

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

November 17, 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_2020/2020-11-17_WPCAG_Audio.mp3

A video recording is available at:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/WPCAG_2020/2020_11_17_WPCAG_Video.mp4

NOTE: Recording began following introductions

Members Present by video or phone:

Aaron Budris	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
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.
Carol Haskins	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
Fred Klein	CT Power and Energy Society
David Knauf	Darien Health Department
David Kuzminski (alt.)	Portland Water Dept.
Dan Lawrence	Aquarion
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:

Judy Allen	Save Our Water CT
Jonathan Avery	Hazardville Water Co./Jewett City Water Co.
Jack Betkoski	PURA
Len DeJong	Kleinfelder
Corinne Fitting	DEEP
Alexandra Hibbard	DEEP
Ingrid Jacobs (alt.)	Aquarion
David Kalafa	
Iris Kaminski	
Sarah Ridyard	CT Water Co.
Martha Smith (alt.)	Rivers Alliance
Kelsey Wentling	CT River Conservancy

Members Absent:

Eric Hammerling	CT Forest and Park Association
Sean Hayden	Lake Waramaug Task Force
Joan Nichols	CT Farm Bureau Assoc.
Brenda Watson	Operation Fuel

1. Call to Order

Alicea Charamut asked everyone to introduce themselves and called the meeting to order at 1:33.

2. **Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [minutes of the 10/20/2020 meeting](#) and the motion was approved unanimously, with Lori Vitagliano abstaining because she had not attended the meeting.

3. **Water Planning Council Update**

a. Implementation Work Group (IWG)

Virginia de Lima said the IWG met and further discussed the [Alliance for Water Efficiency](#) (AWE) rates workshop to be held in the Spring. Maureen Westbrook of the CT Water Co. has been added as a speaker to discuss rate adjustment mechanisms and the workshop planning group is looking into adding a consumer representative. She also provided an overview of water conservation concepts being considered in another aspect of the AWE's work and noted that the WPC requested data be included regarding possible financial and energy savings.

Virginia said the work group evaluating the state's response to the previous drought expects to complete its work in December. The work group considering private well water quality issues has decided against recommending expansion of the list of potential contaminants being measured. They also decided to not limit their recommendation based on current levels of staffing or other resources available to agencies.

Virginia also provided an update regarding the water plan outreach work group. Efforts will be oriented towards two groupings: people working with water or in related fields and everyone else. She added that the group is adding agricultural interests to their work. Virginia mentioned the regionalism/interconnections work group and said they are waiting for input from the WPC. The IWG will consider additional groups too.

b. Other WPC/State Water Plan matters

Alicea Charamut said the [Governor's Council on Climate Change](#) (GC3) report will be completed in the next few months and noted that some of the expected recommendations already are consensus recommendations of the [state water plan](#). Hopefully some of those can move forward. There was a brief discussion of a possible approach.

Denise Savageau highlighted the significance of expected temperature increases, which will impact precipitation and evaporation. She mentioned ongoing work at UConn and noted the role of a longer growing season and said more work is needed.

Margaret Miner referenced the discussion of the private well water quality work group and said water quantity is also important, noting recent well problems. Virginia de Lima explained the evolution of the private well group, which originally

focused on improving the documentation of well siting information before proceeding to the current focus on water quality. Margaret asked if planning commissions consider water availability adequately when approving subdivisions, noting and added that wastewater disposal also is an issue.

4. Old Business

b. Interagency Drought Work Group

Dan Lawrence was experiencing technical difficulties, so the group proceeded to Sec. 4b, returning to Sec. 4a afterwards. Bruce Wittchen explained that the interagency drought group met earlier this month and decided to not change the drought designation of any county (see www.portal.ct.gov/water/drought). Conditions have improved somewhat, but problems remain. He noted that overall conditions in Fairfield County would not warrant declaring any stage of drought at this point, but they left it at Stage 1 to avoid giving mixed signals at a time when some water companies there have drought declarations. Alicea Charamut added that the flow of many streams declined to below normal again last week, prior to the most recent rain.

a. Water Utility Coordinating Committees

The group returned to Sec. 4a and Dan Lawrence said the regional [Water Utility Coordinating Committees](#) (WUCCs) are restarting WUCC plan implementation. They had good attendance at their recent combined meeting and established several subgroups to focus on specific topics. They are working with DPH regarding meeting minutes.

