



Meeting of the Water System Advisory Committee (WSAC)

June 12, 2019 Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue

Room 4901

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

WSAC Members	Present?	SPU Staff & Guests	Role
Joel Carsley	Y	Natasha Walker	CAC Program Coordinator
Steven Cole	Y	Sheryl Shapiro	CAC Program Manager
Rodney Schauf	Y	Melissa Levo	Water System Policy Liaison (Interim)
Kat Dej-Panah	N	Stephen Beimborn	Departmental GIS Analysts, Seattle IT
Wendy Walker	N	Ingrid Goodwin	Strategic Communication Advisor, Water LOB
Annie Saunders	Y	Christian Clemmensen	Web Manager, Community Affairs Division
Christina Heinlen	Y	Brian Rosete	GIS Products & Services, Seattle IT
Angella Mickowski	Y	Alex Chen	Division Director, Water Planning and Program Management
		Rufi Mallick	Project Manager, Seattle IT
		Catherine Wendland	Trainer, Seattle IT
		Mike Harms	Operations Response Center for City of Seattle
		Guests	
		Chris Portrey	Guest
		Imani Martinez	Guest
		Robert Smith	Guest
		Akemi Smith	Guest

1. Regular Business

- WSAC Chair, Rodney Schauf, opened the meeting at 5:35 PM.
- Sheryl indicated emergency exits and exit procedures.
- May Meeting summary was approved for posting.

2. Water Outages Map – 5:45PM

Stephen Beimborn, who works on the GIS Products & Services team in Seattle IT, opened with a history of the development of the water outages map, which began with a citizen request to create a map much like Seattle City Light’s outage map tool. The goal of the map is to create a more reliable and efficient tool for managing water main shutdowns, and to communicate with the public more easily and clearly about SPU service interruptions, as well as provide details about water discoloration, boil water advisories, etc. The goal of meeting with WSAC is to test the Beta version of this new online tool.

Christian Clemmensen, Web Manager in SPU Community Affairs Division, provided an overview of the beta version of the water outages map, which uses sample data. Clemmensen walked members through the layout of the map webpage. The plan is to feature this map prominently on the SPU homepage, which is why CAC feedback is especially important.

Brian Rosete, also with GIS Products & Services in Seattle IT and Seattle IT trainer, Catherine Wendland, walked members through the interactive functions of the map. They provided a quick overview of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), to better understand the mapping controls and functionality.

- **A WSAC Member** asked how quickly water outage information gets updated on the map. Staff responded that most water outages are planned and scheduled. For emergency outages, the map will be updated as soon as the crews indicate the water main has been shut off.
- **A WSAC Member** recommended having a QR code to access the map page.
- **A WSAC Member** shared that one of the paragraphs spoke about the discolored water “clearing on its own.” They wanted to see more information on this. “Is there an estimated amount of time? Should I be concerned? When do I call?” They suggested including a video on water discoloration.
 - **Another WSAC member** added that they liked that SPU describes and discusses why there might be water discoloration, but that there is no information related to water discoloration after an outage. They felt that the current page, which focuses on non-water outage reasons for water discoloration (such as lead), might cause alarm. Staff agreed and discussed linking to a page about outage-related water discoloration.
 - **Another WSAC member** added that the language should say “if the water is not clear” (to indicate any color), as other colored water is possible. Staff shared about bacteriological issues in plumbing that can result in blue water.
- **A guest** was unclear if the map covered just Seattle or neighboring cities. They suggested including a border to show account boundaries. A WSAC member suggested, alternatively, graying out and/or differentiating the topography of the areas not in SPU’s service area.
- **A WSAC member** expressed appreciation for seeing treed areas represented on the map.
- **Multiple WSAC members** suggested including accurate information in the test data of the beta version.
- **A guest** asked about water meter readings. Staff shared more about the manual process of water meter readings, reviewing some of the discussion from the May WSAC meeting about manual vs automated meter readers.

Staff asked WSAC members to discuss if there was there any features or content missing from the map. Members responded:

- **A WSAC Member** asked about ways to report water outages not noted on the map. Another member added that while a phone number exists for reporting discolored water, it is not clear if you can call that number for other reasons. A third member shared this concern.
- **A WSAC Member** said that they could not pan in the map window. They were using Chrome on a Google Pixel.

- **A WSAC Member** said they wouldn't have thought to click on the left arrows to view the legend. A discussion ensued between staff and members about possibly adding a graphic on the site as an alternative legend. Alternatively, members suggested adding the label, "Legend," noting that icons are not always clear on their own.
 - **A WSAC Member** asked where the recent outages on the map were located. Staff noted that this would be hard to determine if they did not see the legend. The CAC member confirmed they had not seen the legend.
- **A WSAC Member** noted that Seattle residents may not understand what a water notice is (given the infrequency of boil advisories here). They thought that residents may not know what actions to take following a water notice (flushing faucets, namely.) Staff agreed they could include an educational link about boil advisories in the pop-up for these.
- **A WSAC Member** said they were expecting the auto-fill capability from Google Maps when you type in "Starbucks" or "QFC" in the location bar. They suggested adding "input address" text to the search bar, to help clarify. Staff said that validation to city points could be added.

