



MEETING NOTES 2050 WATER POLICY PLAN UPDATE ADVISORY GROUP January 30, 2024

ATTENDANCE

Members Present:

Scott Anderson
Bryan Bear
Paul Carpenter
Becky Christopher
Charlie Howley
Laura Jester
Russ Matthys
Richard McCoy
Bruce Westby

Absent:

Phil Belfiori
Andy Brotzler
Bryan Dodds
Bruce Elder
Tim Kelly
Jennifer Levitt
Paul Moline
Vanessa Strong
Nick Tomczik

Tom Wesolowski
James Wisker

Staff:

Steve Christopher
Kyle Colvin
Jen Kostrzewski
Sam Paske
Shannon Skally
Judy Sventek

WELCOME

Jen Kostrzewski welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda. She noted that the handout received ahead of time is in draft format and will change as different groups of stakeholders provide feedback.

DRAFT WATER POLICY PLAN POLICIES

Jen Kostrzewski reviewed the objectives of the Water Policy Plan. The group liked that the objectives have been streamlined down to four from six. She explained the components of the policy template that is used as a guide for each policy. The group split into breakout sessions and discussed the following policies and provided feedback to each below.

Integrated Water Policy:

- Definition of “sustainable” and “resilient”
- What does working collectively mean – active collaboration or just the result?
- Desired outcome – add more about streamlining the planning; there didn’t seem to be anything about the timeline
- First impressions are it’s definitely a Met Council thing; it’s on the right track
- Is this the planners and operators (water planning and management approach); are the city planners and operators thinking and working together
- Liked integrated; cooperative seemed nebulous; cooperative seems to be not quite right
- Words like any and all not used with legalese in mind
- Are benefits of water defined and do we all agree? It’s talked about a lot and is important
- From a municipal perspective – they think about policies and how those ties to levels of service
- This is ambiguous as to what it is and how it actually works
- Are we integrating water planning into other areas that Met Council works on (i.e. land planning, etc.)
- Define roles and be clear about what they are and how they can be used together

- What waters are being focused on and how to prioritize
- Policy level action but not how to get it done
- What “support” means
- Actions for local water planning requirements
- Rural communities – historically MC has been focused on growth and the urban cores
- (pg. 7) I am curious about the core mission “provide surface water planning and management throughout the region”. I’m curious if the rest of the document provides enough specifics on what this means. There are several “support” statements in the document which I think make sense, and the statements on funding and tech assistance do as well. The role of the council in this area should be clearer though. What does “management” of surface water mean and what are some examples. Same could go for “planning” too. Specifically, what is different or a regional add to what watersheds are required to do?
- PARTNER (pg.7) “Work within the metro region to address issues that transcend water organization boundaries to prepare water management plans that promote the enhancement and restoration of local and regional waters (lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and groundwater)” Similar comment to above. Is this primarily through local comp plan requirements? What is different in this approach compared to watershed & local water plan statute requirements? It could be helpful to show how the met council goal/objective here is in addition to those requirements or what is unique in this goal.
- The Met Council will partner with the state to help rural communities collaborate around emergency planning and service reliability by identifying community needs and potential service or funding gaps. Some clearer examples would help here – what community needs and service does this mean?

Water Equity Policy:

- Generally, a good policy
- Hispanic/Latino populations don’t trust the safety and quality of tap water so don’t drink it
- In Eagan the large Indian population has not been very involved with the local government; trust in government is low with this population
- Suggestions from members of the community on approaches to engage underserved populations are valuable
- Define “benefits”
- Should “water services” be “water availability”?
- Accessible and shared across the region might be better
- Is abundant the right word or are we talking about the “right” amount of water?
- Is “clean” and “safe” the same thing?
- Fully realized should be changed because that is not measurable.
- Question on how local governments invest for equitable outcomes
- A future where affordable services and adequate funding exist in the same place
- Undue vs. undo
- Low-flow fixtures in Met Council facilities – let’s do that without putting it in policy

Water Monitoring, Data, and Assessment Policy:

- Work coordination between players (cities, WMOs, etc.) into the policy. Lots of groups monitoring so could use to avoid doubling up or minimizing gaps.
- “to support environmental and human health” – there are so many more benefits; expand this to promote regional health
- Additional desired outcome – data sharing among all the monitoring organizations and partners
- Duplication of work to be avoided
- Add watershed organizations into the list
- Data to be shared: all of it! There is a lot of data out there but it’s in so many spots it’s difficult to identify what you need in an easy and timely manner
- EIMS exists but it doesn’t include watershed data and would need to be expanded if that is the direction being proposed

Water and Climate Resiliency Policy:

