



**Meeting of the Water System Advisory Committee (WSAC)**

**March 13, 2019 Meeting Notes**

**Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue**

**Room 4901**

**5:30 pm – 7:30 pm**

| <b>WSAC Members</b>  | <b>Present?</b> | <b>SPU Staff &amp; Guests</b> | <b>Role</b>  |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Joel Carsley         | Y               | Natasha Walker                | CAC Program Coordinator                                  |
| Steven Cole          | N               | Kathy Curry                   | Water System Policy Liaison (Former)                     |
| Rodney Schauf        | Y               | Sheryl Shapiro                | CAC Program Manager                                      |
| Teresa Stern         | Y               | Melissa Levo                  | Water System Policy Liaison (Interim)                    |
| Kat Dej-Panah        | P               | Alex Chen                     | Division Director, Water Planning and Program Management |
| Wendy Walker         | N               | Ellen Pepin-Cato              | SPU, Community Affairs                                   |
| Annie Saunders       | Y               | Wylie Harper                  | Drinking Water Quality Director                          |
| Christina Heinlen    | Y               | Kelly O'Rourke                |  |
| <b>CDWAC Members</b> | <b>Present?</b> | <b>Guests</b>                 |  |
| Gary Olson           | Y               | Abdi Ahmed                    | Guest  |
|                      |                 | Angella Mickowski             | Guest  |
|                      |                 | Jane Lamensdorf-Bucher        | Guest  |
|                      |                 | Mary Pearsall                 | Guest  |
|                      |                 | Robert Smith                  | Guest  |
|                      |                 | Akemi Smith                   | Guest  |
|                      |                 | Vanessa Lund                  | Cocker Fennessy Consulting                               |

**1. Regular Business**

- WSAC Chair, Rodney Schauf, opened the meeting at 5:35 PM.
- Meeting notes from the January WSAC meeting were reviewed and approved.
- Sheryl indicated emergency exits and exit procedures.

**2. CAC Program Updates**

- WSAC members bid farewell to Kathy Curry, who served as the WSAC liaison for the last two years. WSAC Members shared their gratitude. Sheryl shared a poem and gift.
- Sheryl introduced interim WSAC Liaison, Melissa Levo. Melissa shared about her previous experience serving on WSAC and working at Seattle Housing Authority.
- Natasha introduced the meeting feedback survey, which will be sent out electronically the day after a meeting and due the following Tuesday.
- Sheryl confirmed the 4/24 All-CAC Meeting

- April WSAC Meeting will be focused on Community Asset Mapping. Homework will be e-mailed in advance to prepare members.

### 3. Customer Review Panel (CRP)

Rodney Schauf, WSAC Chair & CRP Co-Vice-Chair, provided an overview of the most recent CRP meeting.

- **A CAC Member** asked about prioritization of sewer repairs, and specifically whether sewer lines that could impact waterways are considered a higher priority. Rodney said he'd have to verify and get back to the CDWAC member.

### 4. WSAC Topics/Work Plan

WSAC Liaison, Melissa Levo, shared the most recent work plan. Levo will be will emailing the work plan to WSAC members to identify their top three priorities. WSAC chairs will use this information to consider Committee interests as they plan agendas in the coming year. **Members voted unanimously to approve the 2019 workplan.**

- **A CAC Member** shared that they appreciated seeing Race and Social Justice as a topic on the list. Staff responded that in addition to an All-CAC topic, we'll be asking WSAC members and SPU presenters to bring a RSJ lens to their work when presenting to the Committee.

### 5. 2018 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report: Part I

Ellen Pepin-Cato, SPU Communications and Vanessa Lund, consultant with Cocker Fennessy, provided an overview of the current status of the 2018 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report. Pepin-Cato distributed copies of the 2017 report. The report is emailed to all City of Seattle residents. SPU is looking for WSAC input on:

- ✓ Themes, ideas, images worth repeating
- ✓ Themes, ideas and images SPU could improve upon from the previous report
- ✓ Fun and exciting new ideas
- ✓ Ideas for providing compelling reasons to open the report (examples include coupons, or visually compelling centerfolds).
- **A CAC Member** asked about the effectiveness of the coupon in 2017. Staff said they will need to get back to them with the numbers, but the overall reaction was positive; several readers registered for tours at the watershed using the coupon. A staff member reported that the watershed education team said that it increased not only the number of individuals who visited the watershed, but the diversity of those taking the watershed tours.
- **A guest** suggested focusing on climate change, and particularly the connection between the snowpack and water supply.
- **A guest** said they'd like to see an update on PFAS. Staff provided a brief overview of PFAS. If there's enough interest, staff could provide a 30 min presentation on it. SPU has sampled the Tolt and Cedar and found none. SPU has also tested three seasonal wells near SeaTac; one had trace levels of PFAS below the health advisory level.