Alicea Charamut noted that there is overlap between groups working on certain topics and noted the coordination with the state drought plan. Denise Savageau asked what WUCCs are doing regarding conservation. Dan mentioned the role of rate adjustment mechanisms and said municipal water companies are especially dependent on maintaining water sales even when conservation is desired.

c. Nominating Committee

Josh Cansler said the WPC approved the [proposed slate of WPCAG members for 2021](#). The committee continues to work on the remaining vacancy, which is Mike Emmons's position. Mike clarified that he will remain a member through December and said he has encouraged the CT Nursery & Landscape Association (CNLA) to designate a replacement. He will update the group next month.

5. WPCAG Work Groups

a. Watershed Lands Work Group

Karen Burnaska said the group will meet Wednesday and provided an overview. She said they are waiting to hear about agency availability and that Fred Klein will coordinate with solar developers to attend. She added that Margaret Miner has invited [CT Siting Council](#) (CSC) members.

Margaret Miner said she has not received an answer from the CSC members she tried to contact. A former CSC member she contacted told her former members are unable to speak about the CSC for a period of time after leaving. She asked if the WPC has contacted the CSC and Jack Betkoski said the WPC has not.

Margaret mentioned the CSC's hearing regarding the [petition filed for the Gaylord Mountain solar project](#). She said state policies run counter to each other for such a project on such a site. She described the challenge of signing up to speak at the hearing, noting she was surprised to learn the deadline for doing so was seven days before. She said CSC's process is not good and the petition process is not appropriate for some projects. She added that they are stricter about cell towers.

Fred Klein asked if Margaret had contacted Melanie Bachman, the CSC's executive director. Margaret said she had not because she was more interested in hearing the perspective of CSC members, not the staff. How do things get through? Fred said Melanie is there day-by-day and there was a discussion of possible differences between the perspectives of CSC staff and members. Referring to local commissions, Margaret said some are run by their staff while others do not consult their staff.

There was further discussion of who to invite to work group meetings and Fred mentioned who he expects will participate in Wednesday's meeting on behalf of solar project developers. Alicea Charamut said the work group meeting will include the right people to map the way forward. Karen Burnaska asked Lori Vitagliano if she had anything to add on behalf of the Regional Water Authority. Lori said she did not but noted that John Hudak is working on this.

Denise Savageau said she was surprised by the requirement to sign up at least seven days in advance to speak at a CSC hearing. She added that she believes the state does not do enough for source water protection. DEEP concentrates on impaired waters and the CSC does not consider potential source water impacts.

Denise said the state should take a One Water approach, looking across all agencies in determining where to focus resources. Denise noted that some [Section 319](#) funding has been provided for a healthy water initiative in eastern CT, but the [Integrated Water Resources](#) plan does not address drinking water. She said we must look beyond impaired waters, adding that climate change will exacerbate the problems.

Margaret Miner said energy and environmental issues are addressed by DEEP, while drinking water is addressed by DPH. The WPC combines all. Fred Klein said expansion of the WPC's role to also address energy would require legislative expansion of the WPC's authority and the CSC already fills that role for energy and environmental considerations. He added that solar projects are also subject to extensive DEEP review, which includes consideration of storm water.

Jack Betkoski said DEEP and PURA are represented on the CSC and described challenges in the WPC approach, noting that a variety of controversies and issues must be considered. Alicea Charamut recommended that this conversation be continued at the work group's meeting tomorrow.

b. Conservation Pricing and Rate Recovery Analysis

There was no update.

c. Utility Merger Analysis Workgroup

There was no update.

6. New Business

a. Other

There was no new business.

7. Public Comment

There were no further comments.

8. Next Meeting Date

Alicea read the dates of upcoming meetings and said the [agenda for tomorrow's watershed lands meeting](#) is available on the state's public meeting site. Bruce Wittchen said he just and the agenda is not there yet. He will post the agenda there and on the WPC site immediately following this meeting.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM