



Meeting of the Water System Advisory Committee (WSAC)

October 21, 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	Celia Kennedy	Water System Policy & Planning Liaison
Kat Dej-Panah	Y	Alex Chen	Drinking Water Planning and Program Management Division Director
Wendy Walker	Y	Melissa Levo	Residential Water Conservation Program Manager
Annie Saunders	Y	Anna Dyer	Community Outreach Water Conservation Program Manager
Christina Heinlen	Y	Guests	
Angella Mickowski	Y	Amal Saleh	Guest
Imani Martinez	Y	Kit Gardner	Guest
		Robert Smith	Guest
		Akemi Smith	Guest

1. Regular Business

- WSAC Chair, Rodney Schauf, opened the meeting at 5:33 PM.
- Sheryl indicated emergency exits and exit procedures.
- September meeting notes were approved for posting.
- Sheryl introduced the WSAC Officers Nomination Process. Current WSAC Chair and Vice-Chair, Joel and Rodney shared their experiences serving as officers. The election process is as follows:
 - 10/22: Nominations for 2020 officers open. Self-nominations are accepted. Members are encouraged to contact Joel, Rodney, or Sheryl to discuss the roles in more detail.
 - 11/13: Nominations are due. Nominees will be contacted to confirm their interest.
 - 12/4: Nomination statements due.
 - 12/11: WSAC Meeting, elections will be held.
- WSAC Chair Rodney shared a photograph from his recent visit to the weir under the I-405 bridge in Renton. He shared about his conversation with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife representatives to better understand the state of Chinook and other salmon species based on their collections this year.

2. SPU Customer Review Panel Update

Rodney Schauf provided an update on the most recent Customer Review Panel (CRP) meeting. Schauf explained that Seattle Public Utilities is looking to extend the deadline for the Strategic Business Plan

due date to City Council to (beyond June), to allow for a deeper dive by members and the community. The plan is to work on keeping the rate path consistent, at no more than 5.0 increase a year (blended rates for all SPU lines of business). Schauf will provide more details after the next CRP meeting on November 5, 2019, which should include a more detailed update on projects.

You can review the most recent quarterly update here:

http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SPU/SBP_2019_Q2_Report.pdf

3. Multifamily Water Conservation

Melissa Levo, Residential Water Conservation Program Manager, provided a presentation on Saving Water Partnership's approach to water conservation in apartments and condos, and to request feedback on the design of a pilot program, including:

- Gaining perspective on the challenges of conservation in this sector; and
- Gathering feedback on program direction, resources/tools that might be helpful to tenants/landlords.

Levo began with a brief overview of the Saving Water Partnership. The Saving Water Partnership is a group of 18 local water utilities (including SPU) who collaborate to provide water conservation programs to their customers in Seattle and King County. Levo explained why water conservation is a priority for SPU, despite current availability of water supply. Water conservation is an integral part of SPU's commitment to the wise management of natural resources. Conserving water helps manage the impact of growth on the region's drinking water supplies and will keep more water in our mountain rivers for fish, for wildlife, and for future generations.

Levo then dove into the multifamily water conservation program. She explained that the multifamily sector in Seattle is growing, accounting for 21% of water consumption. There is an efficiency in working with this sector, as one "account," which could enable outreach to hundreds of residents to build a conservation ethic. Additionally, landlords may be interested in the financial incentives and there is the opportunity to reach more low-income and vulnerable populations.

Levo reviewed how various property managers charge renters for their water usage (known as cost recovery). She explained how these different cost recovery methods can impact tenant conservation behaviors and landlord motivation to upgrade fixtures and appliances.

Levo then discussed the saving water partnership toilet rebate program, and specifically discussed the 2017-2019 Multifamily toilet rebate program. She reviewed the barriers to participation in the multifamily rebate program, and the pilot rebate program design she is currently undertaking which seeks to address some of those barriers.

- **A WSAC Member** asked if behavior is more important than hardware. Staff explained that they often go hand in hand, and both are important.