- **A CAC Member** asked about translation for the report. Staff responded that the report is only printed in English, but the back of the report includes (in-language) the top tier languages for which we offer the translation services. Additionally, in 2017 the centerfold was translated and printed into seven of the top tier languages, as was the generic message about Safe & Affordable water. The latter was made into a handout for outreach events.
- **A CAC Member** suggested emphasizing / discussing what is being done to address lead in school drinking water. This includes standards for schools versus SPU drinking water.
- **A CAC Member** liked that on page 8/9, there is an infographic regarding SPU's water distribution system. They thought it would be good to include in the future.
- **A CAC Member** liked seeing the word "protected" before describing the watershed throughout the report. They felt it was good for readers to know it is monitored and protected.
- **A guest** commented that there is confusion from residents around uncovered reservoirs. Though they felt it was minutiae for a relatively short report, they suggested addressing those questions and particularly pollution concerns. Staff responded that we cover all reservoirs except Volunteer and Roosevelt. The recent seismic study recommendation reversed earlier recommendations to cover, so now they are being kept as potable storage and available in an emergency. CAC members added that they had received similar questions about the Roosevelt reservoir, and felt it was important to address.
- **A CAC Member** asked if resiliency would be addressed in the report; particularly around water security.
- **A CAC Member** suggested having WSAC members prioritize the information in the report. If all the existing information must be kept, they suggested an index/table of contents. Other members agreed that a table of contents could be useful.
- **A CAC Member** suggested addressing the cost of water bills.
- **A CAC Member** shared the following thoughts/feedback:
  - Liked messaging around "Clean", "Tastes great", "from a protected source"
  - If "better than bottled" isn't a 2-page spread, it's worth keeping that tag line in there.
  - Reminding readers that SPU owns the watershed.
  - Highlight new/noteworthy in neighborhoods around the City, focusing on upcoming repairs or projects. Use one big project to provide one example of what's going on all over. Then highlight different projects in different areas, to give readers a sense of what SPU is doing in their neck of the woods. Highlight any partnerships with community groups. Members chimed in with some examples:
    - GSI Pilot in south park
    - Work where SPU is repairing pipes throughout the City.
    - Staff: Could also highlight 1% of the arts projects.
- **A CAC Member** shared that they loved the "Better than Bottled" message; particularly the information about why it is better and why bottled water is unnecessary/bad. "It also hits all the points of the report in a distinct way. Love it and would like to see it continued."
- **A staff member** asked if the report would show images from the watersheds to emphasize pristine/protected. Staff responded that the infographic should indicate the pathways of the

water distribution lines, beginning at the watersheds. Members agreed that the distribution infographic was important.

- **A CAC member** shared that every time they talk to someone about drinking water who does not study water, the Flint, Michigan water quality scandal is brought up. The concern is that citizens weren't informed. The member asked if there might be a benefit to explaining how the public would be notified if water quality was impacted.
- **A guest** added that the last page of the report, which provides details on lead sources, is important. Lund asked if that section should be moved up. A CAC member said they thought it should, namely because lead is a dark note to end the report on. A few other members agreed about ending on a positive/inspirational note. A CAC member suggested ending with ways customers can get involved, with a possible plug for the CAC Program.
- **A CAC member** asked if SPU has a sense of who is opening the reports, and what tracking mechanisms exist. Staff responded that the coupon is currently the only way to track.
- **A CAC member** mentioned SPU's postcard in 2018 regarding leaf raking. They liked the Chinook Book coupon and were surprised at how educational the survey was. Staff shared a little about the pilot program that was run and invited the member to join for the March CDWAC meeting when the pilot would be discussed.

