

MINUTES

Meeting of the Chicago Water Partners Advisory Council (CWPAC)
(An Advisory Body to the Chicago Department of Water Management)
Tuesday, December 12, 2023

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

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. 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:

Joel Vieyra, 1st Deputy Commissioner, Chicago Department of Water Management

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

Rick Hansen, Water Operator, Midlothian-Markham Water Commission

Dan Tryban, Water Commissioner, Village of Alsip

Michael Ward, Water Plant Operator, Village of Evergreen Park

Steven Davids, Public Works Department, Village of Stickney

Chris Lesniak, Water Superintendent, Village of Bedford Park

Thomas Brandstedt, Engineer, Village of McCook

Kevin LasCola, Chief Water Operator, Village of McCook

Tieranie Showers, Public Works Foreman, Village of Calumet Park

Marci Smith, Public Works Director, Village of Calumet Park

Michael Bills, Water & Sewer Superintendent, Village of Oak Park

Orlando Velazquez Sr., Water Operator, Village of Oak Park

Ramesh Kanapareddy, Executive Director, Northwest Suburban Municipal Joint Action Water Agency

Paul May, General Manager, DuPage Water Commission

Allison Swisher, Director of Public Utilities, City of Joliet

Brendan White, Asst. Commissioner, City of Chicago Department of Finance

Andrea Cheng, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Water Management

Patrick Schwer, Director of Water Quality, Chicago Department of Water Management

William Green, Director of Village Projects, Village of Bridgeview

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 September 12, 2023, 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 as amended.

A motion to approve the minutes of September 12, 2023, was made by Mr. Kanapareddy and seconded by Mr. Lord. 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.

Committee/Working Group Reports

None.

Remarks of the Chair / Reminders of Advisory Council Formation Tasks

Mr. Kohn began by reiterating additional steps needed as the CWPAC continues its formation. He asked each member partner, if it has not done so already, to please designate a primary and an alternate representative to attend the body’s meetings, and, if desired, a consultant delegate. This may be done, he said, by using the link to the relevant form previously provided for this purpose.

Mr. Kohn also reminded members about the online Open Meetings Act (OMA) training requirement for those appointed as delegates. Each individual so designated must complete an online OMA training offered by the Illinois Attorney General’s Office. Following the training, the completion certificate should be forwarded electronically to Mr. Kohn and/or to Ms. Henly so that it may be added to the files CDWM is required to maintain to demonstrate OMA compliance.

CWPAC 2024 Meeting Dates

Mr. Kohn then turned to consideration of CWPAC meeting dates for the coming year. The following 2024 meeting dates (all from 10:00 a.m. to Noon on the second Tuesday of the month) were proposed and agreed to by consensus: **March 12, June 11, September 10, and December 10.** Topics proposed for discussion at the 2024 meetings included anticipated Capital Improvement Projects for the Chicago water system, updates on implementation of the AWWA cost-of-service rate methodology, CDWM systemwide condition assessment, communication protocols for water service and water quality issues, and progress updates on the Chicago-Joliet/Grand Prairie Water Commission water supply initiative.

Presentation: Patrick Schwer, Director of Water Quality, CDWM

Mr. Kohn next introduced Patrick Schwer, Director of Water Quality for CDWM, for a presentation to the CWPAC on water quality processes, surveillance activities to detect and monitor Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in source water from Lake Michigan, and steps that CDWM is taking to optimize corrosion control in its transmission and distribution systems.

Mr. Schwer thanked Mr. Kohn for the introduction. He began his presentation by noting that he had been working at CDWM for 11 years and has been involved in the water sector for nearly 20 years, focusing on water treatment, chemistry, quality, and regulatory compliance.

Regarding corrosion control, he explained 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. This, he said, has been very successful and has dramatically reduced detectable lead in the water system, noting that Chicago's drinking water continues to meet or exceed all state, federal and industry water quality standards.

He said that in 2017, CDWM began a study to optimize its corrosion control, aiming to adjust treatment processes to reduce aluminum phosphate precipitates by shifting from blended phosphate to a pure orthophosphate treatment. In doing so, he said, it's necessary to carefully control the amount of orthophosphate introduced into the system, because if the dosage is excessive it can increase the presence of white aluminum precipitate and lead to consumer complaints about "white water."

