



**Joint Meeting of Water System Advisory Committee (WSAC)  
and Creeks, Drainage, and Wastewater Advisory Committee (CDWAC)**

**July 12, 2017 Meeting Notes**

**Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue**

**Room 4901**

**5:30 pm – 7:30 pm**

Committee Members	Present?	SPU Staff & Guests	Role
<b>WSAC</b>			
Rodney Schauf	Y	Alex Chen	Director, Water Planning & Program Management
Melissa Levo	N	Madeline Goddard	DWW Deputy Director
Teresa Stern	Y	Sheryl Shapiro	CAC Program Manager
Paul Reed	Y	Natasha Walker	CAC Program Coordinator
Michael Godfried	Y	Kathy Curry	Water LOB Liaison
Joel Carsley	Y	Brian Medford	SPU Strategic Business Plan Lead
Steven Cole	Y	Julie Howell	SPU DWW Source Control and Pollution Prevention Division
Wendy Walker	N	Rachel Garrett	SPU Customer Programs
Ky Lewis	Y		
Kat Dej-Panah	Y		
<b>CDWAC</b>			
Ben Billick	Y	<b>Guests</b>	
Christina Ciampa	N	Noel Miller	CDWAC Alum, Guest
Schylar Hect	Y	Devin O'Reilly	CDWAC Alum, Guest
Patrick Jablonski	N	Maria McDaniel	Guest
Colum Lang	N		
Seth McKinney	N		
Gary Olson	Y		
Mariella White	N		
Michael Williams	Y		

**Action Items**

- The first CDWAC-WSAC Networking Opportunity (Held monthly, 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesdays, at 6PM at Shawn O'Donnell's in Pioneer Square) has been postponed to September, in order to allow members to attend their neighborhood Night Out events (Tuesday, Aug 1<sup>st</sup>)
- Sheryl and Natasha will survey CDWAC-WSAC Members to see if there are action plans that they would like to dive deeper into.

## 1. Regular Business

- CDWAC Co-Chair Gary Olson opened the meeting at 5:32 PM and reminded attendees to sign-in.
- Committee Members, SPU staff, and guests introduced themselves.
- Meeting notes from June were approved.
- Sheryl indicated emergency exits, exit procedures, and bathrooms.
- Sheryl provided a membership update.
- Sheryl recognized Devin O'Reilly, CDWAC Alum, whose membership ended in May. Members of CDWAC and WSAC shared the things they appreciated about Devin, including his mentorship capabilities as Co-Chair, his advocacy and support of the Utility, and his different angle/perspective on a variety of topics.

## 2. DWW / Water LOB Updates

SPU Drainage and Wastewater (DWW) Deputy Director, Madeline Goddard, and Water System LOB Liaison, Kathy Curry, provided a few DWW and Water line of business updates.

- **DWW South Operations Center:** Madeline provided a brief update on the proposed design for the Operations Center, noting that the SEPA has been released with a 30-day comment period and opportunity for input: <http://www.seattle.gov/util/SouthOperationsCenter>. She said they hoped to have staff moving in by Q1 2020.
- **Water LOB news:** Alex shared a recent water quality complaint, highlighted on the West Seattle News blog. The calls were prompted by brown-colored water, which was linked to recent fire hydrant testing in the area. He explained that sediment or rust particles in the pipes can get dislodged during testing if the hydrants are flowed aggressively. When this happens, SPU works with customers to flush their systems to improve the water quality. Alex said he would be happy to come back at a later date to discuss this process.
  - **Committee Member:** You didn't mention any issues during those testings. Have you ever heard anyone say, "if you close those hydrants aggressively, do you ever get lines hammered?"
    - **Committee Member:** We were suspecting that in our neighborhood. There was an event in our neighborhood and after it was shut off, there was a geyser. A service break.
    - **Response:** More typically, they go to a hydrant and find that they don't work. We respond to those types of service calls within 24 hours.
  - **Committee Member:** Do you know what the sediment is, and if there's any health concerns?
    - **Response:** No health concerns, just aesthetic. We recommend they flush the system. If it takes an excessive time to get the water to run clear, we send someone out to flush the water main and investigate for you.

