

**MEETING MINUTES  
NEW HAMPSHIRE WATER SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION  
June 19, 2012**

**New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services  
Concord, NH**

**Commissioners in attendance:**

Virginia Battles-Raffa  
Kris Blomback  
John Boisvert  
Thomas Burack  
John Gilbert, Chair  
Marcy Lyman, Vice Chair  
Amy Manzelli  
Cliff Sinnott  
Chuck Souther  
Alison Watts

**Public in attendance:**

Henry Deboer, Epping Water and Sewer  
Commission  
Ted Diers, NHDES  
Bill Housel, CDM Smith  
Wayne Ives, NHDES  
Robert Morency, RCAP Solutions  
Sarah Pillsbury, NHDES  
James Ryan, NH Fish & Game Commission  
Jennifer Rowden, NHDES  
Paul Susca, NHDES

**Commissioners not in attendance:**

Dave Allen  
Denise Hart  
Michael Licata  
Glenn Normandeau

***Chairman John Gilbert called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m.***

Tom Burack introduced the Water Sustainability Commission members to Vicki Quiram, the new DES Assistance Commissioner.

**I. May 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes**

A motion to accept the May 15<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes was made by Amy Manzelli and seconded by Kris Blomback. The motion passed unanimously.

**II. Public Engagement Subcommittee Update**

Amy provided the Commission with an update on the three main subcommittee tasks.

**A. July 9<sup>th</sup> Water Professionals Session**

The planning for the July 9<sup>th</sup> session is underway and the main push now is advertising the session to those who either work with water in a professional capacity or whose businesses rely on water. Commission members were asked to please send out the announcement to their constituency and contacts. This session is being considered a Commission meeting; all those in attendance indicated their ability to attend on July 9<sup>th</sup>.

The subcommittee is working with NH Listens staff to design the content of the July 9<sup>th</sup> session. The general format will be similar to the May 8<sup>th</sup> sessions, but with more time for feedback on recommendations. The three major components of the session are the following, with priority going to items two and three, are:

- 1) Attendees' reactions to the May 8<sup>th</sup> public conversations report from NH Listens.
- 2) Reaction to the Water Sustainability Commission's work directions/current thinking.
- 3) Getting people whose work it is to focus on water to identify common causes.

To help attendees and the Commission get the most out of this session, the subcommittee would like to provide the attendees with a summary of the Commission's vision/guiding principle/ general

recommendations. This would be sent out along with the May 8<sup>th</sup> session report and the discussion guide. The plan is to have all of this together by the end of next week so that information can be sent out before the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. Kris asked if any of the session was going to focus on what attendees are worried may be coming, be it increased costs, regulations, etc. Amy stated that getting at those worries will be covered by the session format. If any Commission member has any concerns or suggestions about the session content, please e-mail Amy as soon as possible due to the short turnaround time.

The next subcommittee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 27<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 to 3:30 at Baldwin & Callan.

### **B. Public Comment Survey**

To get feedback from those who have not been able to attend any of the Commission's meetings or sessions, the subcommittee had moved forward with designing a structured comment period. The subcommittee is working with NH Listens and DES staff to design the survey. The survey will be sent out next week (after a brief pilot). The plan is to send out the survey link to the Commission notification list, the NH Listens session attendees and to post it on the website. The comment period will run through the end of July.

Virginia expressed the need for the survey should be sent specifically to municipal officials to get a better sense of the public's attitude about water and water issues. John G. and Amy indicated that the intent was to distribute the public comment survey as broadly as possible without too much solicitation due to time constraints. Commission members were encouraged to forward the comment survey to their contacts.

### **C. NH Listens May 8<sup>th</sup> Sessions Draft Report**

NH Listens sent the Commission the draft report from the May 8<sup>th</sup> sessions late yesterday so they would have it when discussing the vision, goals, etc. for later in the meeting. The overall summary reflects the most prevalent responses to the guiding questions, as well as to the five challenges outlined in the water primer summary that were part of the discussion guide. The priority issue areas to emerge from the conversations are as follows:

1. Management, coordination, and protection of water resources.
2. Education and public awareness of water issues.
3. Regulation and incentives for conservation.
4. Address funding structure for long term and proactive investment.

Comments from members who reviewed the draft report was that the feedback largely reflected what the Commission had been discussing. It was questioned whether the discussion guide and the framing questions may have been too leading. That a large portion of those in attendance were highly knowledgeable about water issues may have also swayed the results.