Seattle IT staff engaged WSAC members in a discussion around the term, "account." The following suggestions were made:

- "homes" (with a distinction between residential / commercial)
- Include an Asterix next to "account". A discussion ensued around the importance of not interpreting "accounts" as customers.
- "households" or "dwelling units." (this was later dismissed as members understood the definition of account better)
- "Connections"
- "Account is generic enough"
- **A WSAC member** was worried that "account" might indicate that a customer would be financially impacted by the outage.
- **A guest** suggested including a definition of "account" on the page.
- **A WSAC member** suggested removing it entirely. They felt it was more of a data point for reporting, rather than for user interface. Staff responded that some people (in particular, media) may want to know the size of the outage. A discussion ensued about whether SPU would want to use this tool for communicating water outages to the media.
- **A WSAC member** felt it would be good to define what kind of residences are affected (commercial, residential, businesses). Staff responded that while we have that information and it would be easier to implement for planned outages, it would be difficult to implement for emergency outages. Seattle IT discussed the data they have in each polygon.

Due to time, members were asked to submit any additional comments via the meeting feedback survey.

3. Developer connections to water mains

Alex Chen, Division Director, Water Planning and Program Management, provided a presentation on the policy governing how developers are allowed to connect to water mains. Chen provided an overview of the various development charges, and the basics of water distribution lines and City versus homeowner responsibility for the lines. Chen reviewed a map of service lines in the City. Chen then shared about the process underway to gather feedback from developers as well as SPU ratepayers.

A discussion ensued with contrasting thoughts and opinions from WSAC members on the cost-responsibility for water main line upgrades.

- One WSAC member felt that given the median price of housing, the developer charges for connecting to water mains, and specifically street cuts, is adding a “small percentage point” to the overall cost of the home. They felt that customer satisfaction is part of SPU-stated goals, and long service lines will come back to affect SPU customers and ultimately SPU customer satisfaction. They added that if SPU is responsible for building main lines in these instances, it means a financial impact to all SPU customers. They did not feel this was right.
- A WSAC member asked for clarification about where these water line extensions are taking place most often (in densely populated parts of the City?). Staff explained that they take place in less gridded areas, which tend to be in single-family residential areas.
- A guest suggested a cost-share between developers and SPU and asked about other local utilities and their policies. A WSAC member added that even in a cost-share scenario, SPU ratepayers would see that cost reflected in their water bills.
- A WSAC member felt that developers should be responsible for the cost of their build, as well as how they pass that cost along. They felt strongly that SPU should not be involved in sharing in that cost.
- A WSAC member felt that the developer paying for water main line extensions “makes sense, but conflicts with the City’s need for more affordable housing.” They felt conflicted.
- A WSAC member added that if the Utility is predominantly responsible for this cost, that the impact would “roll through the system” and result in “water rate increases for those less fortunate as a result of new development.”
- A WSAC member felt that developers “should have a bit more independence from SPU’s water security priorities.” They did not feel the onus should be on the developer.
- A WSAC member suggested having an exception for low-income housing. Another member agreed.
- A WSAC member asked other members to consider why the federal government and state governments have consumer protections in place; why they care about the business practices of for-profit businesses such as developers.
- A WSAC member felt that some prospective home buyers might just be looking for the cheapest option, and not mind a developer choosing less expensive connection options. They felt that is a choice they should be able to make as a buyer.
- A WSAC member expressed that they did not like manifold connections because once the main service line goes out, then all units are impacted.

4. Summer Field Trips

- **Please join us for a tour of SPU's Water Quality Lab on Wednesday, July 10, 3-5PM.** This is a unique opportunity to explore the largest state-accredited water utility laboratory. The field trip includes an overview of water treatment, a tour of the microbiology and chemistry labs, and an interactive demonstration of water tasting performed there. The lab is in SODO (800 S Stacy St), a couple blocks from the SODO light rail stop. Onsite parking is available. Stay tuned for vanpool options. *Note: This date/time replaces the regular Water System Advisory Committee meeting.*
- **Please join us for a tour of the West Point Treatment Plant on Wednesday, August 21, 4-6PM.** Located next to Discovery Park in Seattle, West Point is part of King County's regional wastewater treatment system. West Point treats wastewater from homes and businesses in Seattle, Shoreline, north Lake Washington, north King County and parts of south Snohomish County. West Point treats about 100 million gallons of wastewater daily, and up to 440 million gallons of stormwater and wastewater during heavy rains. We will coordinate transportation options for those who need it. *Note: This date/time replaces the regular Creeks, Drainage & Wastewater Advisory Committee meeting.*

5. Community Insights, Around the Table

- **A WSAC Member** shared about a fundraiser in Kirkland for water machines.
- **A WSAC Member** shared that the Pike Place Market sunset supper tickets on sale now for August 16. Hoping to organize an SPU table with samples of water.
- **A WSAC Member** shared about the Water Law and Resource Management seminar in Seattle last couple days of June: <https://www.lawseminars.com/seminars/2019/19WATWA.php>
- Staff shared about an opportunity for input on Washington State Department of Ecology's Industrial Stormwater Permit. The meeting is on June 18. More information can be found here: <https://ecology.wa.gov/Events/WQ/Industrial-Stormwater-General-Permit/Public-Hearing-June-18-2019>
- Staff reminded members about a list of upcoming Race and Social Justice-related events, including the "Shape of Trust" at Benaroya Hall.
- Staff thanked members for their feedback in May on the SPU's leak adjustment director's rule. They said the input has started to inform the options they are considering.
- Staff shared about recent studies showing a correlation between microplastic ingestion and those who drink bottled water (versus tap water).
- Staff noted that SPU's Water Quality Report should be arriving in mailboxes soon.

Adjourned 7:31 PM