## 3. SPU Strategic Business Plan (SBP) Update

Brian Medford, staff lead for Strategic Business Plan (SBP) Update, provided a brief SBP introduction, beginning with a timeline of the Customer Review Panel process to date. Currently, SPU has completed

the proposed SBP Update and has provided a high-level presentation to the Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development & Arts (CRUEDA) Committee of City Council on July 11. He said that going forward, there will be two more meetings with the CRUEDA Committee and the SBP Update would then be presented to the Full Council.

Brian explained that the purpose of today's meeting was to give CAC members the opportunity to hear the experience from two members serving on the Customer Review Panel (CRP), and review the CRP letter presented to Council.

Current WSAC Chair, Rodney Schauf, and CRP Chair (and CDWAC Alum), Noel Miller, provided a presentation on the CRP process and experience. They said it was a challenge to review all 22 original Action Plans that impacted the rate path, within the September-May timeline given for the CRP meetings. Noel noted that many CRP members had previously served on the CACs, meaning that they did not need to start from scratch to get up to speed in knowledge of the lines of business (LOBs). Rodney and Noel discussed the evolution of deliberations on the proposed rate path options during the CRP process:

- Trimming Action Plans
- Digging into the reasons why the rate was increasing particularly from the Ship Canal Water Quality and Move Seattle Transportation utility related projects
- Decisions to defer some actions, such as diaper and pet waste composting
- Additional revenue opportunities to lower the rate path
- Discussion on the reduction of utility taxes and have them shown as a line item on the customer bills
- Beefing up apprenticeship programs
- The CRP helped to identify \$135 million worth of savings as well as highlight important investments. Rodney noted that although \$135 million was saved, the CRP only reduced the rate by one tenth of a percent. "Although it sounds like a large number, it really becomes a small percentage. It takes a lot to move the needle."
- The CRP is proposing that the City Council empower the Panel come back together twice per year to discuss the progress on implementation of the Strategic Business Plan and the CRP recommendations.

An initial draft of the SBP Update was shared with CAC members. A link of the plan, posted to the CRUEDA website: <http://www.seattle.gov/council/committees/civil-rights-utilities-economic-development-and-arts> was sent electronically to CAC members. Noel also shared the CRP letter, which was signed unanimously. Noel said this was "truly a CRP-wide effort;" and that "all CRP members bought into the plan that was forwarded to Council." He noted that he thought the CRP letter would likely get more attention than it had in the past, based on the July 11 CRUEDA meeting. The meeting time was extended by Councilmember Lisa Herbold in order to hear from the CRP.

CAC Members provided a round of applause for the Customer Review Panel members. A guest noted that they had seen a news article that quoted Lisa Herbold from the 7/11 CRUEDA meeting, where she emphasized the importance of listening to the CRP.

