

MINUTES

Meeting of the Chicago Water Partners Advisory Council (CWPAAC)
(An Advisory Body to the Chicago Department of Water Management)
Tuesday, June 26, 2024

Held at Chicago Plumbers Hall, 1340 W. Washington Blvd., Chicago IL

Call To Order

The meeting was chaired and called to order at 10:21 a.m. by David Kohn, Deputy Commissioner for Regional Partnerships, Chicago Department of Water Management (CDWM). Mr. Kohn welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their participation. At this time, Mr. Kohn asked everyone at the meeting to facilitate a roll call and to please introduce themselves.

Roll Call & Self-Introductions

In addition to Mr. Kohn, meeting participants and representatives of suburban communities and water systems in attendance who introduced themselves were:

Paul May, General Manager, DuPage Water Commission
Michael Schroeder, Supervisor of Public Works, City of Blue Island
Wesley Barber, Superintendent, Broadview-Westchester Joint Water Agency
Rick Barger, Water Operator, Village of Forest Park
Sal Stella, Director of Public Works, Village of Forest Park
Benjamin Daish, Finance Director, City of Berwyn
John Lord, Treasurer, Midlothian-Markham Water Commission
Tim Watkins, Assistant Director of Public Works, City of Des Plaines
Jason Zurawski, Superintendent, Brookfield-North Riverside Water Commission
Steven Davids, Public Works Department, Village of Stickney
Jerry Hurckes, Administrator, Village of Summit
Jason Jurkones, Water Operator, Village of Bedford Park
Michael Cramer, Public Works Director, Village of South Holland
Michael Bills, Water & Sewer Superintendent, Village of Oak Park
Orlando Velazquez Sr., Water Operator, Village of Oak Park
Jack Bielak, Director of Public Works & Engineering, Village of River Forest
Seth Jansen, Management Analyst, Village of River Forest
Ramesh Kanapareddy, Executive Director, Northwest Suburban Municipal Joint Action Water Agency
William Green, Director of Village Projects, Village of Bridgeview
Dan Tryban, Water Commissioner, Village of Alsip
Gerry Surufka, Superintendent, Calumet City
Marci Smith, Director, Village of Calumet Park
Tieranie Showers, Public Works Foreman, Village of Calumet Park
Allison Swisher, Director of Public Utilities, City of Joliet
Michael Ward, Water Plant Operator, Village of Evergreen Park
Colleen Kelly, Director, Justice-Willow Springs Water Commission
Kevin LasCola, Chief Water Operator, Village of McCook
Thomas Brandstedt, Village Engineer, Village of McCook
Brett Kryska, Village Manager, Village of Schiller Park

Jason Wells, Foreman, South Stickney Sanitary District
Steven Mahr, Assistant Commissioner, Chicago Department of Finance
Kylah Seltzer-Johnston, Cook County Bureau of Asset Management
Randy Conner, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Water Management
Joel Vieyra, 1st Deputy Commissioner, Chicago Department of Water Management
Scott Greene, Deputy Commissioner of Finance, Chicago Department of Water Management
Kathleen Henly, Asst. to the Commissioner, Chicago Department of Water Management

Public Comments

None.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Kohn thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for introducing themselves. He confirmed that a quorum of the CWPAC members was present, thus complying with the requirements of the Open Meetings Act governing the conduct of official business. He then turned to consideration of the minutes from the previous meeting of March 12, 2024, noting that draft minutes of that meeting were sent in advance to the members of the CWPAC for review and asking if anyone had any additional comments on or corrections to the minutes. Hearing no further comments, Mr. Kohn stated that he would entertain a motion to approve the draft minutes.

A motion to approve the minutes of March 12, 2024, was made by Mr. Kanapareddy and seconded by Mr. Daish. Mr. Kohn then called for a voice vote to approve the minutes, first asking those in favor to signify by saying “aye” and then asking any opposed to signify by saying “nay.” The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote. Mr. Kohn thanked the members and indicated that the approved minutes would be posted on the CWPAC webpage that has been established on the Department of Water Management website.

Update on Cost-of-Service Rate Modeling

Mr. Kohn then turned to the next item on the agenda, the update requested by CWPAC members on the City of Chicago’s efforts to develop individual projected Cost-of-Service (COS) rate models for all suburban wholesale customers, based upon the American Water Works Association (AWWA) COS rate methodology.

