



**State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Water Resources Board**

Division of Planning
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RHODE ISLAND WATER RESOURCES BOARD - MEETING #553

MINUTES

Thursday, February 15, 2018, 2:00 PM
RI Division of Public Utilities and Carriers
Hearing Room B, 2nd Floor
89 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, RI

Attendance

Members Present

Ms. Susan Licardi, Chair	North Kingstown Water Department
Mr. Daniel O'Rourke, Vice Chair	Warwick Water Division
Mr. Parag Agrawal	RIDOA Planning
Ms. Karen Fuerherm	IGT
Ms. Elizabeth Scott	Representing Janet Coit, Director, RI Department of Environmental Management
	Public Member
Ms. Eugenia Marks	Representing Stefan Pryor, RI Secretary of Commerce
Mr. Michael Walker	Bristol County Water
Ms. Pamela Marchand	Representing Nicole Alexander-Scott, Director, RI Department of Health
Ms. June Swallow	RI Nurseries
Mr. Jesse Rodrigues	

Members Absent

Mr. Marc Petrowicz	Unilock
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WRB Staff Present

Kathleen Crowley	Acting General Manager
Robert Bailey, P.E.	Supervising Civil Engineer

Others present

Macky McCleary	Administrator of RI Div. of Pub. Utilities and Carriers
Betsey Wingfield	Bureau Chief, Water Protection and Land Reuse
	Connecticut Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection
Nancy Hess	Supervising Planner, RIDOA
Meg Kerr	Audubon
Henry Meyer	Kingston Water District
Leanne Peckham	Kingston Water District
James DeCelles	Pawtucket Water Supply
Russ Houde	Pawtucket Water Supply
Carissa Richard	Providence Water Supply
Joe Polseno	Rhode Island Farm Bureau
Ron Michael Meneo	
Peter Gaynor	Rhode Island EMA
Veronica Berounsky	Rhode Island Rivers Council
Michael Zarum	Warwick

Call to Order

Chairperson Licardi called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Swallow made a motion to approve the December 14, 2017 minutes, second by Ms. Scott and Vice Chair O'Rourke. The approval was unanimous.

Board Policy Discussions and Transition

Chair Licardi gave an update on the transition of the Water Resources Board from the Division of Planning to the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers. She noted that in August the board, prior to the proposed move, the Board expressed an interest in being involved in and supportive of the work of the Senate Study Commission. At the next meeting in October, the Board learned that the staff and operations of the Water Resources Board were being shifted from DOA to the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers and hosted a presentation by the Office of Management and Budget. At the next meeting in December, Administer McCleary made a presentation to the board highlighting the consistency of the Board and DPUC missions. For this meeting and moving forward, we are looking to continue the discussion about a long-term strategy for water resources in the state and how the Water Resources Board can add value to both the Senate Commission's work and water resources planning in general.

Statewide Water Policy and Planning

Chair Licardi introduced Nancy Hess, Supervising Planner at the RIDOA Division of Planning. Ms. Hess provided executive summaries and presented an overview of the State Guide Plan and Rhode Island State Guide Plan Elements, Rhode Island Water 2030, and Water Quality 2035. She reviewed the content of both plans along with major findings and recommended actions. She noted that the plans and executive summaries along with other documents are available on the agency's website. Major actions from the plans include:

RI Water 2030

- Implement Drought Mitigation Plan when needed
- Reduce overall demand for water - water reuse & reducing seasonal demands
- Encourage regionalization
- Ensure water systems meet Safe Drinking Water Standards
- Develop understandable water supply availability estimates for state, regions and municipalities
- Develop guidance for coordinating land use planning and water availability

Water Quality 2035

- Develop a comprehensive environmental monitoring strategy
- Enforce all federal, state and local laws and regulations for water quality protection.
- Improve data management and public access to the data
- Ensure climate change is considered in water quality protection and restoration projects
- Promote the removal of cesspools especially in riparian areas
- Implement, and update as necessary, the RI Stormwater Design and Installation Standards Manual and the Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook
- Incorporate LID in municipal development review ordinances
- Train water resources staff to better communicate with the public

Discussion

The discussion among Board members and Ms. Hess are summarized below:

- Timing for updating State Guide Plan Elements vary and require coordination with the Division of Planning's Work Program.
- Major implementation gaps are water allocation and the subsequent effort to relate allocation to land use planning, economic development and growth.
- Evaluating progress on implementation is done when plans are updated.
- When a state plan is updated, municipalities have one year to update their community comprehensive plan. A conflict between a state plan and a local community comprehensive plan is resolved by the State Planning Council.
- The RI Rivers Council is included in Water Quality 2035.

Administrator McCleary introduced Betsey Wingfield, Bureau Chief of the Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Ms. Wingfield presented an overview of the state water plan, its purpose, scope, challenges, technical information, policy priorities, the statute that requires the plan and the process for developing and approving the plan. Some highlights of the presentation follow:

- The Connecticut State Water Plan is prepared by the Connecticut Water Council which is established by statute and is comprised of four members.
- The Council conducted an eighteen-month stakeholder process with subcommittees and consultant support.
- Legislative approval is required for final adoption of the plan.
- CT only drinks Class A water from protected sources.
- Climate change is impacting water resources and the state is experiencing impairments caused by registered diversions as well as increasing peak day demands due to irrigation.
- The key highlights of their Plan are:
 - Create a platform for consistent, informed decision making
 - Committed to Maintaining highest quality drinking water
 - Need to Balance in-stream and out-of-stream needs
 - Water conservation
 - Maintain scientific data
- Similar to RI
 - CT has ample high-quality water for our needs
 - The water is not always where we need it when we need it. Development patterns may not line up with need and drought can be regional.
 - We need wise and efficient use of our water
 - Climate change will add stress to our natural systems and management systems. Now is the time to plan.
- Planning occurred at a sub-regional basis.
- Background white papers, scientific information and recommendations are available (www.ct.gov/water).
- Additional topics resulted from public comment including the issue of bottled water
- The cost/fund allocation was \$1m to produce the plan, including the cost to engage consultants and compile the required data
- Lessons learned that could help RI
 - Important to agree on the scope of the plan

- Incremental progress matters
- Water as a public trust
- Facts matter – talk through perceptions that persist
- Having stakeholders is important
- Water allocation is complicated with many vested interests
- The data is priceless

Discussion

There was a discussion among Board Members and Ms. Wingfield about the Connecticut Plan and parallel challenges in Rhode Island. Discussion highlights include:

- The Water Resources Board has completed basin studies and an evaluation of basin stress similar to the data in the Connecticut plan.
- The four agencies that are members to the CT Water Planning Council are responsible for implementation
- The water quantity issue needs to be figured out in a sustainable way.
- In CT there is now a group of 4 dedicated to diversion permitting. New permits are not happening often. Working with existing permits and registered diversions is the larger effort.
- The water plan's influence on future capital planning varies. Private, municipal and regional utilities have different drivers. In addition, private utilities are regulated, others are not. There are incentives to keep rates low which impact capital planning and investment.
- On-going challenges include issues related to water quantity/sustainability, bottled water, setting priorities during drought and reuse. CT is currently exploring smaller scale opportunities for reuse such as golf courses and small gas facilities.
- In RI, there is a need for long term thinking about storage and redundant supply, including the Big River Reservoir, so that deferred decisions do not pile up for the next generation.

Administrator McCleary expressed his desire to continue the policy discussions with the Board. There was also a brief discussion about the importance of agency membership on the Board as it transitions to the DPUC. The next meetings are 3/16 at 9:00 am as posted on the annual meeting notice and 4/27 (changed due to spring break). Ms. Marchand raised the issue of the surcharge funds noting that water quality protection funds [escrow funds of the Water Resources Board Corporate] have been “scooped” to the General Fund.

Chair Licardi opened the floor to public questions. In response to a question about why the WRB was moving to the DPUC, Chair Licardi replied that it was a financial/budget decision.

There was a question about whether the WRB was going to make a public statement about the recent ‘scoop’ of surcharge monies to help balance the State budget.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:44 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Susan Licardi
Chair