



Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District
GOVERNING BOARD
Minutes
March 25, 2015

The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District Governing Board met on Wednesday, March 25, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. in the Allen S. Hardin Amphitheater at the R. Charles Loudermilk Center for Regional Community in Atlanta, Georgia.

Hon. Boyd Austin, Chairman
Ms. Katie Kirkpatrick, Vice Chair
Mr. Birdel Jackson, Secretary/Treasurer
Hon. Buzz Ahrens
Hon. Charles Oddo
Hon. Pete Amos
Hon. Charlotte Nash
Ms. Pamela Burnett
Mr. Brad Currey
Mr. Tim Thoms

Mr. Steven Woodruff
Bartow County Designee: Mr. Gene Camp
Clayton County Designee: Mr. Mike Thomas
Cobb County Designee: Ms. Kellie Brownlow
Coweta County Designee: Mr. Jay Boren
Douglas County Designee: Mr. Gil Shearouse
Fulton County Designee: Mr. Nick Ammons
Hall County Designee: Mr. Kelly Randall
Henry County Designee: Mr. Tony Carnell
Rockdale County Designee: Mr. Dwight Wicks

Members Not Present

Hon. Kasim Reed
Hon. Lee May
Mr. William Thomas Craig

Ms. Kit Dunlap
Mr. Chuck Huling
Mr. Gerald Pouncey

Chairman Boyd Austin called the meeting to order.

Approve Meeting Minutes

Chairman Austin called for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion to approve the December 3, 2014 meeting minutes was made by Hon. Charlotte Nash, seconded by Mr. Nick Ammons and passed without opposition.

Chairman's Report

Welcoming New District Board Members

Chairman Austin welcomed the new District Governing Board Member for Coweta County: Chairman Tim Lassetter as well as the new Fayette County: Chairman Charles Oddo.

Drought Conditions and Drought Rule Update

Ms. Katherine Zitsch provided an update on drought conditions across the state noting that there are pockets of abnormally dry conditions in Georgia but those areas are expected to improve by summer. Total rainfall for the last three years is tracking along average conditions.

Ms. Zitsch provided an update on the state Drought Rule Update stating that one of the beneficial outcomes of early coordination between the Metro Water District and EPD was the proposed inclusion of a Drought Rule Committee. The committee would hear initial concerns on a county by county basis and determine how best to implement drought response levels accordingly. EPD has been quite responsive to the District's recommendations and the latest draft of the rule is vastly improved. The public comment period is expected to begin following today's EPD Board Meeting with a final rule will be ready for adoption in June 2015.

Legislative Breakfast

Chairman Austin provided an overview of the Legislative Breakfast held at the State Capitol on February 10th. The breakfast was a great success. Forty to 50 people were in attendance including several state legislators from inside and outside the metro area. A few notable attendees included Representative Lynn Smith, Chair of the House Natural Resources and Environment Committee, Senator Ross Tolleson, Chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Environment Committee and Attorney General Sam Olens.

Legislative Update

Chairman Austin noted that the current version of the FY2016 state budget includes \$500,000 for the District Water Management Plan Update. This money would be used to offset the third phase of the District dues increase scheduled for June 2015. Chairman Austin then referenced the bills that passed crossover day that are of moderate relevance to the District.

- **(HB 397) Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission Reassignment:** If passed would reassign the work of the commission to the Department of Agriculture (including the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Manual) consistent with the Governor's budget. This reassignment would place the responsibility for overseeing revisions to the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation (E&S) Manual, or "the green book" (which is an item of interest to the District).
Status: Assigned to the Senate Agricultural and Consumer Affairs Committee
- **(HB 464) Repeal Code Section Relating to a Tax Credit for Water Conservation Facilities:** If passed it would eliminate tax credits for water conservation facilities, and tax credits for shifting from ground water use. This bill's primary impact is on the coast.
Status: Assigned to the Senate Finance Committee
- **(SB 36 and companion HB 116) Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR):** If passed the amended version of this bill - called the "Underground Water Supply Protection Act" - would require the DNR Board to pass new rules for ASR in the Floridan

Aquifer by July 1, 2016. The bill would allow DNR rules to restrict or prohibit ASR where necessary.