**Members were asked, "Who do we want to get to open the book?" CAC Members responded:**

- SPU's Community Connections organizations and other ethnic groups, "as they are often purchasing cases of bottled water" and "may have moved here from countries where water quality is lower."
- Members were interested in any data on calls to the customer service line with requests for in-language translation of the report.
- A CAC member asked if it is an option in the future to have a link with a translated version of the report online.
- A guest commented that they assumed the intent of the report was to make household consumers more aware of water quality. If so, they felt the report contained good information but stopped short of "giving the average person simple, understandable ways to check their own plumbing for lead." They suggested graphics or illustrations for checking their own plumbing or providing a phone number/agency willing to advise.
- If folks have more ideas, they can email them to Natasha and Sheryl.

## **6. Regional Conservation Program**

Anna Dyer, SPU Community Outreach Water Conservation Program Manager, provided an update on plans to improve the regional Saving Water Partnership water conservation website. Dyer began with an overview of the Saving Water Partnership, which is comprised of Seattle and participating local water utilities, and the background on why SPU is re-examining the Saving Water Partnership website. Dyer also addressed how the equity toolkit was applied to the planning process.

- **A CDWAC Member** asked about language around income-eligible programs for utility discounts. They felt that messaging should be clearer about the gross yearly income requirements for qualifying.

WSAC members participated in a brainstorming activity to collect input for future website improvements. For the first exercise, individuals sorted random topic/cards into 8 categories and sub categories. They starred their top 7 topics. In the second exercise, members gathered in pairs to put these topics into a website wireframe. The goal of these exercises was to answer the question, “As a water customer, what information do you expect to be able to easily find on your utilities’ water conservation website?”

Members were asked to share something that their partner prioritized that surprised them.

- There were differences in priorities between renters and homeowner.
- The categories “Homeowner” and “Commercial” missed renters.
- A renter may not prioritize “water efficient products”, because they’re not buying products.
- Top three categories were the same, but the other topics varied in priority.
- We both split things into “Save Water/My Water” and “interior/lawn & garden”.
- Liked how rebates/resources was a top category for their partner.
- Wanted blog to be featured predominantly because it reaches a different kind of audience (those interested in poking around/browsing).
- Thought the promo topics should change-up every month.
- A lot of these could live under multiple categories. For example: “how often to water plants” is indoor and outdoor. So, the information or hyperlink should live in two places.
- Want a bottom-up approach starting with kids and using them to educate their parents.

Members and guests shared their top three prioritized topics:

- Group 1: Residential water saving strategies, Commercial water saving strategies, Rebates
- Group 2: Why is water conservation so important, Water Savings Lawns, Choosing efficient fixtures
- Group 3: Why water conservation is important, Water savings equipment and rebates, contact us
- Guests, Team 1: Landscaping/gardens, available rebates, technical assistance. Downplayed why conserve water since we figured that people already on the website were already interested in this. Added why a renter should even care about water savings.
- Guests, Team 2: Why water conservation is important, available rebates, interactive/instructional videos.

## 7. Community Insights, Around the Table

- **Staff** bid farewell to Teresa Stern, who completed her third year. April will be her last month on WSAC.
- **A CAC Member** shared about an event held by Cedar Grove on March 28 open house designed to cover the range of soils available for use in landscape and construction applications. Information can be viewed here: <https://cedar-grove.com/laces-specifying-soils-local-and-sustainable-soils-stormwater-solutions>

- **A CAC member** shared that on June 9, Thornton Creek Alliance with SPU, the Parks Department and additional local stewardship groups, will be hosting their second Influence of the Confluence” event. Other City watershed/creek volunteers and organizations will gather together at Meadowbrook Pond.
- **A Staff member** shared about an upcoming collaboration between SPU and the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and ACT Theatres for the production “Urine Town”, a musical about the privatization of water. SPU will participate in a pre-show and post-show talk, featuring SPU CEO/General Manager, Mami Hara. Additional staff from our Water Conservation section and Cedar River Watershed will also participate
  - Pre-show: April 25
  - Post-show: May 7
  - SPU information will run for the length of the show on lobby screens and displays, educational materials and CAC recruitment flyers will be set up near theatre lobby.

**Adjourned 7:35 PM**