

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

August 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes

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

An audio recording is available at:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/WPCAG_2020/2020-08-18_WPCAG_Recording.mp3

Members Present by video or phone:

Karen Burnaska	CT Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound
Josh Cansler	Southeastern CT Water Authority
Alicea Charamut	Fisheries Advisory Council
Virginia de Lima	USGS CT Water Science Center
Mike Emmons	CT Nursery & Landscape Assoc.
Eric Hammerling	CT Forest and Park Association
Sean Hayden	Lake Waramaug Task Force
John Hudak	South Central CT Regional Water Authority
Patrick Kearney	Manchester Water & Sewer
Fred Klein	CT Power and Energy Society
David Knauf	Darien Health Department
Dan Lawrence	Aquarion
Margaret Miner	Rivers Alliance
Aimee Petras (alt.)	Farmington River Watershed Association
Joanna Rogalski (alt.)	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Denise Savageau	CT Association of Conservation Districts
Tom Tyler	MDC

Other Participantss:

Judy Allen	Save Our Water CT
Jonathan Avery	Hazardville Water Co./Jewett City Water Co.
Jack Betkoski	PURA
Corinne Fitting	DEEP
Peter Galant	Tighe & Bond
Alexandra Hibbard	DEEP
Ingrid Jacobs (alt.)	Aquarion
Iris Kaminski	
David Kuzminski (alt.)	Town of Portland
Gail Lucchina	PURA
Sarah Ridyard	CT Water Co.
Martha Smith (alt.)	Rivers Alliance
Kelsey Wentling	CT River Conservancy

Members Absent:

Joan Nichols	CT Farm Bureau Assoc.
Jeff Pugliese	Middlesex Chamber of Commerce
Brenda Watson	Operation Fuel

1. Call to Order

The WPCAG meeting was called to order and Alicia Charamut asked participants to introduce themselves. She provided an overview of remote meeting procedures.

2. Approval of Minutes

Alicia Charamut asked if there are any comments about the draft [minutes of the 7/21/2020 meeting](#). Fred Klein referred to the discussion of drought and said the minutes should also mention his recommendation that drought declarations be made on a more granular basis. A motion was made to approve the minutes as amended and the motion was seconded and approved unanimously, with Mike Emmons, John Hudak, Dan Lawrence, and Joanne Rogalski abstaining because they had not attended the meeting.

3. Water Planning Council Update

a. Implementation Work Group (IWG)

Virginia de Lima said the Implementation Work Group (IWG) met prior to this meeting and one topic of discussion was the challenge of participating in consecutive Zoom meetings. She is polling members to gauge their interest and availability to meet the second, not the third Tuesday of future months, at 1:30. The group will make that change if acceptable.

Virginia said the [Alliance for Water Efficiency](#) (AWE) continues its work on behalf of the WPC. She noted that a focus of the work is on maintaining revenue stability for water utilities as water is conserved. She reminded everyone that part of that work will involve case studies. The Regional Water Authority has volunteered to be one of the studies and it is hoped that a municipal system will volunteer to be a second study.

Virginia said the rates workshop currently scheduled for March, 2021 might be postponed because COVID could still impact participation at that time and the preference is for it to be an in-person meeting. AWE is also looking at possible changes in state laws regarding water-conserving fixtures and water loss accounting. AWE is looking how other states handle those.

Virginia said the drought topical group is working on final report after finishing its review of the interagency drought work group handling of the drought of 2016-17. She also mentioned that the private well group is waiting for further feedback regarding the white paper it prepared. The IWG is recruiting members for a new group to consider water quality aspects of private wells. That group should begin meeting in late September.

Virginia said another new topical group will focus on water plan education and outreach. She noted the interest in reaching different audiences and using different approaches. She also mentioned the desire to avoid duplication of WUCC efforts. Another work group being formed will look at utility regionalization and interconnections. As requested by the WPC, that group will also consider wastewater systems. A revised proposal, including wastewater, will be provided to the WPC at its September meeting.

b. Other WPC/State Water Plan matters

Alicea said there is nothing to report because the WPC did not meet.

