

MEETING MINUTES

April 29th, 2009

Water Policy Study Committee

Wilder Foundation

451 Lexington Parkway N, St Paul

Members: Larry Baker, Janna Caywood, Janne Flisrand, Sherri Knuth, Dianne Krizan, Joe Mansky, Wallace Neal, Randy Neprash, Jack Ray, Kaitlin Steiger-Meister, and Danielle Waldschmidt.

Staff: Annie Levenson-Falk and Jim Horan

Guests: Les Everett, Perry Forster, Ellen Gibson and Mary Ann Hecht.

Facilitator: Dianne Krizan

Objectives:

- Come to Agreement on Conclusions
- Begin to Discuss Recommendations

1. Review and approve Agenda: Review Janna and Sherri's documents
 - a. Sherri's Document Comments: Conclusion seem very negative. There are positive in our current system. In particular local water governance entities. We need to show why they're effective. We need a system based on hydrology.
 - i. Do these suggestions fit into 1(b)?
 - ii. Could better be a part of discussing the fragmented system or showing the strengths of the current system? It's a positive but, it also illustrates a challenge.
 - iii. What are the definitive strengths of the local system? What components are specifically based on hydrology?
 - iv. What tools do we know are lacking, what specific support?
 - v. We have inadequate tools opposed to inadequate data. We have data but, we need more of it for the data we have to be more transparent.
 - vi. For example cities are looking for quantification tools for storm water data and they don't have it. We have data collection points but it's difficult to collect it and then spread it to the WSD's that need it.
 - vii. Local buy-in is important although the quality of it is uneven. Local control is not sacrosanct, there needs to be some overview.
 - viii. It is important that we talk about some of the positive things LGUs are doing. I'd like to make sure that we talk about how great a job cities are doing with the resources they have.
 - b. Janna's Document Comments: Pulled from the information in the working document that made sense to me. I took the information that was there and moved it into broad themes.
 - i. Conclusion 1 seems like a broad category on its own. Not distinctly different – we need to emphasize difference.
 - ii. Current Conclusion 3: not enough information on its own, what is the important point?

- iii. Conclusion 4: Not just about citizenry but, about other sections as well, “public” instead of “non-government actors”. Different things in different sector, is there any coordination? Is it a description of coordination? Perhaps this leads to a planning agency.
 - 1. While I like the broader “public” I think the word “citizen” has to pop up, it’s what we are.
 - 2. We’re not including all the stakeholders effectively in MN. If we don’t solve this problem we may wake up in 25 years and find we’ve done little to protect the water supply.
- iv. It seems that our entire report at this point could be lumped under “the water system is fragmented”.
- v. Need to have a formalized role where citizens have a true active role in stewardship activities. We know that your average citizen is untrained and more has to be done to prepare them.
- vi. Citizens can be involved through voting. Right now our WSDs are run by unelected people who have taxing authority. We need have people in power with true authority. Voting empowers people to elect people they want to see with true authority, that true authority is the taxing and rulemaking kind.
- vii. We should say something prominent about citizens. Particularly in regard to the passing of the Legacy Amendment. It points to widespread support of water quality. The majority of the electorate supports water quality data. We have public support of good water stewardship.

2. Discuss Conclusions - Recommendations

- a. The new “working document” includes the language that we’ve been picking up at the latest meetings. Note: Our recommendations must link to the conclusions that we as a committee have agreed to. People tend to go right to the recommendations, we need to park any recommendations or conclusions right next to the information needed to back it up.
- b. Do we want to talk about how funding gets distributed? If the current system isn’t running smoothly, shouldn’t we be talking about how funding happens.
 - i. There is currently insufficient funding, the clean water fund is clearly lacking.
 - ii. There is an immense amount of money spent on the local level but, we don’t have the systems to truly track it.
 - iii. We need to be careful when making funding recommendations, we simply haven’t studied it enough.
 - iv. The Legacy Amendment will fund for the next two years then the Legislature will go back and look at new recommendations.
 - v. We can make suggestions on how funding decisions should be made without being too specific.
- c. What is the vision for what we want in water in the future of Minnesota?
- d. Need to have a state-wide conversation on water use resources
 - i. Needs to happen soon because we’re are at the risk of using too much water resources.

