving forward. So when we meet on a
14 regular basis we could check off the box and see
15 where we're at.

16 So I think it's a good suggestion, Lori.

17 I'm going to open it -- because on the
18 agenda, I am going to open it up to the public if
19 anybody wants to say anything.

20
21 (No response.)
22

23 LORI MATHIEU: Are there people on, Jack?

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Yeah.

25 DAVID KUZMINSKI: This is David. Jack, everybody else,

1 I just want to thank you guys for continuing to --
2 this is going to sound corny -- but prioritize
3 prioritization.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: No, it doesn't.

5 DAVID KUZMINSKI: Because we need some direction, and
6 whatever you collectively wish us to take on,
7 we're happy to do it.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: David, I don't think it sounds corny at
9 all because you know it's what we're trying to do.

10 And it's getting our collective minds
11 together and the support we have from our
12 collective agencies together. And I'm very
13 excited and optimistic about the whole budgetary
14 process. If this all comes together July 1 in
15 2023, we're going to be in really good shape I
16 think.

17 But in the meantime we have to keep the buses
18 online. And to Lori's point, that's why we have
19 to always kind of relook and reevaluate moving
20 forward.

21 So thank you, David.

22 Any other comments?

23
24 (No response.)
25

1 THE CHAIRMAN: I know that we all have time constraints
2 today. I'm glad we got this in, because I think
3 it's important.

4 And we have Rob our transcriber pulling into
5 a parking lot taking the minutes today, and Martin
6 driving. So we appreciate everybody.

7 But to David's point, even though we keep on
8 meeting like this, we have to keep it front and
9 center.

10 And I can't believe when I looked at the
11 calendar, the fact we have to come up with an
12 update and we have to go and market this again at
13 the State Capitol and tell whoever takes over the
14 various committees next year what a great job the
15 Water Planning Council is doing.

16 So any closing comments? Graham? Lori?
17 Martin?

18 VIRGINIA de LIMA: Jack, I'm not Graham, Lori or
19 Martin -- but I have a comment. What is your
20 process from here?

21 We've have heard a lot of great suggestions
22 from each of the four agencies. What are you four
23 going to do with those suggestions and how then
24 will priorities be communicated to the
25 implementation workgroup?

1 THE CHAIRMAN: I think any of my -- Martin or Graham,
2 or Lori can jump in here. I mean, my thinking is
3 we're going to look at what we come up with today,
4 check the transcript, look at what Rob has
5 recorded.

6 And then the way I'm understanding it, to
7 Lori's point is that we will, maybe as early
8 as -- hopefully, by Tuesday's meeting we'll have
9 some items that we can discuss at Tuesday's
10 meeting moving forward, which may very well
11 include giving you, giving your workgroup some
12 assignments.

13 VIRGINIA de LIMA: Well, that's excellent. Thank you.

14 (Interruption.)

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Lori?

16 GRAHAM STEVENS: Lori is getting called by somebody.

17 LORI MATHIEU: I have to run. All right.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Lori, that's okay. Bye-bye. Thank you.

19 Graham, are you okay with that?

20 GRAHAM STEVENS: Yeah, absolutely. I think that's a
21 great approach. And I don't want to hold off
22 until we have the water chief -- but I mean, I
23 feel like things will flow more smoothly once we
24 do.

25 But I think based on the transcript, and

1 based on the conversation today we can probably
2 put together a short document with just some
3 guiding priorities and principles that will help
4 hopefully folks focus efforts.

5 And then once we do have the water chief on
6 board, you know it would be great to really just
7 start developing a workplan for all of those
8 individual priorities, and to look at all of the
9 work that the Water Planning Council advisory
10 group is doing, the implementation workgroup is
11 doing; seeing how it feeds into that
12 prioritization scheme and make sure that we're
13 making progress towards improvements for
14 Connecticut's water.

15 So I'm pretty hopeful. It didn't seem like
16 there was anything that was misaligned, or anyone
17 who really felt strongly or differently. I took
18 some notes today as well and I look forward to the
19 transcript, and we can put something together that
20 hopefully we can discuss further on Tuesday.

21 **THE CHAIRMAN:** Great.

22 **GRAHAM STEVENS:** It's progress.

23 **THE CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much.

24 Do you have any closing comments, Martin?

25 **MARTIN HEFT:** Perfect, Jack. Thank you.

1 And appreciate, Graham, Lori, and Jack, all
2 your comments and everything because I think we
3 are all on the same page, and you know that path
4 forward is our plan of what we've got to do.

5 The only other thing I'd suggest as we're
6 doing the plan is to actually add in a timeline of
7 the plan for that implementation piece of it. So
8 we do that five-year timeline, once we kind of get
9 the priorities done, that we have that as also a
10 piece of our overall plan.

11 **THE CHAIRMAN:** Exactly. That's a very good point.

12 Thank you.

13 Rob, no pressure, but when do you think you
14 can have this transcript?

15 **THE REPORTER:** This isn't very long. I could probably
16 have it done, on the road -- send it in today if
17 you'd like. It's only 22 pages.

18 **THE CHAIRMAN:** Yeah, Monday is fine actually -- but
19 that's fine. Thank you, Rob.

20 **GRAHAM STEVENS:** Yeah, Monday works.

21 **THE CHAIRMAN:** That works for us.

22 All right. Anything else to come before us?

23
24 (No response.)
25

1 THE CHAIRMAN: If not, I thank you all very much. I
2 think this was a quick but productive meeting this
3 afternoon. We keep the things moving.

4 And I'll entertain a motion to adjourn?

5 MARTIN HEFT: So moved.

6 GRAHAM STEVENS: Second.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: All those in favor?

8 THE COUNCIL: Aye.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: The meeting is adjourned.

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11 (End: 1:27 p.m.)
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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing 21 pages are a complete and accurate computer-aided transcription of my original verbatim notes taken of the Special Meeting of the Water Planning Council, which was held before JOHN W. BETKOSKI, III, CHAIRMAN, and PURA VICE-CHAIRMAN, via teleconference, on April 29, 2022.



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1 INDEX

2 VOTES TAKEN
3 (Unanimous Approval)

4 DESCRIPTION	PAGE
5 Adjournment	21

6 TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

7 DESCRIPTION	PAGE(s)
8 Priorities Discussion	
9 L. Mathieu: Quality/quantity, conservation, 10 fixtures, irrigation, 11 infrastructure funding, 12 source protection	4-7
13 M. Heft: 5-year update, funding	8-9
14 Chair: WICA funds	9
15 G. Stevens: Strategic action, data, 16 Source protection, perspective 17 USGS funding	10-12
18 Chair: Conservation workshop	13
19 Public Comment	
20 V. del Lima: Process question	17
21 M. Heft: Timeline creation	20