4. Old Business

a. Water Utility Coordinating Committees

Dan Lawrence said the eastern and western [Water Utility Coordinating Committees](#) (WUCCs) have met. The central WUCC has not because it has to replace its co-chairs. Similar to the WPC and WPCAG, subgroups will be formed from the WUCCs to implement WUCC plan recommendations.

Margaret Miner said she likes the policy work of the group, but has some questions. She noted that WUCC meetings have small turnout and said they continue to approve new water systems. A question had been raised as to whether that process really is slowing the increase in small systems. Three such systems were discussed at the recent western WUCC meeting.

Dan Lawrence said one of the proposed systems would be an affordable housing development in Canaan and they were directed to first check on the availability of water from a nearby school. The second system would be a small transient system, not a community system, in West Cornwall. The third system is in Aquarion's exclusive service area in Monroe, but is greater than 165 ft from Aquarion's line.

There was a discussion of property owners not being required to connect to an ESA holder's system if it is beyond that distance and of the political pressure faced if trying to require such a connection. Dan Lawrence noted that a well and pressure tank can cost less than a short water main extension.

Margaret Miner questioned the value of WUCCs if they cannot for such a connection. She also asked about the updating of WUCC mapping after such changes. Dan noted the cross-subsidization concern raised if a water system is extended to serve a more distant user and noted the differences in approach for economic and residential development.

Fred Klein said he represents developers and there is a cost to develop a new supply and to connect to an existing system. Systems paid for by developers are sometimes used to provide waters to others. We need to consider the impact on economic development. Dan Lawrence said that is one of the challenges and there is work to be done.

Denise Savageau said we should rethink the preference for big systems over old systems. She pointed out that the preference for centralization is being reconsidered in storm water management, agriculture, and energy. Is water different? Alicea Charamut said the work group is being formed and what do we want?

Jonathan Avery said the state should ensure that design standards for small systems are appropriate and described the work his companies have had to do to improve small systems built to lower standards. Denise Savageau said the state's approach has been to extend a water main when there is a problem with a small system.

Margaret Miner said centralization has been DPH's goal and there is a lot to be said for decentralization.

b. COVID-19 issues for water-related agencies and other entities

Alicea said this can be removed from future agendas.

c. Interagency Drought Work Group update

Alicea Charamut mentioned Fred Klein's earlier comment about a more granular approach to drought declarations and said the Interagency Drought Work Group's website shows they have been doing a county-by-county analysis this summer. She is very impressed by the amount of data being reviewed and asked group member Corinne Fitting to describe the group's process.

Corinne Fitting agreed that the interagency group is looking at drought at a more granular level now. She added that US Geological Survey and National Weather Service staff are on the group's calls. The group met last week and will meet again this week. She provided an overview of conditions and of water utilities that are approaching their individual system drought triggers.

There was a discussion of data reviewed by the interagency group and Corinne highlighted the different status of short-term and long-term indicators. She also mentioned that the group is working on graphics to improve messaging. Denise Savageau noted the importance of the trigger levels and said this probably will be a part of the topical group reports. There was a discussion of where to find data on the water website (see <https://portal.ct.gov/Water/Drought/Data-and-Reports>).

d. Alliance for Water Efficiency work

Alicea Charamut said Virginia de Lima has covered this already.

5. WPCAG Work Groups

a. Watershed Lands Work Group

Karen Burnaska said there are two issues to discuss today related to legislative land conveyances. She will discuss the WPCAG's review of recommended changes to the legislative land conveyance request form. There was a discussion of the WPCAG's previous input and of the land conveyance process in general and work group goal. Karen said the WPC will decide what is sent to the legislative leaders.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the proposed addendum to the land conveyance questionnaire and to send it to the WPC with a recommendation that it be provided to the General Assembly. Fred Klein suggested that a brief introduction be added to explain what it is for. Margaret Miner said she expects that to be added and that, at this time, they want to see if the WPC approves the addendum language. The introduction might vary according to the audience. Dan Lawrence agreed that an explanation should be included.