Status: The bill has crossed over and will be heard at 2:00 this afternoon in the House Environmental Quality Subcommittee.

- **(SB 101) Coastal Marsh Buffer Bill:** If passed, this bill would apply the 25ft erosion and sedimentation buffer to coastal marshes.
Status: The bill has crossed over and passed out of the House Natural Resources Committee and is on to rules committee.
- **(SB 119) Water Professionals Appreciation Day:** If passed, would establish the first Monday of every May as “Water Professionals Appreciation Day.”
Status: The bill has crossed over and has passed out of the House Natural Resources Committee.
- **(SB 191) White lining/Blasting and Excavating near Utility Facilities:** If passed, it would prohibit local governments from adopting ordinances that place “different” requirements (i.e. more stringent than State law) on contractors to delineate excavations sites (with white paint) prior to utilities locating their sewer laterals. Full text: “No local governing authority shall adopt or enforce any ordinance or resolution setting forth requirements or standards as to white lining, marking, re-marking, or any other method of locating utility facilities or sewer laterals.”
Status: The amended bill crossed over after 5 votes on the senate floor. It has been assigned to the House Energy, Utilities & Telecommunications Committee.

Water Drop Dash 5K Run

Ms. Lora Amedu provided a recap on the March 20, 2015 Water Drop Dash 5K held in Roswell along the Chattahoochee River. This year’s event had over 500 participants. The event also included a Kid’s Fun Run with the kids chasing Kathy Nguyen with the Cobb County Water System, also known as our running toilet mascot. Following the race we had a Water Festival with our water providers, and sponsors including EPA, Georgia Aquarium, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper and the Atlanta Hawks, to name just a few. Sixteen water providers participated in the race. Cobb County was recognized for the largest race team with over 150 runners.

Schedule for 2015

Chairman Austin noted the scheduled dates for District Board Meetings in 2015 as follows:

- June 16, 2015 – this date does not align with the ARC Board Meeting due to scheduling conflicts. This meeting will start at 10:30 AM.
- August 26, 2015, 10:00 AM
- December 2, 2015, 10:00 AM

Executive Committee Report

Plan Amendment for Public Review

City of Locust Grove

Chairman Austin announced that the Executive Committee voted to approve the City of Locust Grove amendment request as a major amendment, requiring a 30-day public comment period and The Governing Board will be voting on the City of Locust Grove amendment request at the June meeting.

Water Litigation Update

Ms. Zitsch provided an update on the Florida vs. Georgia Supreme Court case over the equitable apportionment of flows in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) River Basin. The two parties are currently in the discovery phase and all of the District counties and some of the cities have been subpoenaed for information related to the case.

Ms. Zitsch also provided an update on the ARC/State of Georgia/Cobb County-Marietta Water Authority vs. USACE case over failure to act regarding the inclusion of water supply within the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa (ACT) Water Control Manual. At the time of the Board meeting, USACE was expected to release the final record of decision any day now related to the updated manual.

Septic Management Perspectives

Mr. Danny Johnson introduced the topic of septic management as an issue that District staff have been asked by stakeholders to tackle in the next plan update. Mr. Johnson provided an overview of septic management action items in the 2009 plan, specific regulations within the Georgia Code and potential focus areas for the 2016 plan update.

Mr. Gil Shearouse, Director of the Douglasville-Douglas County Water and Sewer Authority (DDCWSA) provided an overview of septic management in the Dog River watershed. In 1990, DDCWSA conducted a watershed protection and management study which identified malfunctioning septic systems as a principle contributor to degraded water quality for the 13 stream segments listed on the 303(d) list. The Dog River basin was determined to be the best source for water supply, therefore DDCWSA developed a reservoir just upstream of the Chattahoochee River. Watershed protection rules and regulations were enacted upstream of the Dog River Reservoir including 200 foot stream setbacks, one unit per three acres zoning restrictions, no sanitary sewer extensions, continued stream monitoring, an 18% impervious surface limit, and requiring that all septic tanks must be pumped once every five years. DDCWSA also focused on educating the public and helping them understand what they were trying to do and why. In the past 25 years, the watershed has seen a decrease of 35% in fecal coliform levels even with a 45% increase in customers. Additionally, seven of the 13 streams have been removed from the 303(d) list of impaired waters with two more likely to be removed in the next cycle.

Ms. Jamie Stones, the Grease Management Program Coordinator for Cobb County, provided an overview of the Cobb County Water Systems septage receiving program. Cobb County requires

all haulers to submit a permit for the privilege of disposing septage at the South Cobb WRF. The facility does accept Porta-John discharges. The cost for disposal is not cheap. The rate payers who are paying for the treatment process only want waste generated from Cobb County. Discharger must bring their own hoses and can only discharge to certain parts of the plant at certain times of the day. All dischargers are required to provide a manifest signed by the customer showing where the waste was generated. This helps Cobb County know what type of wastes they are receiving. One of the program's biggest problems was when haulers began to take advantage of the \$100 per load fee and began increasing the size of their trucks. Other problems were identified when the County began verifying some of the manifests only to find many to have been falsified. The health department found this information very vital and began cracking down on haulers for improper practices. The County's biggest treatment issues are the unknown sources of discharge.

Discussion and Questions:

There is a DVD produced by the state that may be of interest to many health departments and utilities that details the proper management of septic systems for homeowners. Additionally, many local officials sit on the local boards of health which could be a good source to address concerns over septic management in the future. We should work with them on developing education and schedules for implementation. This would save homeowners a lot more money over digging up systems and making major repairs.

We could recommend offering a fee credit on the water bill for folks who pump their septic tank on a routine basis.

The South Cobb WRF is the only facility accepting septage in Cobb County because it is a big plant and can handle the capacity. That is why we have plans to build a new receiving station so we can start charging more on a gallon basis. Right now we don't have the manpower or equipment, just enough that it doesn't hurt the operating costs, but low enough that it encourages haulers to bring it in rather than dumping in manholes or storm drains.

Clayton County Water Authority tried to set a fee based on recovery of costs and has seen a dramatic reduction in septic dumping. The haulers are going somewhere, but I don't know where they are going. We allow other folks to come, but then we add \$25-\$50 on to that. We know they don't have another place to go. We don't want them dumping in the sewers or woods so we need to work with the health department to require manifests.

Seems like the biggest issue is the price utilities charge. If we want them to bring septage to the facilities, we need to keep the charge low - otherwise they may illegally dump. This becomes a business and political decision.

In Gainesville, 20 years ago, we figured the cost of treatment per load. One truckload of BOD loading was equivalent to the entire city of Oakwood's 200,000 gallons per day

capacity. Should customers subsidize the cost for septic treatment? We decided to set the price for recovery of costs including capital so if you receive capacity, you've built in ability to increase capacity. I believe we are now charging about \$250 per load. I recently tried to find out from staff what we're charging but no one new because we haven't gotten a load of septage in a long time. I believe it's going to White county and east of Atlanta. We literally made a conscious decision that our sewer customers would not subsidize septage treatment.

Do you track other constituents like nitrogen or phosphorus in your basin monitoring?

Mr. Shearouse - Yes, but I don't have that data. We saw system wide, as we did our sampling, levels of fecal and other things go down. General public awareness of proper procedures has improved with people talking to friends and neighbors.

The public education component is a strong part that we need to continue to push in the District. There are instances that it could be tweaked for localized outreach in critical areas

Fayette County offers incentives with a credit to pump septic systems every three years. Any credits or incentives would go well with public education for residential users.

We could consider a toolbox of options for the plan update for jurisdictions to consider.

For Cobb County, one of the good things about us submitting manifests to the health department is that they are putting them into a database and looking for repetitive issues like routine pumping from the same location. The health department is tweaking how they do inspections and what they are looking at. They have been able to make their work more efficient. They will call me for manifests if they haven't received them. The biggest things they find are failing drain lines.