To prevent this, he said, CDWM has been conducting extensive studies to determine the correct level of orthophosphate used in the treatment process. He indicated that a phased transition from blended to orthophosphate is planned starting in May or June of 2024 and continuing through late 2024, gradually replacing blended phosphate with orthophosphate in the finished water. He added that this process entails adjusting CDWM's full treatment process, moving not just from blended to pure orthophosphate, but also controlling the point where orthophosphate is introduced in that process. At the end of the day, he said, this transition will produce major benefits, including additional reduction of the amount of lead coming off of existing lead service lines due to enhanced corrosion control.

He added that the change to orthophosphate will convey other benefits, such as lessening the interior roughness of water pipe surfaces that can impede water flow. He explained that the aluminum precipitate from blended phosphate produces a uniform white coating that increases resistance within pipes, and as the blended phosphate product is decreased and replaced with orthophosphate, testing data suggests that CDWM should expect said resistance to diminish, thus lowering energy costs for pumping operations and improving water pressures across the board.

Next, Mr. Schwer turned to the City's ongoing monitoring of the presence of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAs) in drinking water, recalling that PFAs refers to a group of thousands of man-made chemicals with similar molecular structure that spread to the environment, break down very slowly over time, and are found in many different consumer, commercial, and industrial products. As a result of their widespread use and persistent structure, he added, PFAs have been found throughout the environment, which is of concern since scientific studies have shown that exposure to some PFAs may be linked to harmful health effects.

He stated that in Illinois, PFAs are more likely to be present in groundwater than in surface water like the Great Lakes. Despite this, he said, Chicago for many years has proactively sampled its drinking water for PFAs, starting in 2011 as part of a larger study on emerging contaminants. Detailed results of that study, he said, are available on the CDWM website in a report titled [City of Chicago Emerging Contaminant Study](#).

In addition, he said, Chicago’s drinking water was sampled for chemicals within the PFAs group in 2014 during the U.S. EPA Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule 3 and again in 2020 as part of the Illinois EPA’s PFAs Study. Both studies yielded “non-detect results,” meaning that if any PFAs were present, they were at such a low level that laboratory instruments couldn’t detect them.

He concluded his presentation by noting that CDWM continues to test and monitor for the presence of PFAs on an ongoing basis and expects to maintain its “non-detect” status for these chemicals. As to why Chicago has not seen detectable levels of PFAs in its water versus other utilities, he said, the working hypothesis is that this is basically due to CDWM’s water intakes, which at two miles out into Lake Michigan are much further offshore and also deeper than the locations from which other utilities draw water. The distance from shore and depth of Chicago’s water intake therefore minimizes the potential for PFAs to be introduced into source water for CDWM’s treatment processes.

Extensive conversation ensued following Mr. Schwer’s presentation, during which CWPAC members inquired about additional details concerning CDWM’s upcoming changes to its corrosion control methods, monitoring of PFAs, and protocols for communicating with wholesale suburban customers regarding water quality issues that may occur from time to time. Members also expressed their desire to have after-hours contact numbers for CDWM to report water quality or operational issues that may arise outside of regular business hours; Mr. Kohn said that CDWM would provide this information.

Mr. Schwer acknowledged the importance of sharing timely information on such matters, indicated that his contact information was included on the presentation handouts, and encouraged members to reach out to him with water treatment and quality questions. Mr. Kohn added that he and Ms. Henly were also available to respond to CWPAC members’ concerns about any aspect of the Chicago Water System.

Follow-up Discussion: Draft By-Laws

Mr. Kohn then turned to the next item on the agenda, continuing review of the draft CWPAC By-Laws. He recalled that at the previous meeting, members had discussed refinement of the roll call voting procedure to be followed when the CWPAC is unable to reach consensus on a given issue.