- **CAC Member:** I looked at the report but didn't get into the details. Did you parse out the percentage amount that the Consent Decree represents in the budget/overall rate?
  - **Staff Response:** We gave them a pie-chart, which showed how much was regulatory driven, etc. About .5% was related to the Consent Decree.
  - **Staff Response:** Once the Council votes on the plan, we're more than willing to give a presentation on how those numbers came out. When it comes to the baseline, we didn't have a choice.
  - **Committee member:** But it's a talking point; it's a large chunk of money.
  - **Noel:** The other large percentage point is replacing infrastructure related to the MOVE Seattle initiative. That was the other big surprise.
- **Staff comment:** This is the first time I've gone through a SBP process with a panel. It was not easy. They were very demanding, but they made us look at how we can do business differently. They wanted to ensure we get a return on investments. There were a lot of lessons learned through this process; we went through every proposed Action Plan multiple times and looked at them in different ways. I want to remind current CAC members that in the future, it could be you [serving on the CRP]. The process was very time-consuming, but very worthwhile for SPU.
- **CAC Member:** [Regarding the bar graph of rate increases] You say it's a 5.5% rate over the SBP life, but can you explain the especially high rate in 2019?
  - **Noel:** The rates are already in ordinance for 2018. The CRP recommended some rate smoothing/superseding of the 2018 rate to help reduce the 2019 rate.
  - **CAC Member:** Should have an explanation for that rate spike.
- **CAC Member:** You mentioned that there is no reserve fund for aging infrastructure. What is standard in the industry?
  - **Noel:** The practice has been to push it off.
  - **Rodney:** In the commercial sector, there is always money set aside for it. But I think it's interesting that the City doesn't do that. There are legislative reasons why that doesn't happen with a public entity like this.
  - **Staff response:** One of the reasons we don't have a reserve fund, is that we typically pay for CIP's primarily with bonds. It's one of the ways we deal with intergenerational equity. We spread that cost over time. We do have a small reserve fund for the drinking water system to offset the financial impacts of droughts. In past droughts, when we have asked customers to use less water than they normally do, that has translated into a financial impact associated with reduced water sales revenue.
  - **CAC Member:** I think the State had an infrastructure fund, but then it got raided. Trust funds aren't sacrosanct.
- **CAC Member:** They keep saying that the pipes are 75 years old. How many are that old?
  - **Response:** Over 50%, and that's just the median age.

A one-pager of SBP Action Plans (investments beyond the SPU baseline) was handed out. Brian provided a high-level overview of the Action Plans that were presented to Council. He noted that if CACs wanted a deep-dive on any of the Action Plans, SPU has business experts who can provide a more in-depth

presentation. We will survey CAC members to see if there are Action Plans that they would like to dive deeper into.

#### 4. SPU “Flushables” Program Outreach

Julie Howell, Wastewater Prevention Program Coordinator and Rachel Garrett, SPU Wastewater Education and Outreach Program Manager provided a presentation on SPU’s “Flushables” Program. Julie and Rachel reviewed some of the challenges of non-flushable items in the wastewater stream. Julie shared statistics on the nonwoven fabric market, which includes “flushable” wipe manufacturers, and explained that the industry is growing. As a result, SPU has developed the “Make it a Straight Flush” campaign, which seeks to educate Seattle homeowners on proper flushing protocol. Rachel shared the 2013-2014 customer research results; the full “Make it a Straight Flush” Outreach Campaign Report was distributed electronically. Rachel shared past campaign mailers, noting that CDWAC had influenced the residential mailer and commercial poster. She also shared the “Make It a Straight Flush” outreach videos, and asked for CDWAC-WSAC feedback on the videos.

#### Rachel posed the following questions to Committee Members:

- *What are your thoughts on the mailer and door-to-door outreach materials we are using for outreach to commercial and residential customers?*
  - *What are your thoughts on the three outreach videos? Which one(s) do you think are most effective, and why? The videos will be shown during the meeting, or can be viewed on SPU’s YouTube site here:*
    - o [“Shaking jars” video](#)
    - o [Animated flushing video](#)
    - o [Pump Station 9 video](#)
  - *Can you think of other potential audiences for targeted outreach (see Slide 17)?*
  - *What other methods or metrics do you think could be used to evaluate outreach program effectiveness?*
- **CAC Member:** Why are manufacturers of these products allowed to use the term “flushable”?
    - o **Staff Response:** The labeling is misleading. The fact that it is a \$35 billion-dollar industry is a big part of that reason. Utilities around the world have been fighting with legal and legislative efforts to put a real definition to the word “flushable.” The only legislation that has been passed in the US is in the District of Columbia Maryland and some other states have introduced legislation but it hasn’t yet been passed. You can try to pass legislation, but for a lawsuit you have to prove harm. We’re working on collecting those costs and reporting them.
    - o **CAC Member:** So, the manufacturer industry says it’s flushable but they didn’t actually ask [if they could flush these materials]?
      - **Staff Response:** That’s correct.
    - o **CAC Member:** Are there any European countries that have implemented bans?
      - **Staff Response:** Japan has come up with a truly flushable wet wipe, which I just heard of recently. There’s certainly international pressure.
      - **Staff Response:** They are a big issue in most municipalities in the United States.
      - **CAC Member:** Why don’t all the municipalities band together on a lawsuit?
      - **Staff Response:** Some municipalities have. You do need documented costs to show harm, to pursue a lawsuit. We are working to better assess costs to SPU.

