



Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District
GOVERNING BOARD
Minutes
October 19, 2018

The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District Governing Board met on Friday, October 19, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. at the Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center in Buford, Georgia.

Members Present

Hon. Charlotte Nash, Chairman
Ms. Katie Kirkpatrick, Vice Chair
Mr. Birdel Jackson, Treasurer
Hon. Steve Taylor
Hon. June Wood
Ms. Pam Burnett
Mr. Brad Currey
Mr. Glenn Page
Mr. Gerald Pouncey
Mr. Tim Thoms

City of Atlanta Designee: Ms. Kishia Powell
Cherokee County Designee: Mr. David Kubala
DeKalb County Designee: Mr. Ted Rhinehart
Douglas County Designee: Mr. Gil Shearouse
Forsyth County Designee: Mr. Tim Perkins
Fulton County Designee: Mr. Nick Ammons
Rockdale County Designee: Deirdre Blackard

Members Not Present

Hon. Boyd Austin
Hon. Mike Boyce
Hon. Richard Higgins
Hon. Eric Maxwell
Hon. Al Smith

Hon. Jeff Turner
Mr. Mark Berry
Ms. Kit Dunlap
Mr. Tim Lee

Chairman Charlotte Nash called the meeting to order.

Approve Meeting Minutes

Chairman Nash called for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion to approve the May 23, 2018 meeting minutes was made by Mr. Gerald Pouncey, seconded by Vice Chair Katie Kirkpatrick and passed without opposition.

Goals for the Retreat

Chairman Nash discussed the goals for the retreat which are to take a collective deep dive into a variety of water planning topics and to discuss priorities for the upcoming years. Chairman Nash

noted that our hearts go out to the families in South Georgia who have been affected by Hurricane Michael. Many of the District utilities have provided emergency generators to help those in need. Ms. Katherine Zitsch provided feedback from the host of the District Board Retreat in Camilla, GA before it was relocated to Gwinnett County. He reported to Ms. Zitsch on the devastation experienced by many of the southwest Georgia farmers who have lost all of their crops and many that will need help with debris removal on a home-by-home basis far into the future.

Legislative Update

Chairman Nash noted that Ms. Pam Burnett has been added to the Legislative Committee. Chairman Nash stated that Ms. Burnett's leadership at the Georgia Association of Water Professionals and involvement through its legislative affairs committee will make her a valuable addition as a member of the District's committee based on her experience, information, and relationships.

Mr. Andrew Morris noted that the purpose and strategy of the legislative committee is to support efforts to secure state funding for the District, serve as a resource on Georgia and metro water issues to elected officials and staff, to keep District board members and stakeholders informed on water legislation, and work to ensure sound water management policy. Mr. Morris discussed his plans to coordinate three committee conference calls during the session. Additionally, Mr. Morris will plan to work with ACCG and GMA to share information and perspectives on proposed legislation.

The following question was received:

Question: With the change of governor in the new year, do you anticipate any changes on how the District's state funding will be presented in the governor's recommended budget?

Answer: We are working to set up meetings with both candidates and their policy advisors to discuss water in general as well as District priorities..

Chairman Nash introduced Ms. Camila Knowles from Cornerstone Government Affairs who provided a brief legislative preview of the upcoming year. Ms. Knowles stated that Cornerstone has been hired by the District to provide government affairs assistance. Ms. Knowles said that there will likely be a lot of turnover at the state capital including many of the leadership positions. Their focus will be on educating legislators on metro Atlanta's water story, the purpose of the District, and on budget discussions for the following year.

Board members discussed the importance of education and requested that staff provide board members with a one-pager of talking points to use when discussing the importance of water resource planning with their elected officials. Hon. June Wood noted that lots of efforts have been made in the past to educate local officials, but the difficulty is getting them to show up to the events. Hon. Wood recommended that District staff could present at local commission and council meetings to more effectively engage with those officials.

Ms. Zitsch noted that the District will be approaching the legislative leadership with multiple options for future funding that would be stable from year to year, which would alleviate the need to perform single large budget requests during plan update years.

Litigation

Katherine Zitsch provided an update of the ongoing water lawsuits including Alabama versus the Corps in the ACT, CCMWA versus the Corps in the ACT, Alabama and the National Wildlife Federation versus the Corps in the ACF, and the Supreme Court case. She discussed the Supreme Court 5-4 opinion, the questions posed to the new Special Master and next steps in the case.

2022 Plan Update Discussion

Mr. Danny Johnson presented background on the District legislative mandates and stakeholder requirements. Mr. Johnson noted that the District is responsible for establishing policy, creating plans, and promoting intergovernmental coordination for all water issues in the District, facilitate multi-jurisdictional water related projects, and enhancing access to funding for water related projects among local governments. The legislation requires multiple stakeholder groups including the Governing Board, six Basin Advisory Councils (BAC) who advise on policy, minimum standards and plan content, and a Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) who provides additional support to the Board and staff. Mr. Johnson also reviewed the planning principles adopted in the 2017 update to the Water Resource Management Plan.