He began by recalling that one of the key data points needed to develop accurate COS models for all wholesale customers is peaking factors for each member, such as the values for maximum hourly and maximum daily water demand. He said CDWM continues to explore solutions to capture that data for everyone served by the Chicago Water System, such as enhanced metering, telemetry, or adaptation of the existing metering system. He added that as soon as Chicago has developed potential approaches for collecting that data, the City will be in back in touch with the members of the CWPAC to discuss how we can all collaborate to assemble this key information. He said the City remains committed to providing COS rate models for everyone by late 2025.

Update on CDWM Capital Improvements Plan

Mr. Kohn then offered an update on CDWM’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), focusing in particular on CIP for the Jardine and Sawyer Water Purification Plants (JWPP and SWPP, respectively). He noted that the City of Chicago’s five-year CIP Plan (for 2024-2028) had recently been published by the City’s Office of Budget and Management, and he shared the online link to that plan that had been emailed to CWPAC members prior to this meeting: https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/obm/supp_info/CIP/CIP%202024-2028.pdf

He continued, saying that for JWPP, initial projects include \$18.4 million for Roadway Repairs, \$16 million for Dehumidification System Rehabilitation, as well as \$12 million to complete the transition to an enhanced Corrosion Control/new Orthophosphate System (about which additional detail appears below).

For SWPP, he said, initial work highlights include \$250 million to replace the original, cast-iron Underdrain System that has been in service for more than 70 years, as well as to repair the Filter Building roof. Other SWPP projects of note include \$20 million to upgrade the plant's boiler systems. For additional information, Mr. Kohn encouraged CWPAC members to view the detailed CIP Plan online at the URL provided.

On another subject of ongoing interest, Mr. Kohn said that the facilities assessment the City is conducting for its water system is progressing well. That assessment, he noted, is important because this report on needed capital and facilities work, which will be shared with the CWPAC, contains cost information that is factored into COS modeling. He concluded by stating that the facilities assessment work is ongoing and is on track to be wrapped up toward the end of this year, or sometime in 2025.

Mr. Vieyra was recognized and said that to further clarify the timeline Mr. Kohn mentioned concerning the facilities assessment, the "notice to proceed" to the team working on this project was issued only recently, so they are expected to begin in a couple of weeks. The overall facilities assessment, he said, should be completed by late 2025. He added that, with respect to the corrosion control transition, CDWM is preparing a "Frequently Asked Questions" document that the department will provide to CWPAC members so that they may share this information with the residents they serve.

Mr. Kohn then asked if there were any further questions or comments concerning the CIP information. Hearing none, he moved to the next item on the agenda.

Update on CDWM Corrosion Control Transition (Polyphosphate to Orthophosphate)

Mr. Kohn next provided an update on CDWM's transition from Polyphosphate to Orthophosphate to achieve enhanced corrosion control within its water transmission system.

Recalling CDWM Director of Water Quality Patrick Schwer's presentation at the CWPAC's December 2023 meeting, he stated that since the 1990s, CDWM has used a 60/40 blended phosphate in its water treatment processes to help coat and protect the interior surfaces of pipes so as to prevent any lead that may be present from leaching into the finished water supply, a treatment process that has been very successful.

In 2017, he continued, CDWM began a study to optimize its corrosion control, aiming to adjust treatment processes to reduce aluminum phosphate precipitates by shifting from blended phosphate (i.e., polyphosphate) to a pure orthophosphate treatment. In coordination with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), CDWM has been conducting extensive studies to determine the correct level of orthophosphate to be used in the treatment process. As Mr. Schwer mentioned, a phased transition from blended phosphate to orthophosphate is projected to start in September or October of this year, with full transition complete by April 2025.

Ms. Swisher was recognized and inquired if the IEPA had finalized the orthophosphate dosage that CDWM is to use. Mr. Kohn replied that it is his understanding that the exact dosage had not yet been finalized but that IEPA was expected to do so within the next few months.

Mr. Green was recognized, and he asked if IEPA was approving the transition from blended phosphate to orthophosphate so as to eliminate the need to replace lead service lines. Mr. Kohn said that definitely was not the case. He said that the lead service line replacement (LSLR) requirement remains in effect for all water providers including Chicago, which, with about 407,000 lead service lines, has the greatest LSLR challenge of any municipality in the nation. The transition from blended phosphate to orthophosphate, he said, is being implemented to improve CDWM's corrosion control efforts and to continue to prevent possible leaching of lead into the transmission system as Chicago continues to replace lead service lines throughout its system.

Preview of online “K2i” (Knowledge to Implementation”) Global Utility Information Sharing Platform

Mr. Kohn continued, saying that the next item on the agenda should be of interest to all CWPAC members. For many years, he explained, CDWM has been working with a consultancy called Booky Oren Global Water Technologies (BOGWT), a firm headquartered in Israel and whose founder, Booky Oren, is the former Executive Chairman of Israel's national water agency, MEKROT, the supplier for 70 percent of that nation's water. They work with water and wastewater systems serving more than 90 million citizens all over the world and provide technological and operational support to help implement improvements based on innovation and best practices. In addition to Chicago, he said, BOGWT participating systems include the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, D.C. Water, the Orange County Sanitation District, and Clean Water Services of Oregon, as well as water agencies serving Singapore, Portugal, the Netherlands, Greece, and other jurisdictions.

BOGWT, he added, has developed a robust, online portal of information for water sector professionals called “K2i,” which stands for Knowledge To Implementation. The K2i portal contains a library of information and recorded webinar conversations among leaders from water systems across the U.S. and many other international systems, covering common challenges and best practices to meet those challenges as shared by water sector professionals. While much of the information on the K2i platform addresses engineering and operational concerns, the platform includes information on a wide range of topics, including Cybersecurity, Predictive Maintenance, Water Quality Management, Water Loss Management, Asset Management, Human Resources, and more.

Mr. Kohn mentioned that BOGWT made a commendable decision to exclude from the K2i conversations vendors or any entity selling a product or service. The webinars and discussions available via the platform involve only operational and engineering professionals involved in the work from water systems across the globe – no vendors are involved. The basic idea is to share best practices and proven methods for addressing common challenges in water operations and management.

Because CDWM has a relationship with BOGWT and a subscription to the K2i platform, he said, the department wishes to provide CWPAC members complimentary access to this platform as an additional resource and to help us all avoid “reinventing the wheel” on shared challenges to which successful approaches have been developed.

To begin this rollout, Mr. Kohn said, the BOGWT leadership will visit Chicago at the Jardine Water Purification Plant (JWPP) on July 22, and CDWM will be extending an invitation to the CWPAC members who may wish to join us for an overview of the K2i platform. He mentioned that attendance by CWPAC members at the July 22 meeting will be limited (i.e., below a quorum of the organization) in order to ensure compliance with the Open Meetings Act. He added that the BOGWT team has agreed to offer an introductory presentation to the entire membership at a future CWPAC meeting, so if anyone is unable to attend the July meeting at the JWPP, there will be another opportunity to learn about the platform and the information it offers.

Consideration and Adoption of CWPAC Draft By-Laws

The next item on the agenda, Mr. Kohn said, is consideration and adoption of the draft By-Laws, which were sent in advance for review.

To facilitate discussion, Mr. Kohn said he would entertain a motion and a second to consider and adopt the draft By-Laws. A motion to do so was made by Mr. Kanapareddy and seconded by Mr. Kryska. With a motion being offered and seconded for consideration of the draft By-Laws, Mr. Kohn proceeded with the discussion.

He began by offering a summary and highlights of the proposed By-Laws and background on the development of the document. He acknowledged and thanked the member partners who served on the ad-hoc committee that drafted the By-Laws, including Mr. May of the DuPage Water Commission, Mr. Kanapareddy of NSMJAWA, Ms. Swisher of Joliet, Mr. Maslo of Hardwood Heights, and Mr. Ward of Evergreen Park.

Reiterating the discussions from prior meetings, he said the draft By-Laws set up the formal operating structure of the organization, providing for leadership of the CWPAC via establishment of a nine-member Executive Committee comprising the largest partners of the Chicago Water System as determined by water allocations issued by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), as well as representatives of smaller communities and water systems.