## **III. Commission Visions/Goals/Recommendations Discussion**

Prior to the meeting, John G. distributed a document containing the drafts of the Commission's vision, guiding principles, strategic goals, recommendations and actions. These have developed and discussed at full Commission and Implementation Subcommittee meetings. The document was not intended to represent the final format of the Commission's final deliverable/report, but rather just the content. John had asked Commission members to think about the following when reading through the draft:

- What is missing?
- What should be addressed in the strategic recommendations that have not been covered?
- Are there any recommendations that appear to have drifted in terms of the way that they are expressed now versus the manner in which they were originally proposed? In other words, have any of the recommendations moved off point?

The final content of the draft materials will serve as the foundation for the final deliverable, supported by the Executive Order, the NH Listens report, feedback from the water professionals listening session, and other relevant context-setting information.

Marcy also asked Commission members if any of the recommendations or actions are too specific for the Commission to make a recommendation about (i.e. does the Commission know enough to weigh in). Virginia commented that many of the recommendations and actions are not specific enough; there needs to be details such as timeframes and sources of information. Cliff noted that it is important to be specific where possible, but when the Commission only has a partial idea of how to address something that it should still be captured.

Additional comments regarding the overall final deliverable included the following:

- The goals and recommendations, the “whats” are good and well framed. The “hows” are largely missing and that may be the most important part: how will all of this get done, by whom, by when and how will it be tracked? (How will the Commission’s work be carried on?)
- The idea of this Commission adding value to the past water-related commissions’ work still needs to be incorporated. What work has been started from those recommendations and what else needs to happen?
- Visuals and testimonials need to be included to make the content accessible.

#### **A. Vision Statement**

Discussion included the necessity to either define the term sustainability, define what the Commission views as sustainability, or to simply work it into the vision statement.

#### **B. Guiding Principles/Overarching Recommendations**

***Education:*** The importance of education must to be included throughout the deliverable; however, the extent of the emphasis was discussed. The Public Engagement Subcommittee at a recent meeting heard from Judy Silverberg (NH Fish and Game Department) about the state of environmental education in New Hampshire. The basic message was that environmental and science education varies greatly in the state, particularly at the lower grade levels. However, the state does have an environmental literacy plan that has vetted recommendations to better incorporate environmental education into the classroom curriculum. Youth education needs to be specified because the youth of today will be the adults of tomorrow. If the Commission chooses to include youth education into its recommendation, it is possible to cite the work of others who are more knowledgeable about the issue than this Commission.

It was also noted that, though education is an important component of the final deliverable, it also needs to emphasize the actions that need to get done and not just what the public (along with youth and legislators) needs to learn.

***Investment/Funding:*** Does the Commission want to use strong language when speaking about the need to invest in water infrastructure and resource protection/management? Does the Commission have enough knowledge about the interaction between the federal, state and municipal funding and the value/cost of water to make such a statement? Commission members discussed the need to emphasize full cost accounting in the price/ value of water. For example, what is long-term cost of a water system versus just replacing pipes? What is the value of ecosystem services? John B. noted that there is a difference between recommending investing in water infrastructure and funding/subsidizing that infrastructure.

***Adaptation/ Risk Management/Population Shifts:*** The Commission discussed whether there needs to be a statement about the implications of climate change, shifting populations and diffuse land use patterns. What is the risk if land use patterns continue as they have recently, particularly for different regions of the state?

***Water Laws and Rights:*** Ensuring equitable allocation and access for social and ecological demand was discussed because it is part of sustainability.

**Post - Water Sustainability Commission Actions:** Several Commission members noted there was discussion about how to carry the work of this Commission forward once the final deliverable is issued in September. A solution to this issue was not decided; however, Commission members offered that a description of an organization or entity that could carry this work forwards could be included. That would leave the door open for creation of a new entity or an exiting entity to take it on.

### **C. Goals/Recommendation/Actions**

#### **Goal 1 – Watershed Planning and Management**

- Members debated about whether to use the term watershed in the report, given that the general public does not know its meaning. However, part of the Commission's desire is to emphasize thinking about issues at the watershed scale so introducing the term may be consistent with that.
- The need for a good glossary with the report was deemed essential.
- Tom also indicated the need to use language the public can understand and not technical jargon.