There was a discussion of how the original questionnaire and the work group's addendum combine into an overall framework. Margaret Miner offered to draft a brief introduction. She explained that the questionnaire does not ask about potential impacts to water resources, so the addendum is intended to do so. There was a discussion of what the WPCAG is being asked to approve: the second page and the overall approach. Eric Hammerling said a cover memo is only necessary for review by the WPCAG and WPC. It won't be required at the General Assembly. There was further discussion of expectations. The motion was approved unanimously.

Karen Burnaska said she and Margaret Miner will add the desired language. Margaret Miner mentioned Rep. Steinberg's and Rep. Ryan's interest in the situation. Alicea Charamut asked if Cheshire had responded to DEEP and said she will ask at the upcoming WPC meeting.

Jack Betkoski left the call so the group could discuss concerns that have arisen regarding solar energy installations on public water supply watershed lands. John Hudak provided some background regarding solar energy installations on public water supply watershed lands not owned by the water company. He noted that projects on lands owned by the water company receive an additional layer of review, by DPH.

John Hudak described a project proposed in the Regional Water Authority's (RWA's) Lake Whitney watershed, which would generate 1.9 megawatts and clear 15 acres of forest adjacent to land owned by the RWA. The developer [has submitted a petition](#) to the [CT Siting Council](#) (CSC) seeking a declaratory ruling that a certificate for environmental compatibility and public need is not required. Documents are online at the CSC website and comments are due by September 6.

Fred Klein said the CSC review process is public and applicants are required to notify neighbors, so the RWA should have been notified of that petition. John said he has not seen such a notification, but the RWA is aware of the petition. Fred Klein said he is interested in any information that can be shared.

Denise Savageau said that there is a lot of discussion of the continued siting of solar arrays on natural landscapes when already-developed roof-tops, parking lots, and other sites are available for siting. Developers look for the lowest costs, but are not including the externalities. She said this is being discussed at the [Governor's Council for Climate Change](#) (GC3).

Denise said there have been a lot of problems and mentioned that DEEP has denied a permit for a project not meeting storm water management regulations. There have been some changes already, but source water protection should be stronger. Martha Smith noted that neighbors and the town are opposed and Denise said the CSC is not friendly to interveners.

Margaret Miner said a new, but weak law requires a limited signoff by DEEP. She described a Candlewood-area project and said these follow a different process than cell towers. Energy projects go through an almost rubber stamp process. They can get a fast track past environmental and environmental justice considerations. As a result, they can be destructive to water resources when they should be helpful.

Denise Savageau said a representative of DEEP is a member of the CSC, but that person does not send site information to DEEP programs for their review.

b. Conservation Pricing and Rate Recovery Analysis

There was no update.

c. Utility Merger Analysis Workgroup

There was no update.

6. New Business

a. Nominating Committee

John Hudak noted that a draft slate of members for 2021 was circulated today and asked members to review the included information, especially regarding alternated. He recommended that the WPCAG act on that draft in September and provide it to the WPC in October. Eric Hammerling corrected the spelling of his alternate's name and John Hudak asked Sean Hayden to confirm the name of his alternate.

b. Other

Margaret Miner mentioned that WPCAG member Brenda Watson's organization is a member of the [National Energy & Utility Affordability Coalition](#) (NEUAC). She mentioned that organization's [recent national conference](#) and recommended asking Brenda to give a presentation on the coalition and its work.

Karen Burnaska thanked Aquarion and DEEP for their upcoming information session on the southwest regional pipeline and Alicea said further information will be circulated.

7. Public Comment

There were no further comments.

8. Next Meeting Date

Alicea said the next WPC meeting will be on September 1, 2020 and the WPCAG will meet September 15. The IWG must decide on a date, but the target date is September 8.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:53 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM