

MINUTES

Meeting of the Chicago Water Partners Advisory Council (CWPAC)
(An Advisory Body to the Chicago Department of Water Management)
Tuesday, September 10, 2024

Held at Village of McCook Park District Hall, 4911 Riverside Drive, McCook IL

Call To Order

The meeting was chaired and called to order at 10:08 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. He also thanked and acknowledged the Village of McCook and the McCook Park District for hosting today's meeting. 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:

Jack Bielak, Director of Public Works & Engineering, Village of River Forest
Seth Jansen, Management Analyst, Village of River Forest
Chris Lesniak, Water Department Superintendent, Village of Bedford Park
Wesley Barber, Superintendent, Broadview-Westchester Joint Water Agency
Jason Zurawski, Superintendent, Brookfield-North Riverside Water Commission
Thomas Brandstedt, Village Engineer, Village of McCook
Kevin LasCola, Chief Water Operator, Village of McCook
Colleen Kelly, Director, Justice-Willow Springs Water Commission
Gerry Surufka, Superintendent, Calumet City
Deanne Jaffrey, City Administrator, Calumet City
Jason Wells, Foreman, South Stickney Sanitary District
Wally Dowling, Water Operator, Central Stickney Sanitary District
Steven Davids, Public Works Department, Village of Stickney
Nick Gornick, Deputy Director of Plant Operations, City of Joliet/Grand Prairie Water Commission
William Pazdzioch, Water Superintendent, Village of River Grove
Benjamin Daish, Asst. Finance Director, City of Berwyn
Michael Ward, Water Plant Operator, Village of Evergreen Park
Michael Schroeder, Supervisor of Public Works, City of Blue Island
Marci Smith, Director, Village of Calumet Park
Tieranie Showers, Public Works Foreman, Village of Calumet Park
Maggie Britton, Treasurer, Village of Midlothian
John Lord, Treasurer, Midlothian-Markham Water Commission
Ramesh Kanapareddy, Executive Director, Northwest Suburban Municipal Joint Action Water Agency
Ron Baker, Operations Manager, Northwest Suburban Municipal Joint Action Water Agency
Chris Bostick, Manager of Water Operations, DuPage Water Commission
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 then turned to consideration of the minutes from the previous meeting of June 26, 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 June 26, 2024, was made by Mr. Kanapareddy and seconded by Mr. Bielak. 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 reporting that Chicago continues to work on updating individual COS models for all wholesale customers, noting that the City has made a commitment to sharing those rate models to each member of the Chicago Water System in 2025.

He reiterated 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. CDWM is considering various solutions to capture that data for Chicago Water System wholesale customers, such as enhanced metering, telemetry, or adaptation of the existing metering system. He said progress is being made and that the CDWM will update the CWPAC members as soon as possible on how the City proposes to obtain peaking factor data.

Mr. Kanapareddy was recognized. He said he wished to confirm that the COS models will provide a projected rate range for each wholesale customer that reflects what their rate will look like when the COS methodology becomes effective in 2030. Mr. Kohn replied that this is correct – the initial COS rate models will represent a “snapshot in time” of what the 2030 COS rate range will be for each customer, based upon the best available data at that time. Further updates/refinements of those rate models, he said, will be conducted each year prior to transitioning to COS so that all partners have the most accurate possible projection of the rate they will obtain.

Update on CDWM Capital Improvements Plan

Mr. Kohn then offered an update on CDWM’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), emphasizing CIP projects for the Jardine and Sawyer Water Purification Plants (JWPP and SWPP, respectively). He reminded CWPAC partners that the City of Chicago’s recently published five-year CIP Plan (for 2024-2028) was available via an online link disseminated previously via email, and he re-shared the link for their convenience:

https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/obm/supp_info/CIP/CIP%202024-2028.pdf

As an overview, Mr. Kohn said that currently the Jardine and Sawyer plants are undergoing significant upgrades to enhance efficiency, reliability and safety. The CIP initiatives at these facilities, he added, focus on electrical, mechanical, structural and other engineering improvements covering a wide range of essential systems and infrastructure. He also mentioned that work continues on the overall condition assessment at JWPP and SWPP, which is of interest to the CWPAC since this assessment will be another factor with respect to the COS calculations pertaining to each of the plants. The work orders for this infrastructure assessment, he said, have been issued, and this analysis begins early next year and continues through 2025.

He continued, stating that electrical improvements are a big part of the current CIP at both plants. The Chicago Water System has twelve pumping stations, he said, ten of which have been converted from their original steam to electric power. Within the near future, he said, all of CDWM's pumping stations will be fully electric. Other work in this category includes electrical safety upgrades, system upgrades (including electrical switchgear), and upgrades to the SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) systems at JWPP and SWPP. He also mentioned that there are some medium voltage upgrades underway to ensure reliable power distribution and operational continuity across all critical systems.

Turning to another category of capital improvement, he mentioned that treatment process and facilities upgrades will rehabilitate sediment force mains to improve the efficiency of solids removal in the treatment process, and also include installation of new chlorine scrubbers to enhance safety. Also currently underway are filter underdrain upgrades and work to maintain optimal filtration performance.

Next, he discussed upgrades to the water plants' laboratories and water quality processes, noting that CDWM has some of the most sophisticated and capable facilities of any water system in the country, including the JWPP's laboratory – the only IEPA certified lab in the state of Illinois, staffed by highly trained microbiologists, chemists and engineers. Those facilities, he said, are undergoing renovations to enhance and maintain Chicago's world-class water quality testing and monitoring capabilities. He stated that CDWM constantly monitors water quality, from the raw water intake at the offshore "cribs" in Lake Michigan, to the water's arrival at the JWPP and SWPP facilities, and throughout the entire treatment process. After the finished water is sent through the distribution system, he said, CDWM has additional touch points to monitor water quality at all times.

Next, he turned to improvements in mechanical systems relating to air compressor systems, dehumidification, heating and cooling systems, and boiler upgrades to ensure efficient heating and to enhance treatment plant processes and operations. Concluding his CIP review, he mentioned various civil and site improvements such as road paving and resurfacing to improve access and safety, as well as other maintenance work on the overall physical plants.

Following Mr. Kohn's CIP review, Mr. Bielak was recognized. Alluding to the COS modeling under development, he inquired whether the facilities assessment – the findings of which factor into the COS rate models for each customer by reflecting their contribution to the costs associated with the facilities directly relevant to their water service – would be completed in time to inform the COS models for CWPAC partners. Mr. Kohn replied that the timelines for completion of the facilities assessment and COS modeling should match up fairly well and should allow the City to include the facilities assessment data in the COS models being developed for each system partner.

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.

To recap the information provided thus far, he mentioned CDWM Director of Water Quality Patrick Schwer's presentation at the CWPAC's December 2023 meeting. At that time, Mr. Schwer reported 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. The recent timeline of the corrosion control transition process started in 2017 when CDWM began a study, in coordination with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), to adjust its treatment processes to reduce aluminum phosphate precipitates by shifting from blended phosphate to a pure orthophosphate treatment. CDWM and IEPA have since collaborated on extensive studies to determine the correct level of orthophosphate to be used in the treatment process. At that 2023 meeting, Mr. Schwer said a phased transition from blended phosphate to orthophosphate is projected to start in the Fall of 2024, with full transition complete by April 2025.

Mr. Kohn stated that because of the importance of this matter, CDWM will offer to its wholesale customers two webinars to review the corrosion control transition, on September 23 and again on September 24. The two webinars, he said, will be identical in content and are offered on two different dates for the convenience of those who wish to participate. The sessions, he said, will include Mr. Schwer, a representative of IEPA, and CDM Smith, with whom CDWM has been working on this matter. Each webinar will begin with a review of the transition plan, followed by ample time for questions from participants and responses from the presenters. He said CDWM looks forward to the webinars and to discussing with its water partners the upcoming corrosion control treatment changes.

Update: Presentation of Online "K2i" (Knowledge to Implementation") Global Utility Information Sharing Platform

Mr. Kohn continued to the next item on the agenda, which he noted has been discussed at previous CWPAC meetings: providing CWPAC partners access to an online platform known as "K2i," which stands for Knowledge To Implementation.

He recalled that the K2i platform was created by Booky Oren Global Water Technologies (BOGWT). BOGWT, he said, is an international consultancy firm headquartered in Israel and whose founder, Booky Oren, is the former Executive Chairman of Israel's national water agency, MEKROT. 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, 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.

The K2i portal, he continued, contains a library of information and recorded webinar conversations among leaders of water systems across the U.S. and in many other nations. The recorded discussions address common challenges and best practices to meet those challenges as shared by water sector professionals. In addition to information concerning engineering and operational matters, the platform includes webinars on a wide range of topics, including Cybersecurity, Predictive Maintenance, Water Quality Management, Water Loss Management, Asset Management, and Human Resources. Through its subscription to the K2i platform, he said, CDWM is able to provide CWPAC members complimentary access to this platform as an additional resource.

Mr. Kohn noted that in July, CDWM extended an invitation to the CWPAC to attend an overview of the K2i platform (during a previously scheduled BOGWT visit to the Jardine Water Purification Plant), but that date turned out to be inconvenient for most members. To follow up, he announced, the BOGWT team will return to Chicago on Tuesday, December 10 – the date of the next CWPAC quarterly meeting – to offer a presentation to the members about the K2i portal.

He said additional details will be shared with the CWPAC in the email notice for the December 10 meeting. He added that, if possible, members are encouraged to bring a laptop computer to that meeting, because BOGWT will offer a live demonstration of this online resource, and with a laptop, members will be able to log in and explore the K2i portal.

Discussion: Next Steps to Implement CWPAC Draft By-Laws

The next item on the agenda, Mr. Kohn said, is reviewing next steps needed to implement the structure of the CWPAC and its governance, pursuant to the By-Laws that were formally adopted at the June 26, 2024 meeting.

He said a primary task is to complete formation of the executive committee that leads the organization, establishing the agendas for its meetings and guiding the CWPAC's overall mission. Under the By-Laws, he explained, this committee comprises nine members: a permanent representative of the City; the five largest partners of the system by water volume; a representative of the Northern Region partners served by the Jardine water purification facility; a representative of the Southern Region partners served by the Sawyer water purification facility; and one At-Large representative who is from a community or water system that is not among one of the other committee members.

He confirmed that currently, the five largest partners by water volume are the DuPage Water Commission, the Northwest Suburban Municipal Joint Action Water Agency (NSMJAWA), Bedford Park, Oak Lawn, and the Grand Prairie Water Commission. So, he said, the CWPAC now needs to select the three remaining executive committee members – the Northern Region, Southern Region, and At-Large representatives.

He then drew attention to a handout that had been distributed at the meeting listing every CWPAC member by region (Northern or Southern, depending upon the plant from which their water is obtained) with names and email contacts for each partner of the water system. He asked the members to review this list for accuracy and to let him and/or Ms. Henly know of any errors or omissions so that corrections may be made. He also asked the members to please consider coming forward to fill one of the three open positions on the executive committee.

He noted that under the By-Laws, these positions are to be selected and approved by the members of each region, or in the case of the At-Large representatives, by all members. He said this matter should be discussed at the December meeting, saying he hopes that some nominations will be forthcoming for consideration and approval by the members. He added that establishing a fully constituted executive committee is critical to the CWPAC's ongoing mission.

CWPAC Delegate Designation, Open Meetings Act Training, Confidentiality Agreement

Next, Mr. Kohn turned to three other items to be addressed: 1) completing CWPAC partners' designation of their delegates as specified in the By-Laws; 2) the Open Meetings Act (OMA) training required of delegates; and 3) also pursuant to the By-Laws, development and implementation of a confidentiality agreement.

He began by mentioning that the By-Laws call for each community or water system member of the CWPAC to designate a Primary Delegate, an Alternate Delegate, and (if desired) a Consultant Delegate to the organization. The basic idea, he said, is to ensure that all CWPAC members are represented at each meeting. While one or more delegates from a municipality or water system may attend any meeting, at least one is expected to participate; if the Primary Delegate cannot attend a meeting, the Alternate Delegate or Consultant Delegate should be there.

The By-Laws, he said, define a Primary Delegate as an “employee or staff member of the Member Partner designated by the Member Partner.” A Consultant Delegate is defined as “a consultant or advisor to a Member Partner who is not an employee or staff member of the Member Partner and whose participation has been approved by the CWPAC pursuant to Article 5, Section 2 of these By-Laws”; that section requires that the appointment of a Consultant Delegate be “approved by the Executive Committee upon written request of the Member Partner.” He added that according to the By-Laws, “a person designated as a Consultant Delegate to the CWPAC may not simultaneously represent more than one Member Partner as a Consultant Delegate,” and that “[t]he Primary Delegate shall act and vote on behalf of its Member Partner and the Alternate Delegate or Consultant Delegate may act and vote for its Member only in the absence of the Primary Delegate.” He asked all partners who have yet to designate delegates to please do so at their earliest opportunity and said CDWM would follow up with the members on this matter.

Moving on to the second, related item, he said that the State of Illinois’ Open Meetings Act requires all appointed delegates to the CWPAC to complete the online OMA training offered by the Illinois Attorney General, and he directed members’ attention to the relevant website address on the agenda. He explained that if anyone has already completed the OMA training for another public body on which they serve, that training is sufficient and they needn’t complete the online course again. He said the OMA course takes approximately a half hour, and when one completes the training, the system will generate a Certificate of Completion, which delegates are asked to email as a PDF to either himself or Ms. Henly. As the convener of the CWPAC, he explained, Chicago is obligated to maintain a file with copies of the OMA certifications for all delegates. He asked any delegates who have not already undergone the OMA course to please visit the Attorney General’s website and complete that training as soon as possible.

Mr. Kohn then turned to the confidentiality agreement. This provision of the By-Laws, he said, references a brief agreement now being drafted that is intended to help protect from disclosure any confidential or non-public information that may be shared with the CWPAC membership. He said all water operators and management understand very well the importance of protecting the security of sensitive public infrastructure for which they are responsible, and that comes in many forms -- including physical security of water plants and infrastructure, as well as cybersecurity. The rationale for the confidentiality agreement, he said, is in this same vein, to protect information of which external disclosure could potentially pose a security risk.

From time to time, he continued, CWPAC members may have access to sensitive water system information or other non-public information relevant to discussions about water operations – information that an external party could not obtain via a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request. The confidentiality agreement to be signed by all CWPAC members pertains to any such information, documentation or data shared within the organization. It represents a mutual pledge to not disclose to any outside party confidential information provided for internal deliberations. An example, he offered, would be something like design information about a water system or technical details about a particular transmission main or other piece of sensitive infrastructure.

He added that protection of such sensitive information is reflected in Illinois’ OMA statute, which for security reasons contains provisions to prevent disclosure of certain information concerning operation of municipal utilities, so the confidentiality agreement is consistent with that objective. He concluded by stating that the agreement would be presented to the members in the near future for their review and thanked the members for their attention to this important matter.

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.

Hearing none, Mr. Kohn said he would welcome recommendations about the location of the next quarterly meeting of the CWPAC on December 10 and asked members who may be interested in hosting that meeting to please contact him or Ms. Henly.

Mr. Lesniak was recognized. He indicated that the Village of Bedford Park would be pleased to host the December 10 CWPAC meeting at the Wintrust Sports Complex located in Bedford Park, just south of Midway Airport. The members responded with applause, and Mr. Kohn thanked Mr. Lesniak for graciously offering to host the meeting, noting that the CWPAC had a previous meeting there and that it is a beautiful facility in a fantastic location. He asked the members to note this on their calendars and said that additional details will be provided in the emailed announcement sent in advance of the December 10 meeting.

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 11:15 a.m.**