- **A WSAC Member** asked how SPU defines multifamily. Staff responded that multifamily is defined as four or more units. That means a single-family home with multiple residents is still considered single-family.
- **A WSAC Member** asked if an “account” is defined as one apartment building. Staff responded that yes, an account is one building and this can pose a challenge when designing an outreach program.
- **Two WSAC Members** shared that they felt the RUBS (ratio utility billing system) felt unfair and did not like the lack of transparency in this billing style.
- **A WSAC Member** agreed with the idea that submetering would result in low motivation for landlords to upgrade hardware.
- **A WSAC Member** shared that they lived in a condo in Belltown for many years, and that 50% of those units are now used for Airbnb. They felt that education with this rate of turnover would become very expensive.
- **A WSAC Member** said that with the trend towards more multifamily and new construction, they felt the focus should be to encourage submetering. Staff responded that there may be a higher percentage of units in new buildings that are submetered. It’s easier to put submeters in when the buildings are being built than to retrofit. California code requires it, but it is not currently required by code in Washington or Seattle.
- **A WSAC Member** asked if all the cost to do the submetering work falls on the landlord; i.e., is it ever presented as an option to the renter to help pay for submetering. Staff responded that it can be costly to install, as it requires a certified plumber and monthly readings of the meters. There is also the challenge of distributing some of the common water use for a multifamily building.
- **A guest** felt that if residents knew they would need to pay for the full quantity of water that they use each month, then the program would not have to focus on motivating landlords to upgrade hardware.
- **A guest** asked about electronic meter readers to reduce the cost of adding submeters to a multifamily building. Staff explained that while the meters may be 100% automated, the property management would still have to have a qualified person do the monthly meter readings, distribute water use information, and bill apartments. This is often too much to take on for the companies. **A WSAC member added** that the other challenge to submetering is putting the meters where they’re accessible, because they will require maintenance.
- **A WSAC Member** shared that they appreciated the education they were receiving at tonight’s meeting and thought there would be interest in educating the public about the various cost recovery methods.
- **A WSAC Member** thought renters would be interested in understanding their water usage, even if they don’t have influence over their bill. She shared an example of an experiment where awareness of water-use, relative to their neighbors use, changed their behavior and resulted in a cultural shift over time.
- **A guest** felt that it would be useful to provide return on investment statistics to building managers to make a case for upgrading hardware. Staff responded that we have provided iterations on that, but that the calculation must be customized to the building and fixtures.

- **A WSAC member** added that an optimistic ROI tool on a website with plug-and-go parameters would be helpful. They felt that it should be easy to calculate the average flushes per day, multiplied by gallons-per-flush (gpf), to get an overall savings when upgrading toilets. Staff responded that it is the installation that varies widely, but agreed that even just displaying the water savings could be helpful.
- **A WSAC member** asked if schools and public buildings are considered multifamily? Staff responded no; they are categorized as commercial.
- **A WSAC member** asked what happens if a landlord does not replace his toilet(s) to code? Staff responded that older, non-code toilets could probably be found, but it's unlikely a landlord would do that.
- **A WSAC member** asked how to determine what the gallons per flush (gpf) is on a toilet. They felt this information could help tenants make a case to their landlords. Staff responded that the gpf is located sometimes on the outside of the toilet, or inside the tank or under the tank lid, stamped into the ceramic. They can also usually determine the gpf by the date (age) of the toilet. We are working on providing this information in a major revamp of Saving Water Partnership website, which will help customers determine eligibility for rebates.
- **A guest** suggested developing "How to talk to your landlord about replacing your toilet" talking points for tenants.
- **A WSAC member** suggested partnering with an approved list of plumbing companies that are concerned with water conservation.
- **A WSAC member** felt that an element missing from the educational side of the discussion is the intrinsic value of water. She wanted to see a statement with aspirational / motivational / emotional attachment, something like "water is life."

The discussion questions – will be added to the survey to provide more opportunities for input. They included:

- Thoughts on program changes (more emphasis on education)?
- Are there any barriers to water-saving behaviors in multifamily that you have identified?
- Are there tools/resources you think would be helpful?
 - For tenants
 - For landlords

4. Youth Water Conservation Program

Anna Dyer, Community Outreach Water Conservation Program Manager, provided a presentation on recent in-depth evaluation of youth water conservation programs and where SPU is currently headed. She noted that at an earlier presentation to WSAC highlighted that WSAC members felt strongly about prioritizing youth conservation education.

Dyer reviewed the existing youth water conservation programs, including the various curriculum, the geographic distribution of classes served, and the program reach for both race and income. Dyer reviewed her program evaluation design, and shared overall trends and the resulting decisions made to

improve the programs going forward. Dyer then reflected on the last year of implementing these recommendations. They are currently piloting 4 new programs.

- **A WSAC Member** asked how many students are reached via a “program.” Staff responded that a program denotes a single classroom, and there are likely 28-30 students per classroom.
- **A WSAC member** asked how the program targets schools to ensure the demographics reached match the demographics of the areas we serve. Dyer explained that we are not providing targeted advertising of the programs to schools based on their demographic information; rather, the evaluation was conducted to ensure the race and income of students served matched the demographics of the geographic areas served. If a significant gap in participation had been noted in any geographic area, the program could reach out to the wholesale water partner to help conduct targeted advertising.
- **A WSAC member** suggested that we advertise to schools who have higher water use than other schools. Staff responded that there is an opportunity there, and that it would be a natural partnership for the commercial water conservation program, and there is an opportunity to improve on this relationship in the future. Washington Green Schools, a nonprofit that works with schools, counts participation in some of the Nature Vision/SWP programs towards school certification.
- **A WSAC member** asked if the Water Cycle Terrarium, one of the most popular courses, is one of the programs oriented towards younger age group classes, and if the programs taught less frequently tend to be for older age groups. Staff responded that it is a great question, and one that will be addressed later in the presentation.
- **A guest** asked why there is a discrepancy between the percentage of programs taught to elementary school versus middle school/high school. WSAC Members discussed this and felt that standard core curriculum requirements and scheduling of individual subject area classes might be substantial barriers. Staff responded that yes, the rigidity of curriculum at older grade levels is one of the biggest barriers. But also, the programs tend to be interdisciplinary in younger grades, and don’t necessarily fit in the paradigm of narrower high school topics such as biology, chemistry, etc. She added that it does not mean we can’t develop programs for that age group, but we may need a different model. All the programs offered match up with Next Generation Science Standards and State standards.
- **A WSAC member** asked who conducts the marketing for the programs. Staff responded that the consultants do. They also provide the annual evaluations of their programs.
- **A guest** asked if it would be of value to look at the most popular programs and understand why they are more popular. Staff responded that, as mentioned earlier, the most popular programs are for the younger age groups because of the lack of curriculum barriers, though further analysis into the effectiveness of individual programs could be completed.
- **A WSAC member** asked how popularity of a program is determined? Staff responded that it is based on how many teachers decide to say “yes” to the program, not on program evaluations.
- **A WSAC member** asked if we have considered contracting with other consultants for the older age group? Staff responded that for the sake of this evaluation, we are looking at ensuring the

existing program is effective. There are other providers of programs and other models, and that is all on the table going forward.

- **A WSAC member** asked if water conservation is defined as “amount of water used,” and not about water contaminants or water quality? Staff responded that “yes,” we are only talking about water conservation.
- **A WSAC member** asked if the point in the slide about race was to demonstrate equity, why did we display the white population statistics. Staff explained that the data was provided by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. However, they noted that it was confusing when presented this way, and that they would take this feedback for modifying future presentations.
- **A WSAC member** asked if the school programs are offered in other languages? Staff responded “no,” they are only currently provided in English. However, one of the additions to the program was to design an infographic with no words, so students could bring back the information to their families who may not speak English.

5. Community Insights, Around the Table

- **A WSAC Member** shared that September was Emergency Preparedness Month and reminded members to ensure their emergency kits were put together.
- **A WSAC Member** reminded members to vote in the Nov 5th election.
- **A WSAC Member** shared that they are participating in sending water filters to the Bahamas. They explained that there will be a benefit concert in Las Vegas and Miami, and that American Airlines is pitching in to transport them.
- **A WSAC Member** shared that the American Water Resources Association, Washington section, is hosting a dinner meeting on Thursday, October 24, 5:30-8 pm, and Tutta Bella in Wallingford. The topic is “*The Washington State Department of Ecology’s 2019 Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington: An Overview of the 2019 Update.*” More information can be found here: <https://www.waawra.org/event-3591118>
- **Upcoming WSAC Meetings:**
 - WSAC Liaison, Celia Kennedy, shared that she is currently hoping to bring the topic of emergency response related to drinking water to the November meeting.
 - CAC Program Manager, Sheryl Shapiro shared that there is a good chance the November and December WSAC meetings will be held jointly with CDWAC, and to stay tuned for more information on that.
- WSAC Members and staff bid farewell and a big “thank you” to CAC Program Coordinator, Natasha Bailey. Appreciative words about Natasha were shared by WSAC Chair, Rodney Schauf.

Adjourned 7:33 PM