

**Approved**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**NEW HAMPSHIRE WATER SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION**  
**August 16, 2011**

**Commissioners in Attendance:**

Dave Allen  
Robert Beurivage  
Kris Blomback  
John Gilbert, Chair  
Denise Hart Mike Licata  
Martha Lyman, Vice Chair  
Glenn Normandeau  
Chuck Souther

**Public in Attendance:**

Rep. Judith Spang  
Bill Hounsell  
Paul Susca  
Jennifer Rowden  
Stacy Herbold  
Tim Fortier  
Tyler King  
Dave McClean  
Bob Morency

**Commissioners not in Attendance:**

Thomas Burack  
Amy Manzelli  
John Palermo  
Cliff Sinnott  
Alison Watts

*Chairman Gilbert called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.*

**I. July 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes, Commission Website and Draft Budget**

Minutes: The minutes of the July 12, 2011 meeting were presented to the Commission for approval. Glenn Nomandeau made a motion to approve, seconded by Dave Allen. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Website: The Water Sustainability Commission's website is now live and available at: <http://www.nh.gov/water-sustainability/>. It will include the Commission's meeting schedule, agendas, minutes, and reference materials for both Commissioners and the public. Martha Lyman asked if there was a capability within the website for the public to submit comments and feedback. Chairman John Gilbert noted that Commissioners' e-mail address are available on the site for the public to send comments, however, other means can be explored.

Budget: A draft of budget was circulated with revisions based on comments from Commission members. Potential sources of funding include the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the Endowment for Health, McIntosh and the Switzer Foundations.

As stated by Governor Lynch, there is very little to no money to fund this Commission's work, so much of it will need to be done on a volunteer basis. The in-kind contributions of Commission members' time, along with in-kind administrative support from New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) and other entities have been included in the draft budget. Chairman Gilbert reiterated that the budget is only a draft and that the in-kind and income amounts will change – the final budget will determine what the Commission can and wants to

accomplish. It was suggested that the budget line item “report” be changed to “reporting” in case the Commission does not specifically develop a report.

## **II. Commissioners’ Comments**

Chairman Gilbert asked each Commission member to offer comments on where their thinking has come based on the presentations that have been made and the exercises that have occurred to date related to the charge of the Commission. Some of the common themes in the comments included the following:

- Need to apply the watershed concept.
- Need to coordinate/determine most effective local, state, regional and federal roles.
- Need for good forecasting including demographics and modeling.
- Information gaps.
- Calculating and applying the true cost/value of delivering clean water in sufficient quantity to individuals, communities and businesses while preserving ecological systems.

Specific comments included the following:

- We have done a good job and there is a lot of good news. When we look at the issues, though there are problems in southeastern New Hampshire (groundwater), grey infrastructure is aging, and we do not have projections on future water needs – cannot plan without demographics.
- We know WHAT to do, but do not know HOW to do it.
- Regional differences (southeast corner more stressed than northern regions) suggest a need to set priorities to address most troubled watersheds.
- Control of water is fragmented from a policy perspective and not done on a watershed basis.
- From a business perspective, there is the issue of keeping control of water at the state level and not the local level. Having control at the state level makes it easier for businesses to plan for and deal with regulations, etc.
- The watershed approach is being used within DES; it brings players together, gets at the quantity issue, and has the ability to address variability throughout state in needs, issues and stresses.
- Resources and funding is needed to address water infrastructure needs.
- Issues cannot be dealt with on a town by town basis- it needs to be on a watershed or state level and may need a single entity to implement.
- City of Portsmouth is living the watershed approach. Portsmouth is working with four other communities testing and modeling appropriate levels of discharge and experiencing the kinds of pressures on communities if one community backs out of the process. Support from state has been important to keep communities together – applying upper level pressure.
- The regulation structure needs to allow for more lead time when implementing new regulations to allow communities time to prepare for them. Policy and regulatory structures need to be aligned and sensitive to economic and environmental imperatives.
- What does water sustainability mean and how does it get translated into policy?

- Policies need to ensure water quality and quantity meet future needs in a holistic manner.
- There is a need for forecasting population and ecosystem needs.
- Watershed-based land use decision making is needed.
- Local and state involvement in managing water resources is needed: local involvement because of local knowledge and impact, and state involvement for broader consistency and support. Need for mutually supported decision-making.
- There is a wide variety and amount of work to be done to ensure sustainable water resource for the state.
- Permit decisions need to be based on science and not because people object to having something in their backyards.
- Concern about what can be accomplished in this Commission's remaining time (10 months).
- Explaining how key water is to the state economy.
- Challenges of actually implementing changes and recommendations to protect water resources.
- There is a need to set up a kind of water infrastructure dedicated fund, perhaps similar to Rhode Islands' program.