The District Board discussed the 2010 Metric Report items and whether there was a need to reexamine any of the same metric elements before undertaking the next data collection efforts for the 2022 Water Resource Management Plan Update. Mr. David Kubala asked if the District could undertake a study to determine the rate of saturation of efficient plumbing fixtures and possibly undertake a similar local effort to replicate the scope of work in the 2016 Water Research Foundation Residential Water Use Study.

Mr. Brad Currey stated he would like to see an updated per capita number to better understand where we are now. Additionally, Mr. Currey noted that the District should look at the cost-benefit of future actions. Vice Chair Kirkpatrick asked if the District should focus on just residential per capita. Mr. Nick Ammons noted that the metrics provide good talking points on quantity and quality and it can be good to show how our policies have shown results.

Ms. Deedee Blackard said she would like to see septic impacts in low lying areas during rain events. Ms. Keisha Powell stated that it would be good to cross walk the metrics with action items and wondered if there are action items that don't translate to metrics. Ms. Powell noted that it would be helpful to show benefits as elected officials ask the utilities to justify the cost of implementing action items.

Ms. Zitsch noted that it would be helpful to tell better local stories as well. Ms. Linda MacGregor stated that telling stories using water quality data will be hard to do because the data does not do an easy job of demonstrating results. Ms. MacGregor agreed that we need to work on story telling.

Chairman Nash stated that it makes sense for the TCC to look further at recommendations for a future update to the Metrics Report.

Mr. Johnson presented preliminary schedule highlights for the 2022 Plan Update. Population projections for 2050 are expected to be completed by both ARC and the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) by the spring of 2019. Based on current information, Mr. Johnson noted that he expected consultant contract selection would begin in the fall of 2020 and the plan would be completed in May of 2022.

Mr. Johnson presented highlights of the 2019 budget and discussed the available \$220,000 in funding that was set aside for work related to the 2022 Plan Update. The Board could use this funding at its discretion for preliminary studies related to the plan update or save it for the work to be completed in 2021 and 2022.

Cost Benefit

Chairman Nash highlighted the discussion and motion approved during the June 2017 board meeting to include cost-benefit in the scope of work for the 2022 Plan Update. Chairman Nash noted the need to consider the effects of diminishing returns on implementation of the District plan action items and stated that she is going to appoint a committee to consider how the District should evaluate cost-benefit in future conversations related to action items of the plan.

Mr. Kubala suggested that local business schools could develop an assessment of the cost-benefit for plan action items at little or no cost and that the District owes it regional water users to show that they are getting good value for their expenses.

Mr. Ammons noted that regional project initiatives might be a big item to consider. He added that information sharing on best management practices that have worked well could be broadly shared. Mr. Gil Shearouse noted that documentable return on investment would make it easier to justify the gifts/gratuities clause.

Mr. Glenn Page expressed concern that the District cannot measure some items that do not have quantifiable benefits. He added that the committee needs creativity. Hon. Wood and Chairman Nash reiterated that some efforts cannot be assessed by cost-benefit and are intangible.

Ms. Powell provided some examples of what her elected officials would like to see cost-benefit assess such as AMI metering evaluations, service line repair, and implementing a grease management program. Ms. Linda MacGregor noted that due to economies of scale, cost-benefit may not be appropriate for every community.

Ms. Deedee Blackard noted that the installation of green infrastructure would be good to install everywhere but low-bid policies often prohibit its installation. She added that a triple bottom line approach to cost-benefit would help.

Mr. Kubala asked what items specifically could not be evaluated with cost-benefit and stated that every action should have a quantifiable benefit that could be measured.

Chairman Nash stated that she is seeking volunteers for the committee but noted that District staff would be reaching out to several folks who would be asked to serve.

Mr. Tony Carnell requested the District conduct an overview of each utility with an AMI metering system and share the results with other water utilities.

Highlight Stakeholder Feedback on Data and Research Needs

Mr. Johnson provided an overview of feedback from the BACs and the TCC on how they answered the question, “In advance of the next update to the Water Resource Management Plan (expected schedule 2019 to 2022), what questions and or data/research needs would help you better understand water resource conditions/opportunities to aid in your input for the next plan update?” The input from the stakeholder groups was compiled into the meeting materials for the board meeting. Mr. Johnson explained that the board would be asked to consider only a handful of specific recommendations during the following exercise. Those items are described in the section below. The topics selected were those items that District staff needs board guidance on to prioritize future staff work program and District expenses.