He emphasized that the overall objective was to ensure that all members, regardless of size, have representation and a voice in guiding the CWPAC and its mission. That is why, he added, that in addition to the City and the five largest partners of the water system, the By-Laws provide for a representative of the Northern Region partners receiving water from the JWPP, a representative of the Southern Region partners receiving water from the SWPP, and another At-Large representative that is not among the largest partners. Together, he said, these Executive Committee members will develop the CWPAC meeting agendas and facilitate discussions of potential recommendations on water policy and operations for consideration by the Commissioner of CDWM.

Mr. Kohn continued, further explaining the process in the By-Laws for the CWPAC to provide recommendations to the Commissioner of CDWM, which also are conveyed to the City's Chief Financial Officer. He added that whenever the organization decides to approve such a recommendation – an internal matter on which the City's representative does not vote – any member partners who may disagree with the recommendation may submit a minority report explaining their position. Upon receipt of a CWPAC recommendation, the By-Laws require the Commissioner to respond within 90 days, either accepting the recommendation, rejecting the recommendation, or rejecting it in part and accepting it in part. If a recommendation is rejected in whole or in part, he said, the response to the CWPAC must include the reasons for the Commissioner's decision.

He added that the By-Laws also provide a mechanism for the CWPAC to seek the Commissioner's reconsideration of a recommendation that has been rejected in whole or in part. By consensus or by simple majority vote, the membership may ask the Commissioner to re-examine a recommendation, providing a response to the initial decision that explains why the recommendation should be accepted. He further noted that the By-Laws include a procedure for amending the document with an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members.

Finally, he said, the By-Laws envision the CWPAC serving as a regional voice on external water related issues of concern to the organization – i.e., adopting a position on general matters of water policy, legislation, public information or education that affects the water sector. As an example, he suggested the CWPAC might decide to express a view on water quality standards proposed by the IEPA or proposed revisions of Lake Michigan water allocations by the IDNR. When the CWPAC considers such an external position, he said, the City's representative may vote on the matter.

He concluded by stating that adoption of the By-Laws would establish an organizational structure and leadership that is driven not by the City of Chicago, but by the members of the CWPAC itself. While the body was authorized by Chicago City Council ordinance, it is not intended to be a Chicago-centric organization. It's intended to reflect the views of the members and the communities and water systems they represent, and to foster true collaboration on water policy and operations throughout our region.

At this time, Mr. Kohn asked if there were any further comments or questions from the members. Hearing none, he said that a vote on adoption of the By-Laws was in order, and since this represents a significant action, he announced that the vote would be conducted via a formal roll call. Noting again that a quorum of the members was present, he said he would read the name of each community and water system and asked each representative to respond “aye” or “nay” to the motion to adopt.

Mr. Kohn then conducted the roll call vote, during which all members present voted in the affirmative. The CWPAC By-Laws, he announced, were therefore approved by unanimous roll call vote of the membership and were formally adopted.

Mr. Kohn thanked and congratulated the CWPAC for achieving this critical organizational milestone and asked for a round of applause, to which the members responded with enthusiasm. He said that he would email to the CWPAC a PDF copy of the By-Laws as adopted for their files. He added that the CWPAC can now operate and organize itself pursuant to the By-Laws, saying that he looked forward to working with the members to take the needed administrative steps to fully implement the By-Laws’ structure and begin formally to pursue the CWPAC’s mission.

Old Business

None.

New Business

At this time, Mr. Kohn asked if any members of the CWPAC wished to offer additional comments or bring up new business. Ms. Swisher was recognized and offered an update on the Chicago-Joliet water supply initiative. She reported that the new Grand Prairie Water Commission that Joliet is assembling to receive water from Chicago as of 2030 – together with the communities of Romeoville, Crest Hill, Minooka, Shorewood, and Channahon – will be officially formed as of June 28 and will be ready to move forward.

Mr. Kohn thanked Ms. Swisher for the timely update and offered congratulations for achieving official formation of the new Commission. He added that the communities of the Grand Prairie Water Commission, including Joliet, represent approximately 250,000 residents who will receive water from the City of Chicago’s water system as of 2030.

Mr. Kohn then said he would welcome recommendations about the location of the next quarterly meeting of the CWPAC on September 10 and asked members who may be interested in hosting that meeting to please contact him or Ms. Henly.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the CWPAC, Mr. Kohn asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Said motion was offered, seconded, and approved by unanimous voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 11:07 a.m.**