Q: Does DDCWSA require inspections of fill lines?

Mr. Shearouse – We don't require inspection. We figured we would start with septic tank pumping. If homeowners are pumping every five years, we hope to prevent the field line failures from occurring. We work closely with the health department and send them manifests. We are the enforcement arm on pumping and have close coordination on those systems that end up failing.

Looking at the bigger picture, we have got three entities that are involved: 1) utilities who can do certain things to protect the resources, 2) the health department and 3) whoever has jurisdiction control over development in general. If the county doesn't own a water and sewer authority then another component needs to be brought to the table as we look for modification in the new plans. We need to do something to address the development community.

In Henry County, we only have one wastewater plant that can take septic waste in the southeast part of the county. There are a lot of septic residents on north end with a pretty long drive for haulers. The haulers are going somewhere, but we've seen a significant decrease as well in loads received.

In Cobb County, I have seen haulers go from an hour away and drive into Cobb County to dispose of it. We have revoked permission for certain haulers. How do you find a place for haulers to dispose of it while protecting the Cobb County wastewater system and treatment plant? We can't be responsible for everyone else. It's Cobb County that will feel the impact.

Remember that there are commercial businesses that will take this waste. I don't need to be responsible for people outside of my county.

We all have to be mindful of the rates we set including one jurisdiction setting rates over another. The person that pays those costs is the homeowner. If we raise those rates too high, there's another issue.

In talking with homeowners in my community, there is a problem with the way septic tanks are put in. They are installed as if they'll never be pulled up. That might be something this group can address. The systems need to be put in with knowledge that they'll need to be serviced at some point in time. This needs consideration.

The new rules allow space for alternate system placement. Development regulations now require that you have enough good soil for a secondary location.

Health departments have good maps on where tanks are located and they can usually do it relatively quickly.

Q: EPD issued a general permit in July of last year. Do you ask the haulers for a chemical component?

Jamie Stones: I have asked. I have even taken samples especially with Porta-John waste. They tend to be very small trucks and use small hoses, take at least 20-30 minutes and discharge right at head of plant where there is a lot coming in which dilutes the waste. We only allow one truck at a time. We have had to stop multiple haulers at the same time. We require them to have their own hoses. We have not tested any of them lately, but our plant hasn't had any issues either. The plant staff are watching them carefully and that's one of the reasons we allow discharge to only that plant.

I have heard of one utility that has started plans for an equalization tank so that operators can bleed it discharged septage into process flow so they can manage the waste load.

There is an area in Cherokee County with several thousand older homes right on Allatoona Lake. There are lots of failing septic tanks. I sat on the board for 8-9 years. We haven't come up with solution. The water authority did studies but it comes down to how

does someone afford \$12-15,000 to fix it? They are not necessarily concerned about fixing it. The Water Authority did their work and a couple of commissioners got involved and never came up with solution. We even low cost financing over time.

I talked with someone else in similar situation on another lake. Many homes were initially two bedroom homes and were rebuilt as six bedroom homes but the septic system was only designed for the small house. Many of the systems are now failing. These failures might be contributing to the chlorophyll a problems in the lake that have caused the lake to be impaired. If this city wanted a future load increase for its waste water treatment plant, it could find a solution in funding a low pressure sewer alternative in these communities to offset the requested load increase with the load reductions from the eliminated failing septic tanks. The theory is there and may be worth exploring.

We looked at that in Cherokee but had a problem finding cause and effect. It is difficult to quantify how much of the lake problem is coming from septic tanks.

Introduction of the 2016 Plan Update Consultant

Mr. Danny Johnson introduced the 2016 Plan Update consultant, CH2M Hill and the project manager, Rick Brownlow. Mr. Brownlow provided an overview of the consultant team, plan update process and schedule.

Other

Chairman Austin recognized Ms. Grace Trimble and congratulated her on her upcoming retirement at the end of March from the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). Ms. Trimble serves as Manager of the Communications and Marketing Division of ARC and has assisted the District with its communications efforts for over 12 years.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.