Deep Dive into Specific Work Program Items

Ms. Zitsch described how the District Board would break out into four smaller groups and discuss the elements provided below and report back to the board on their priorities identified in their discussion. The notes below represent the topics presented and the statements provided by board members during the open discussion and report outs from the small group spokesperson.

Education and Outreach

- Update 2015 residential water use survey
 - o Group 2 – Identified the survey as a priority.
- Develop broader regional and statewide water education curriculum
- Water education for elected officials
- Other
 - o Group 1 – suggested making education resources capable of addressing multiple audiences
 - o Develop 2-pagers highlighting goals and successes of the District

Water Supply and Water Conservation

- Assess opportunities to curb summer peaking factors
 - o Mr. Page asked if summer peaking factors are a problem.
 - o Mr. Tim Perkins noted that increased indoor efficiency in some communities could lower annual usage and make the peak look higher compared to another community with a different plumbing stock.
 - o Group 2 – suggested that this item be rephrased to say “evaluate summer peaking factors across the District”

- Evaluate potential water sources in District for use in extreme drought
 - o Mr. Gerald Pouncey asked why the District has not played a larger role in developing new water supplies for the region. Ms. Zitsch noted that the District was initially focused on water quality issues early on and then later turned to conservation and efficiency measures.
 - o Mr. Shearouse noted that the District does play a significant role in water supply planning through the District water demand forecasts produced during each plan update.
 - o Group 1 – identified this as a priority
- Partner with national water efficiency organizations on applied research
 - o Mr. Kubala asked if there was any way to have Water Research Foundation projects focus on the District region.
- Other
 - o Group 2 – would like to see a consumptive use metric established.

Wastewater

- Research and report on impacts to sewer infrastructure from the effects of increased indoor water conservation
 - o Group 3 – identified this as a priority and noted that it should include broad considerations to include revenue impacts. The group also stated that the District should assign goals on water conservation and consider the impacts from diminishing returns as well as consider the impacts to wastewater treatment plants.
- Assess the need for the District to perform assimilative capacity modeling across the region
 - o Ms. Zitsch asked if there was a need for the District to play a role in assimilative capacity modeling. She also noted that the District plan is silent on the ability of local water bodies to assimilate the future pollutant load generated within the forecasted wastewater flows.
 - o Group 3 – noted that this was not a high priority
 - o Group 1 – noted that this was not a high priority
- Pilot implementation of agricultural non-point source reductions in Lake Lanier watershed
 - o Group 3 – asked where would the funding come from? Are there additional partners we could coordinate with?
- Other
 - o Group 3 – we would like to see an update on the septic study.

Watershed

- Perform assessment of surface water quality trends over past three decades
 - o Group 2 – suggested that this item be changed to “perform assessment of surface water quantity trends” because quality trends may not tell the whole story and quantity often impacts quality.
- Use surface water quality trends to identify projects that are most likely to lead to delisting of impaired water bodies
 - o Mr. Kubala noted that the District should consider if there was a single event that triggered a listing.
 - o Group 4 – It would be good to collect an assortment of case studies to show what other communities have done for education purposes.
 - o Group 4 – We do not see a need to identify new projects for the District to do
- Research and report on opportunities to address non-point source pollution from fertilizers
 - o Group 4 – Did not feel that it was a priority to take on the fertilizer trade but clarified that they did not realize the topic was only “research and report.”
 - o Mr. Kevin Farrell noted that the board should consider the fact that nutrient criteria for streams and rivers may be a reality in the future and we may want to revisit this.
 - o Group 1 – liked the concept of research and report on fertilizer relationship to non-point source pollution
- Other
 - o Group 2 – suggested adding an item for nutrient trading
 - o Group 1 – would like to see successes quantified where ground water recharge through green infrastructure has been implemented

Other

Vice Chair Kirkpatrick noted that the District’s 20th Anniversary would be coming up in 2021 and asked board members to consider how the District can be more thoughtful in building recognition for the event and the good work of the District.

Mr. Ammons asked if the District staff could prepare a standard slide presentation for board members to share at local events like Rotary and Kiwanis clubs. Mr. Ammons also added that the board should think about what we need to accomplish and how much money will be needed to do it.

Ms. Powell stated that the District should focus on workforce needs to support the water industry.

Mr. Page recognized there are requirements in the plan that address asset management, but communities should be paying close attention to sound implementation. Mr. Page also added that the board should be aware of the new rule proposed by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division affecting buffers on water supply reservoirs.

Mr. Currey stated that if you want to change long term behavior, we must create a first-class course in Pre-K to 12th grade. If you don't start in the schools, you won't succeed.

Chairman Nash asked for feedback on the retreat.

Several members expressed their satisfaction with the meeting with one member suggesting we hold a retreat every six months and others suggesting the board hold an annual retreat. One board member suggested fall as a good time to hold the meeting, so it will help the board prepare for the upcoming legislative session.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.