### **III. Working Vision and Principles**

Commissioners discussed the draft vision statement and management principles the members plan to use as the basis for developing the state water plan. *See attachment.*

Regarding the *Vision Statement*, Commission members requested the term public trust be more clearly defined or changing the term to read "public interest", and that "water use" be changed to "water management." For the *Management Principles*, Commission members requested water conservation be inserted into the mix and that Commissioners look at the other states' water plans principles.

The Commission discussed the need to be better informed about the regulatory structure surrounding water in the state before proceeding and what decisions are made at the state level. (This will be discussed at a future meeting.) Getting local backing for state and federal action is key. The Southeast Watershed Alliance was established by the Legislature to address a specific issue for the coastal watershed and may be a good model for other watersheds in the state.

### **IV. Key Issues and Information Gaps**

Commission members identified the following as key information gaps the group needs to understand further:

- Understand the differences between public trust versus riparian rights in the state.
- Current and future projections of the state's demographics.
- Water rates, rate structure and water use: what is the true cost of supplying clean water and treating wastewater?
- Trends of various businesses and industries in the state and their water usage.
- Water quantity: what are the current and future needs of people and the ecosystem?

- What effects climate change will have on the state's water resources, specifically on flooding and dam management?
- What are examples of what is working in New Hampshire? Suggestions included: Southeast Watershed Alliance, Mount Washington Alliance, and Instream Flow Advisory Committees for the Souhegan and Lamprey Rivers.

## **V. Work Product**

Commission members discussed what the end product of the group will be. The Commission is charged with developing a state water plan that will ensure the state's water resources are sustainability, however, the Commission must deliver its report by June 1, 2012.

Using the *Minnesota Water Sustainability Framework*, as a template for developing a New Hampshire water plan was suggested, and the executive summary was distributed to Commission members. Commissioners indicated liking the structure and outline the Minnesota plan gives, specifically the easy to understand layout that outlines the long-term goals, actions and parties responsible for implementation in a way that can be tracked over time. It was cautioned that the Minnesota plan required tremendous amounts of funding and did not include public engagement in its creation.

Discussion on how the Commission can accomplish its charter by next June included suggestions to develop a task list, timing of how the Commission will involve the public through the require public hearings in each Executive Council District, and how the Commission's work product needs to specify goals and identify responsible entities. Commissioners expressed the need to use indicators or measures to help engage the public and track the plan that is developed. Commission members suggested the use of a watershed map that characterizes each district's water resources and seeking input on the Commission's *Vision and Management Principles* was suggested as a first step.

## **VI. Work Assignment**

Commission members choose the divide up into three subcommittees to handle various tasks, including: gathering key information needs and identifying information gaps, developing a public engagement strategy, and development of an implementation plan for the Commission's findings and recommendations. Subcommittee work will be the focus of the next Commission meeting.

### Subcommittees:

- 1) Information Gathering: Chuck Souther, Dave Allen
- 2) Public Engagement: Martha Lyman, John Gilbert, and Denise Hart
- 3) Implementation Plan: Glen Normandeau, Kris Blomback, Bob Beaurivage.

## **VII. Public Comments**

- Suggesting the Commission utilize the work and recommendations of all the other water related legislative commissions, specifically by calling in the chairs of those commissions.

- The challenge is implementation - who is going to take action and how? The other legislative commissions were largely not able to do this because they ran out of time and because of political and budgetary constraints.
- Hope that this Commission is bold enough to look at the need for funding, specifically how to leverage local and state funds with federal funding opportunities.
- Other entities out there are currently working on promoting more water sustainability efforts for water utilities, including recently signed MOA between EPA and the US Department of Agriculture - Rural Development Rural Utilities Service to promote sustainable rural water and wastewater systems.
- Additional resources the Commission may wish to look into include:
  - Research in social marketing and municipal promotion of water conservation DES is exploring.
  - Climate change modeling being conducted at UNH.
  - Utilizing the UNH Sea Grant Marine Docents Program for conducting public outreach on water resources.
  - Working with Granite State Rural Water Association.

**Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.**

*The next Commission meeting is scheduled for September 20, 2011 from 2:00 to 5:00pm at the New Hampshire Higher Education Assistance Foundation in Concord, NH.*