

**MEETING MINUTES
NEW HAMPSHIRE WATER SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
July 17, 2012**

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

Commissioners in attendance:

Kris Blomback
John Boisvert
Thomas Burack
John Gilbert, Chair
Denise Hart
Marcy Lyman, Vice Chair
Glenn Normandeau
Cliff Sinnott
Chuck Souther

Commissioners not in attendance:

Dave Allen
Virginia Battles-Raffa
Michael Licata
Amy Manzelli
Alison Watts

Public in attendance:

Michele Holt- Shannon, NH Listens
Rosemary Landry
Walter Leach
Bruce Mallory, NH Listens
Sarah Pillsbury, NHDES
James Ryan, NH Fish & Game Commission
Jennifer Rowden, NHDES
C. Spencer [Name was illegible on sign-in sheet]

Chairman John Gilbert called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m.

I. June 19th Meeting Minutes

A motion to accept the June 19th meeting minutes was made and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Public Engagement Updates

A. Public Engagement Subcommittee update

Denise provided a brief overview of the last few tasks the Public Engagement Subcommittee will complete now that the July 9th session has occurred. The tasks include developing a report of the outcomes of the July 9th session and finalizing the May 8th session report with NH *Listens* based on comments received today.

B. New Hampshire Listens Debrief

Michele Holt-Shannon and Bruce Mallory, NH *Listens*, provided an overview of the NH *Listens* process, how the process was utilized at the May 8th and July 9th sessions, and how the Commission can use and interpret the outcomes of those sessions. NH *Listens* main goal was to help the Commission gain broad input from the public and water professionals. The second goal was for the conversations to begin engaging citizens in discussing and acting on these issues.

An analysis of all notes and small group reports surfaced the following issues as priority areas for further action. The priorities are:

- Management, coordination and protection of water resources.
- Education and public awareness of water issues.
- Effective regulations and incentives for conservation.
- Address funding structure for long term and proactive investments.

At the May 8th session there was strong emphasis on the need for incentives, and not just regulations, in order to get the desired behavior change around water. Many also acknowledged that water is

undervalued. The general take away message Michele had for the Commission is that people are becoming more aware, i.e. beginning to "think blue", but that they are simply uninformed about the issues. The guide for the May 8th session is a summary from the *New Hampshire Water Resource Primer* that is translated in to more general terms. The May 8th session report is intended to emphasize what attendees can do to continue the conversation about water.

Michele provided a brief summary of the outcomes from the July 9th session; Marcy and Denise will be working with Michele to develop a report of the session. Many in attendance indicated they would be interested in similar future events. Most groups seemed to feel the Commission had its challenges laid out well, but there was strong sentiment asking what needs to be done to spur acting on those challenges. Bruce identified that all along, July 9th included, that there has not been anything surprising that has come up. The issues have been identified, but the public's relationship with water is that it is taken for granted. The real identified need seems to begin to raise awareness amongst the public. Attendees at all the sessions recognized the complexity of these issues, but that having a conversation is not enough. The conversation, however, does begin to raise awareness which is an important step in achieving the long-term goal.

The Commission members thanked Bruce and Michele for their assistance helping the Commission complete the public engagement requirement of the Executive Order, indicating that it would not have been as thorough or provided as much feedback without them. The group discussed the following regarding the NH *Listens* process and the May 8th Session Report:

- The content of the discussion guide was excellent; it was refreshing to see the issues and challenges expressed so clearly.
- At the July 9th session, the collective expertise that was in the room may not have been fully utilized to help come up with solutions. Having facilitators may have helped, as would more time. Michele explained that when a mixed group convenes it often does require time for attendees to begin to warm-up to the conversation, and getting to solutions can be rushed. However, it does foster the desire for continuing the conversation at a future event.
- Attendees at the July 9th session reinforced the need for education that was brought up at the May 8th session. The focus on education was very broad at the May 8th session, and on July 9th it was more focused on the need to work across disciplines. Education that results in behavior changes was emphasized. Bruce commented that often educating someone on their personal impact/change on an issue leads to awareness and action on broader issues.
- Denise heard a need for education over time, questions regarding whether infrastructure is a local or state issue, that people do not think in terms of a watershed, and that more collaboration is needed.
- John B. noted that the true/real cost of water keeps coming up. Much of the discussion has been about water services costs, in which the real cost can be calculated. The fixed versus the variable costs in water services prices might not ultimately promote water conservation given the pricing structure that is often used. The cost of water that has not been discussed is the more abstract values, for example, the recreational value of an impoundment versus the cost to maintain a dam. Getting people to know and realize these costs is also important. Michele noted that many participants understand that the full cost of water is not captured in their water bill. Others stated that thinking needs to be adjusted to understand that there is no such thing as waste water.
- Cliff noted that if we expect the public to respond to the issues they need to understand the challenges. Michele indicated that that aspect of public education is part of the larger strategic planning effort the Commission is undertaking. Denise requested the Commission not lose sight of the creative solutions that were offered at both sessions, such as bonding, a water lottery, etc. Glenn cautioned that sometimes ideas such as those may have unseen consequences, such as taking away from other issues that drawn from the same, somewhat fixed pool of funds.
- John B. mentioned that while Pennichuck Water Works has not reached the price point with its rates to where customers start to take notice and become engaged, the communities around Great Bay may be about to reach that point with sewer rates. The issue with these rates hitting a tipping point is that there is not alternative. The water and wastewater utilities will always do their jobs, however, it may be with a band-aid approach there the level of service become less. The real issue may be at what point will the level of services fall below customers' expected level of service. For example, is a business willing to go without water one day a month for lower

rates, or are they willing to pay more for better, consistent service? Marcy suggested that that specific topic may be an excellent follow-up session using the NH Listens model.

- Suggestions about using the NH Listens model for future discussion included holding something at the New Hampshire Municipal Association conference in the fall. Working with other similar groups at other events in between the end of the Commission and afterwards was also suggested. The suggestions on topics, events and audiences should also be included in the deliverable.

Denise made a motion for the Commission to accept the substance of the May 8th Session Report, and approve the request that the Public Engagement Subcommittee to work with Michele and Bruce to make any minor editorial changes. John B. seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

III. Final Deliverable

John G. explained that in order to begin to finalize the Commission's work, the members have been divided into two groups to work on the content and rollout of the deliverable. The idea is to have the two groups meet at the same time since the items they discuss will overlap. The first meeting was on July 10th and the two groups are as follows:

Deliverable Content – John G. Denise, Tom, Cliff, John B., Chuck and Alison.

Deliverable Rollout – Marcy, Amy, Virginia, Kris, Mike, and Glenn.

A. Content Overview

John G. explained the content group discussed that audience for the report is really those who are engaged in their communities (municipal boards, school boards, business leaders, local water association members etc.). This being the target audience will allow the report to still be accessible to the public, and will get at legislators who generally draw from those groups. These community leaders are some of the busiest people, so the actions and issues must be clear. The attributes of the content must be understandable, useful, accessible and engaging. The general size of the document should be limited to eight to ten pages, plus appendices. There is no budget for printing of a document and many aspects may need to be housed online. The general content of the report will include the following:

- Overview as to why this topic is important and why the Commission was established.
- The vision statement and guiding principles.
- The goals, recommendations and actions.
- Outcomes the Commission expects if the goals/recommendation/actions are completed and perhaps some measures of progress.

The why portion of this report was discussed as need to include that water is critical to the environment, quality of life, and the economy. The goal is to not have it be only human oriented.

B. Rollout Overview

Marcy gave an overview of the rollout group's initial thoughts and ideas. The first item for the rollout is to determine to what degree the Governor will want to be involved. The main goal for the rollout is to design it in a way that will help get the ball rolling and keep it rolling once the Commission ends. Issues related to and ideas for the rollout included:

- Have a pre-release event of the report for the media.
- The format of the report given the lack of budget may constrain how the rollout occurs.
- Try to engage the business community and other targeted audiences through upcoming events.
- Encourage the media to do a series of stories around water.
- Needs to be a description or plan on who should take this forward and it needs to be independent of the Governor.
- There could be a speaker's bureau or a site of off the shelf material for interested groups or individuals.
- Establishing a New Hampshire water prize for those going innovative work around water issues.

- Holding a series of launching events in prominent water locations: Great Bay, Lake Winnepesaukee, etc.
- The need to highlight the different issues and actions to various groups in a way that will foster long term change.

Given the lack of funds the group discussed the need to prioritize efforts and develop a timeline at the next meeting. Additional suggestions were to develop a canned presentation for any Commission member to give if a group requests such a presentation and the need to be careful with the messages contained in the report and rollout.