- **CAC Member:** What if you start making smart pipes? A device that can actually drag all those materials out of the pipes. Retrofit to the pipes. Less work for the crew.
  - **Staff Response:** It would be really hard to implement, and you often don't have the opportunity to collect before the materials get to the pump station. We clean our sewer pipes with high pressure nozzles and cutter blades, which can damage pipes.
- **CAC Member:** Since you know which pump stations are having issues, could you include a notice in the bill of those residents that live in the basin?
  - **Staff Response:** We certainly could. Is that a one-time thing, is it twice a year? With our outreach, at least in Pump 9 basin, it did seem that the compound effect of information from multiple sources was helpful.
- **CAC Member:** When you travel outside of the Country, there are places where you can't flush anything, including toilet paper. Have you considered paper sticker decals for the inside of the toilet? You would see it every time you open the toilet.
  - **Staff Response:** We had stickers for the tank at one point. I like the idea of expanding where we hang signs.
  - **CAC Member:** I was thinking for residential.
  - **CAC Member:** And you could give them a roll of toilet paper with it.
- **CAC Member:** It sounded like you received a lot of feedback, and a lot of people didn't care unless it impacted their house. Has there been any messaging around the financial harm, i.e. "This kind of issue is another reason why Utility rates go up."
  - **Staff Response:** Not yet, because we're missing cost data. Pump Station 9 has provided the best information so far and it is still limited. We are still working on improving cost reporting.
- **CAC Member:** Sewer repairs is in the Action Plan. Is this work in that number?
  - **Staff Response:** This is included in Capital Project numbers.
  - **Rodney:** They're talking about work that is already in SPU's baseline. Action Plans are above and beyond that.
  - **Staff Response:** That said, we have had to do upgrades (like to Pump Station 9) to handle the flow of wastewater and trash.
- **CAC Member:** What's the added cost of the impact to the pumps? Is it being measured?
  - **Staff Response:** We are working to better quantify those costs.
- **CAC Member:** In commercial environments, you could have a sign on the bathroom door. Would have to be readily available and inexpensive, because it's subject to graffiti/vandalism.
  - **Staff Response:** We provide laminated signs, with special tape. They are hard to remove, but won't leave tape residue.
  - **Rodney:** I will give you a call (for Sheraton Hotel)

## 5. CDWAC and WSAC Commitment to Public Engagement

Sheryl noted that the previous presentation shows how important it is to be out in the community, hearing other perspectives. Sheryl shared a one-pager with possible community engagement opportunities. She encouraged members to get a feel for what's going on in the community and what work we're doing there.

- Trees for Seattle event
- Taylor Creek Open House
- Duwamish River Festival

- Handed out literature for talking about the CAC Program and business cards; if members would like to request additional materials or have edits they were encouraged to do so.

### **6. Field Trip Planning**

We will send these out via email in the next couple days

- Wed., August 9 (regular CDWAC meeting: Field trip to the Duwamish. 4:30-5:30 Presentation. Sheryl requested RSVPs ASAP, so we can plan for transportation.
- Sat, September 9: Landsburg and Cedar River Hatchery Tour. 1+ hour transportation each way, plus tour. Opportunity to give input on SPU Salmon Recovery Goals. We have a Committee member minimum in order to confirm the event. We will email out details.

### **6. Around the table**

- Happy Hour planned for Aug 1 is cancelled as it is also neighborhood Night Out. We will be rescheduling to September. Thanks to Wendy Walker for facilitating the calendar invites.

**Adjourned 7:37 PM**