- ii. Results of the discussion should guide the water policy plan of the state.
 - iii. Recommend the state-wide conversation be the starting point of a state-wide water plan, the funding to come from the education dollars allotted in the Legacy Amendment.
 - iv. Compare or Coordinate with the Land & Water Policy Project at MEI – Comprehensive, Coordinated Vision.
 - v. The Extension Service at the U would be a trusted source to begin to conversation as well as to staff the technocrat panel.
 - vi. Who would lead discussion? Legislature, Commission, Institute of the Environment, a Non-Profit?
- e. When people read this document they need to be able to compare it to another state-wide discussion that they have put their heads around. Ex. Minnesota Miracle.
 - f. Headlines – In thinking about recommendations think about the two line headlines that will be picked up by the media.
 - g. Citizen Inclusion is starting in the CWC with a citizen committee and the PCA with a citizen engagement component for TMDLs being looked at.
 - h. Fragmentation
 - i. No “super agency”, the best we can do is coordinate. A group within that supports the Legacy Amendment goals. We need to coordinate between existing data without taking agency authority. Similar to what the EQB did.
 - ii. State of Water Group: 12 person technical group, recommendations only/no authority, another 12 who work on specific projects, made up of people the agencies, universities, non-profits, etc.
 - iii. Would there be a seat for ordinary citizens? No, the group would be made of technocrats. However, more interdisciplinary, FT government employees with government backgrounds.
 - iv. Could be the same as the EQB mandate? Should we just be recommending a rejuvenated EQB? EQB with dis-empowered and never had any independence.
 - i. Do we want recommendations that get rid of the current system? Who is in charge of water resources in MN?
 - i. Maybe we need recommendations that take a serious look at a new system. Put someone in charge who is accountable.
 - ii. How broad? A serious examination of ALL environmental agencies.
 - iii. Transformation instead, can groups be more effective?
 - iv. This recommendation seems to add to fragmentation not address it.
 - v. BWSR is a good example of something that works. They need more citizen engagement and of course more funding, but they work.
 - vi. We can go back to square one, and have one agency. This takes a lot of time to reorganize and then after that to become effective.
 - vii. The statutory structure of the state would have to change. Remember bureaucracies behave like bureaucracies. What can we pull out of the existing system that works?

- viii. We've tried oversight (EQB, etc.) and it's failed, maybe its time we propose an alternative structure. We need aggressive change. Minor changes get sniped away by agencies who don't want to change.
- ix. Let's start over! Yes, it would take time, there would be an interim period of chaos. But, we can see what Wisconsin did (right and wrong) and make a more efficient change.
- x. What happens if you start from the WSD level and go up? Each agency has issues and its own oversight. What if we picked an effective WSD level and moved up?
- xi. Perhaps we should start with information and communication. It might show inadequacy and spur change. We can build on what we have and what we need.
- xii. EQB could address the new problems of today. Ideally and office that serves, coordinates and plans. When an agency is transparent it's easier to find fixes.
- xiii. Physically decentralized agency model, one with a common network of communication, planning and coordination efforts.
- xiv. Information has to be matched with action. How do we get people there? Currently shareholder groups only have an advisory role. People need power in co-management of resources.
- xv. Our current agency system has to have more accountability – it has to be tied to a vision and goals and then held to those standards.
- xvi. What works for program evaluation? Is there an outside inspection group we can model off of? Ex. OLA. Or do we want a mixed internal/external accountability office?
- xvii. Would it work to put all water issues in one department? Do we want the regulator to be the same as the promoter (Ag example). MPCA regulates while BWSR coordinates. Depends on who's on top and the competition between the interests there.
- xviii. Perhaps two offices – one centered on data and tools the other on accountability.

3. Next Steps and Evaluations

Average Score – 4.5

Comments: Lost focus on charge – loosing citizen voice – don't want to tell others how to do their jobs – stay citizens when it comes to recommendations – move onto the recommendation phase – if the system were OK we wouldn't be sitting here – recommend post-it note exercise at next meeting – need to integrate conclusions into recommendations – more specificity – email recommendations to Annie on draft – Recommendations need to be “profound tweaks” – complexity may be too much – people need to be writing off line a lot between meetings – write out alternative governance structures – alternative spending for the Legacy Amendment money – recommendations soon – broad contribution to water governance in Minnesota – serious perception problem.

Next Meeting – May 11th (Monday) at Flannery Construction