

MEETING NOTES
Public Engagement Working Group
Water Sustainability Commission
January 30, 2012

The meeting was held at the offices of Baldwin and Callen in Concord, NH.

Commission members present: Denise Hart, John Gilbert, Amy Manzelli, Marcy Lyman
Guests: Paul Susca/DES staff, Molly Donovan/NH Listens

Issues discussed:

1) Update on Leadership NH Environment Day: General impression was that LNH participants didn't have appreciation for how water connected to them much less with broader connections to economy and other aspects of the state. Conclusion was that it was a "marketing" problem and offered recommendations such as PSA's and a televised marketing campaign. We were interested to note the inexperience about the subject of water of individuals that had been selected as "leaders" and it deepened our realization about how much is needed to teach about water in the state to bring citizens to the point of engagement. The story of Manchester Water Works' recent national water quality award was discussed. The facilitated group sessions and panels were very successful

ACTION: John to remind Steve and Allison to encourage the LNH class to attend legislative breakfast on February 15 and to take a legislator. John to invite representative from the NH PUC.

2) Legislative Breakfast – February 15: Amy Manzelli informed that Commissioner Tom Burack will represent the Governor and speak at the Legislative Breakfast.

ACTION: Amy will send invitation to members of the Commission.

3) DES Water and Watersheds Conference – March 23: Paul Susca briefed us on planning for the conference – work in progress to find plenary/keynote speaker with hopes it will be the Governor. No opportunity for plenary session about the work of Commission, potential still for 1.5 hour workshop, exhibit. Paul will keep us posted.

4) Funding updates: Marcy noted that decision from Bean Trustees is expected on February 15. Both John and Marcy had conversations with Bean program officer, Kathy Cook, to answer questions about the work of the Commission.

5) NH Listens:

Denise introduced Molly Donovan from NH Listens who will be the Commission's project coordinator for the public engagement sessions. She proceeded to describe the planning process for NH Listens sessions and to go over a draft set of questions that will help guide the development of the program.

We discussed the need/opportunity for a separate stakeholder session and costs involved. Molly discussed the disadvantages of having the general listening sessions populated by people who have expertise, data and firm positions. She suggested that the stakeholders be notified and told what the Commission and NH Listens is doing, give them an opportunity to participate either through a separate session, survey or some other means. Amy suggested that it is

extremely important to have a way to engage the stakeholders but one that is different from the general public – there may be a different set of questions for the stakeholders, because they have a deeper understanding, and may offer a different set of recommendations. Molly suggested that often the citizen input will mirror the stakeholders, but the priorities will be different. She indicated that a separate session for stakeholders would cost \$750-1,000. The initial recommendation is for 5 sessions for the general public and to have an additional one for stakeholders. It was also suggested we might look for an organization to partner with to conduct survey of stakeholder groups. Denise offered that she would hope for some problem solving activities in the stakeholder session. The next steps are as follows:

- Potential dates: May 1, 8, 9 and 10 – the five sessions will be conducted over 1 or 2 evenings, preferably one throughout the state to facilitate media outreach.
- Sites: NH Listens has specific criteria for sites (public facility/community center, plenty of parking including handicap accessible, community is comfortable with place, 8-10 round tables with another for food and area with capacity for childcare) and is working to identify ones for five sessions – looking specifically for places in Manchester area. Hopes to have locations and dates secured by February 15.
- Outreach: NH Listens has an email/contact list of community leaders. Outreach will begin 1st of April. WSC will need to work with NH Listens to develop the stakeholder list – who/where/priorities need to be addressed. Names and contacts for stakeholders should go to Molly. Denise will ask at Commission meeting for suggestions for stakeholder meeting contacts and work with Jenn Rowden to enter these in the contacts spreadsheet.

Focus Questions: We reviewed the draft set of focus questions that are used during sessions. These questions also frame the participant guide. Issues raised during the discussion included:

- 1) How to keep questions simple while trying to get at complexities of water, uncertainties and unknown risks across a 25-year period of time.
- 2) How to frame questions that foster sense of collective responsibility for managing water across towns, regions, states
- 3) How much background information is needed in question to provide context? Background materials/guide prepared by NH Listens will be important.
- 4) How can questions advance thinking/discussion related to “sustainability?”
- 5) What are big questions? Why/how does water matter?

The draft list of questions prompted discussion on issues related to choice of words: what *are* water words that work? Using the word water (as opposed to water supply/water resources), pollution, clean water, infrastructure; how do we bring together our understanding of water with the concept of sustainability? Can we create an opportunity to imagine the future – what do you want our waters to look like in 2037? Can we create a vision for the values, attitudes, responsibility that will ensure that NH’s waters are as good or better than they are now in 25 years? Marcy observed that the NH Listens process builds a platform for long-term engagement with water planning. We discussed various ways that the Commission could follow-up with public engagement session participants to engage in future water sustainability opportunities.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m. The Public Engagement Subcommittee meets again February 14 at 1 p.m., location TBD.