C. Outcomes

John G. explained that at the deliverable meeting it became obvious the Commission needed to make a statement about the outcomes it expects to see in 25 years if the goals, recommendations and actions are achieved or implemented. This will help to give those who take on some of these tasks a final benchmark to work from.

Goal specific outcomes:

- Watershed management:
 - Municipalities and the state are partnering to manage water at the watershed level (integrated watershed management).
 - Permitting is occurring at the watershed level.
 - Land use decisions and planning are being conducted at the watershed scale, which in turn are fostering cooperation between municipalities and/or the state.
 - Recommendation/action: Amend the regional impact statute (RSA 36) to incorporate projects of watershed impact.
- Stormwater:
 - MS4 communities are being permitted at the watershed scale, not the municipal level to help reduce the redundant costs associated with the MS4 permit.
 - The regulatory process for permits is streamlined, but incorporates stormwater. (If stormwater is going to be added into the mix of regulations there needs to be effort made not to add to the project approval time.)
- Infrastructure:
 - More stormwater is being infiltrated into the ground rather than being directed into detention basins.
 - Municipalities begin to view stormwater as a utility.
 - Septic systems are able to be financed to be replaced by homeowners through a revolving loan program
 - Municipalities are able to add a fee to property tax that is then refunded if a homeowner shows that a septic system has been properly maintained.

The Commission began presenting thoughts on outcomes based on of the five goal areas, however, it was realized that the outcomes being stated were closer to actions or recommendations. A broader approach to outcome statements was then discussed.

Broader outcomes:

- Tom drafted a few specific and some broader outcomes broken into three general categories: water quality and quantity, infrastructure and public awareness.
- For infrastructure, the replacement costs of the existing system need to be incorporated into the annual costs rather than letting those cost accrue, i.e. asset management.
- New Hampshire's policies, laws, rules and programs support the principles of sustainable practices.

The group discussed the degree to which the can/should address issues related to water rights and laws. The conclusion was that the Commission can identify those areas of water rights law that are relevant to

sustainable water management and describe outcomes that are necessary to align with the principles of sustainability.

The need to streamline the regulatory process and to have more consistency.

- An example for stormwater outcomes with a time line are that in five years each watershed would have a model stormwater utility, in seven years the state would provide incentives and in 25 years stormwater would be part of an integrated water management process.
- Flexibility exists in state laws and regulations to allow for water issues and resources to be managed differently based on regional or local situations.
- Information regarding water quality and quantity from around the state is available and accessible to allow for site specific, local, regional and statewide planning and regulatory decisions to be made. This data will allow for trends and cumulative impact information to be calculated.
- Water infrastructure is designed and water services are priced in such away to be adaptable to changing climate conditions, population shifts, and fluctuating demands.

V. Upcoming Meetings

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

- **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 had the following questions and comments for the Commission:

1. *Question:* What is the Commission's take on issues related to private wells?

Answer: The Commission has attempted to not take positions or make recommendations on specific topics. That said, we have taken a more long term view and are planning to make recommendation related to water pollution and cumulative impacts to help ensure that people will still be able to obtain plentiful, clean water from their wells.

2. *Question:* Given that the Commission has not issued a draft report, what is there for the public to comment on during the public comment period?

Answer: The Commission's public comment period is an attempt to given the public another opportunity to influence the process of the Commission's recommendations. This opportunity is in addition to the listening sessions held in May and July. The form online for comments is intended to help frame what the Commission is looking for feedback on; however, comments may be submitted with out the form via e-mail or regular mail. Additional information about the Commission's work, including meeting minutes and reference material, is available on the Commission's website for the public to react to.

3. *Question:* Will the public have a chance to comment on the Commission's report once it is issued?

Answer: It is unclear if the Commission is required to take public comment once its report has been issued; it is not called for in the Executive Order. Ways this may be accomplished will need to investigate this and discuss by the Commission. That said, the short time frame left in the Commission's existence may not allow for such responses.

A general discussion between the public in attendance and Commission members regarding how the Commission was established, the membership, and general work of the Commission also took place.

Meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for August 21, 2012 from 2:00 to 5:00 at the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. The Commission will also be meeting from on July 24th and August 14th from 1:00 to 4:00 at the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to discuss the content of the final deliverable and how it will be rolled out to the public.