The original proposed structure, he recalled, was based upon a weighted voting system wherein each partner’s vote is weighted according to its Lake Michigan allocation from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). Members expressed concern about whether this system reasonably balances representation between the larger partners of the system – that have greater collective voting strength due to their allocations – and the smaller communities of the system. Prior discussions of the CWPAC, he said, have therefore sought a voting structure that achieves such a balance, ensuring that the interests of the largest system partners and those of the smaller communities both are fairly represented.

A suggestion by Paul May of the DuPage Water Commission, he continued, seemed to offer an acceptable path forward. Mr. May proposed a procedure where a recommendation or position considered via roll call of the members would be measured in two ways: 1) by members’ weighted votes based on their respective IDNR allocations; and 2) by counting each CWPAC member’s position as one “yes” or “no” vote, irrespective of their size. Under this procedure, any motion or position where a roll call vote is required would need to pass by a majority of both methods to be approved.

Mr. Kohn drew members' attention to the draft, amended By-Law provision reflecting this procedure that had been distributed for consideration. He noted that the City's weighted vote would be based upon its then-current Lake Michigan allocation from IDNR for Chicago's retail customers; the Chicago vote is not the total volume of water that it supplies to everyone in the system, only the volume supplied to the City's retail customers (i.e., Chicago residents).

He added that if the matter under consideration is a recommendation to the Commissioner of CDWM – that is, a recommendation to the City of Chicago and its Department of Water Management – then Chicago does not vote. The only time Chicago votes, he said, is when the CWPAC conducts a roll call vote on a motion concerning an external matter (for example, a position concerning the IDNR allocation process, or a new water quality standard being proposed by IEPA) on which the CWPAC wishes to take a position as an organization on behalf of the region.

Restating the central premise, he said that under the amended procedure, if the majority of the votes cast by the member partners present at the meeting approve the question by both methods, then the motion or issue is approved. If the majority of votes disapprove the motion by either method, then the matter fails and is not approved. Mr. Kohn then opened the floor for comments or questions about the proposed amendment.

Mr. Kanapareddy, Mr. Green, and Mr. Lord subsequently were recognized, each of whom expressed support for the amended roll call procedure as providing a better way to balance interests among all partners of the system.

As no objections or further comments were forthcoming, Mr. Kohn asked for a motion from the floor to approve the proposed roll call procedure amendment to Article Five, Section 11. **Mr. Kanapareddy moved to approve the amendment, and his motion was seconded by Mr. Green. At this time, Mr. Kohn asked all those in favor to signify by saying "Aye," then asking those opposed to signify by saying "Nay." The amendment on the roll call voting procedure was approved by unanimous, affirmative voice vote with no opposition.**

Mr. Kohn thanked the members for their approval of the amendment, indicating that in advance of the next meeting he would send to all members the updated draft By-Laws containing the revised roll call procedure. He stressed the importance of having all CWPAC members attend the first 2024 meeting on March 12 so that the necessary quorum is present to allow a vote to adopt the formal By-Laws. Toward that end, he urged the members to please review in advance the By-Laws document in its entirety and to be prepared to discuss and vote upon it at that meeting.

At the suggestion of Mr. Lord, Mr. Kohn said that he also would email to the members the current roster of CWPAC members with contact information, as well as a list indicating those partners who have participated and designated delegates and those who have not yet done so. Mr. Lord stated that this would be helpful, inasmuch as current members could then reach out to other communities in the system who have not participated in the CWPAC to encourage them to do so. He expressed his view that the formation of the CWPAC is very beneficial to Chicago's suburban water partners and that he is pleased to be a member of the group.

Mr. Kohn thanked Mr. Lord for his comments and asked if there was any other business that the members wished to discuss. Hearing none, he proceeded to the final items on the agenda.

Old Business

None.

New Business

None.

Adjournment

Prior to adjournment, Mr. Kohn informed the members that Mr. May of the DuPage Water Commission – who had to leave the meeting but who spoke with Mr. Kohn before departing – had graciously offered to host the first meeting of the CWPAC in 2024 on Tuesday, March 12 at the Commission, located at 600 E. Butterfield Road in Elmhurst. He asked that the members please make a note of this location and indicated that a meeting notice would be sent well in advance of that date.

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 voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 11:58 a.m.**