- Generally thought the wording could be clearer in the policy statement
- Mitigation and adaptation – how does it work? Is it possible? Does it come before or after growth and population projections?
- Planning limitations where there are water limitations
- Missing action: technical support
- What is the Met Council role in developing climate policy? Unclear at the moment.
- Climate features we are experiencing are feast or famine; at opposite extremes in very short timeframe
- The policy focuses on droughts and water shortages and not the impacts of floods
- Remove “utility” before infrastructure as this is redundant
- Anything after “address” should be moved down to the desired outcomes
- Add statements about flooding and provide flooding examples
- Apply would be better than “center” on first bullet
- Add a bullet for drought on the last one
- Desired outcomes: 3rd bullet has negative and positive climate impacts (what are the definitions of ‘negative’ and ‘positive’?) Are two things needed from a cost effective and affordability perspective?
- Reductions of GHG and other things sound good, but water needs to be provided reliably and snowplows need to function effectively at the time they are needed
- Partnering – no talk of water reuse at wastewater treatment facilities
- Low impact/low salt designs – nature-based solutions
- Opportunity between partner and plan; require entities to identify vulnerable and critical infrastructure in local comprehensive planning and how to address
- (pg. 5) Include “planning for or adapting infrastructure” to impacts

NEXT STEPS AND ACTION ITEMS

Jen Kostrzewski asked for suggestions for improving this feedback mechanism and the exercise.

- Appreciated receiving information ahead of time but did not adequately prep for the meeting; would like a little more lead time and additional prompts. What was sent is everything (however it will change as we continue to have partner meetings).
- Have the agenda terminology exactly match the policy being discussed.
- Could we do this exercise as a full group instead of in breakout sessions? That would streamline by avoiding the report out. 20 minutes was a little short for each policy. Don't want more meeting time, but better use.
- Prefer being in person but this may affect participation.
- Send out notes to other participants so others can add their comments or additional comments can be added.
- Next meeting will be Tuesday, February 20, 2024, from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. in-person at the Met Council Metro 94 location (455 Etna St., St. Paul, MN 55106)

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m.

Shannon Skally
Recording Secretary
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Integrated Water

- Where is action for providing local plan requirements & guidance?
- Action item: The Met Council will partner with the state to “help rural communities...”
 - Questioned how does this work?
- Enhance/restore – which waters/how do we prioritize?
- Comment that this is policy level, not action: Work within the metro region to address issues that transcend water organization boundaries to prepare water management plans that promote the enhancement and restoration of local and regional waters (lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and groundwater).
- Question as to what does this look like for implementation? Support educational efforts through partnership opportunities with organizations that further integrated water planning and management.
- Need to define roles for all players
- Level of service lens from community perspective meets needs of their residents
- Outcome: Working collectively. Is this active collaboration or the result of our collective work?
- Define sustainable
- Add streamlining?
- Include federal fund in action under Provide related to financial assistance
- Integrated Water w/ comp planning
 - Water-based directed growth?
 - What is a sustainable water supply for growth
 - This statement is ambiguous. How does it work?
 - Should include tangible things that can be proven

Equitable Water Outcomes

- Should Met Council have a role in providing data to inform planning (e.g. underserved populations)?
- Regarding the Partner action under Community Development & Housing: Question asking why are low flow fixtures not already being implemented?
- How do you reconcile local priorities (asset management vs statutes)?
- Affordable services vs sufficient funding might be in conflict (rate-based)
- Policy Statement: Regional water benefits (Are these defined?) and water ~~services~~ availability are accessible and shared ~~amongst all residents and communities~~ across the region.
 - Services could also include private wells.
- ‘Clean’ should be stricken when combined with ‘safe’
- 3rd Outcome: Vulnerable populations should not be limited and include everyone
- Partner action: Work with ‘Council Members’... should read elected officials
- Plan action: Insert ‘and resource protection’ after infrastructure

- “Nothing about us, without us”

Water Monitoring

- Desire for coordination between players – cities, WMOs, etc.
- Outcomes: Add Data will be shared among its partner organizations
- Add WMOs to last Partner action
- Partner actions should avoid duplication of other agency work
- Consider adding asset management to policy statement

Water and Climate

- Wording could be clarified under policy statement
- Policy statement: move “supporting the region’s...” to outcome
- Think about redevelopment/population growth through climate lens. Switch to planning based on water limitations
- “Feast or famine” planning
- Council’s role in developing guidance
- Tech support is missing in actions
- Need an action for drought
- What is ‘center state’?
- Policy Statement: Utilities us implied with infrastructure
- Explain negative vs positive climate impacts
- Add low salt design to Plan action
- Help entities identify and integrate
- Add mitigation activities
- Identify vulnerable critical infrastructure