#### **Goal 2 – Stormwater and Non-point Source Pollution (Water Quality)**

- The goal was rephrased to read "stormwater runoff and non-point source pollution is minimized and effectively treated."
- Suggested restating stormwater runoff as "rain and snowmelt runoff."
- The second set of recommendations/ actions seemed to capture what the Commission discussed at a broader, more strategic level. The first set captured DES staff comments regarding more specific recommendations/actions.

#### **Goal 3 – Water Infrastructure (Drinking Water, Wastewater, Stormwater and Dams)**

*Conversation regarding this goal was covered simultaneously with the investment/ funding discussion found above.*

#### **Goal 4 – Adaptation**

- The recommendation regarding prioritizing water uses during drought conditions fits under Goal 5, as well.
- This goal either should be combined with goal 5 or both should be rephrased to be more distinct.

#### **Goal 5 – Water Quantity**

- The Commission discussed whether there was agreement on a recommendation about development of a hierarchy of water users, particularly during drought situations and/or when demand exceeded supply. The general consensus was that no agreement had been reached. The group discussed whether climate change and population shifts will increase the occurrences of there not being enough water. While it may not be a major problem now, it may be in 25 years, particularly for smaller water systems. Perhaps there is a middle ground with only prioritizing during very specific conditions (drought for example).
- Another suggestion was the need for a hard look at water rights and water laws in New Hampshire related to groundwater and access to water. Sarah Pillsbury offered to forward the Commission the research the Groundwater Commission had done related to developing a hierarchy of water users in New Hampshire; information related to priorities during drought situations is also covered.

### **IV. Final Deliverable**

John G. discussed the need for the Commission to begin to finalize the content of its deliverable to the Governor and how that deliverable is going to be rolled out. He would like to accomplish this by dividing the Commission members into two teams; one focus on the content and the other on the rollout. There was considerable discussion about how the work of this Commission and its recommendations will

continue after the Commission is done in September. This will be part of the rollout effort so the Commission's final report will not just sit on a shelf. The content team will focus on the final language that will be used, but also ensure the recommendations and information can be used by a variety of stakeholders. The need to have the report be accessible and have multiple points of entry for different readers was stated several times.

The two teams will ideally meet simultaneously due to the overlapping nature of the two, and the teams should have members of the Implementation and Public Engagement Subcommittee on them. John G. and Marcy will be participating with both teams. The following Commission members indicated their team preference:

- Deliverable Content Team – Denise, Tom, Cliff, John B. Chuck, and Alison.
- Deliverable Rollout Team – Amy, Virginia, and Kris.
- Team not yet indicated - Mike, Dave and Glenn

Tom asked that the extent to which the Commission would like DES staff to assist in the mechanical preparation of the final report be discussed at the first content team meeting. The need to have the report written in one, consistent voice was highlighted as very important.

## V. Upcoming Meetings

The following dates and times were proposed for upcoming Commission meetings:

- **7/9** - Water Professionals Session
- **7/10** - Deliverable Teams Meeting
- **7/17** - Regular WSC Meeting
- **7/24** – Deliverable Teams Meeting
- **8/14** – Deliverable Teams Meeting
- **8/21** – Regular WSC Meeting
- **9/6** – Deliverable Teams Meeting
- **9/11** – Regular WSC Meeting

## VI. Public Comments

The public in attendance at the meeting provided the following comments to the Commission:

- Robert Morency, RCAP Solutions: The buzzwords he hears in his work are asset management, which is synonymous to a degree with sustainability. What are New Hampshire's assets? Its lakes, dams, etc. Sustainability also has to do with cost of balancing what you need, what you can afford and the timeframes involved. An effort should be made to like the water infrastructure funding to public health and economic vitality. Are New Hampshire municipalities sustainable if their water and water infrastructure are not?
- Henry Deboer, Epping Water and Sewer Commission: Commended the Commission for their open-mindedness on issues, particularly when it comes to the economics of water infrastructure. Every municipality is looking for a free handout and funding needs are long term, but most towns do not plan for the long term as are reflected in their rates. The question about will there be enough water in the state in 25 years is yes and no; it is locally dependant. The bottom-line is education, technical assistance and reduction in the broad regulator restrictions that constrain towns because of the cost. The broad policies do not work in the state because so much of the issues are locally specific.

***Meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.***

***The water professionals' session will be held on Monday, July 9<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 to 5:00 at the New Hampshire Fire Academy in Concord; this is considered Commission meeting. The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 17, 2012 from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m, at the Department of Environmental Services***

