



Consortium Board Meeting Summary

JUNE 3, 2020 CALLED TO ORDER: 6:32 PM ADJOURNED: 7:37 PM

QUORUM PRESENT - YES - 15 MEMBERS (MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM/VIDEOCONFERENCE)

Chair Fagin started the meeting acknowledging the current unrest and emotions throughout the country in the wake of George Floyd's death and noted that as elected officials and public employees, we care about our communities and will work together to heal and get through this together.

Approval of February 5, 2020 Meeting Summary

Mayor Russ Axelrod made a motion to approve the February 5, 2020 Board meeting summary as presented. Director Mark Knudson seconded the motion. The Consortium Board unanimously approved the February 5, 2020 Consortium Board meeting summary as presented. (15:0:0)

Public Comment

None

Director Report

Rebecca Geisen, Consortium Managing Director pointed out that a detailed tri-annual activity report was included in the meeting materials packet and encouraged Board members to look over the report for information on activities conducted since the last Board meeting in February.

Legislative Update – Ms. Geisen advised that the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), the Oregon Water Utility Council (OWUC), and the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) have been meeting with the Governor's office on COVID-19 issues related to water utilities and educating the Governor and staff on all of the proactive work water utilities have been doing to support customers and avoid shut-offs. These discussions have helped avert a potential Executive Order from the Governor to ban utility

disconnections during the pandemic for now. The discussions have also been a good springboard to talk about financial impacts to water utilities and the lack of resources available for water and waste water agencies. Ms. Geisen advised that OWUC has conducted a survey to determine the types of financial impacts water utilities are experiencing and they are sharing that information with legislators. The House Interim Committee on Water met last week and again this week and has been getting presentations on these issues. There will likely be a special session to address them sometime this summer. Ms. Geisen reported that as part of the HEROS Act, \$1.5 billion has been set aside for water and wastewater relief and if passed, the State of Oregon would receive about \$15 million.

Ms. Geisen advised that Clean Water Services (CWS), in partnership with Oregon State University is doing COVID-19 tracking through sewage through a grant from the National Science Foundation. CWS is targeting 21 sub-sewer watersheds in Washington County and using it as a public health tool to track trends of COVID-19 in those communities.

Ms. Geisen reported that most of the Oregon snowpack has melted out. The statewide water precipitation is at about 80% of average. Predictions are for a warmer, drier summer again this year. Approximately 95% of the State of Oregon is abnormally dry according to the US drought monitor. The Consortium Technical Committee will meet throughout the summer to discuss summer water supply and messaging.

Alliance for Water Efficiency Letter – Ms. Geisen advised that the Alliance for Water Efficiency, of which the Consortium is a member, is asking its members to comment on a notice in the federal register to review specifications on the WaterSense Program which includes using use customer satisfaction information as a possible factor to be considered in future changes to WaterSense specifications. A letter on behalf of the Consortium was drafted and included in the meeting materials. The letter expresses support for the WaterSense program and some concern for the use of customer satisfaction criteria when evaluating WaterSense products. The concern is that customer satisfaction data, if not properly measured and implemented, could be used to weaken WaterSense standards for water efficiency. Ms. Geisen noted that Consortium Staff is looking for the Board to approve the letter for signature. The Executive Committee has reviewed the letter and expressed support.

Mayor Truax made a motion to approve and send the Alliance for Water Efficiency letter to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on behalf of the Regional Water Providers Consortium. Councilor Brooks seconded the motion. The Consortium Board unanimously approved the motion to approve and send the Alliance for Efficiency letter to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on behalf of the Regional Water Providers Consortium. (15:0:0).

Revised FY 2020-21 Consortium Budget – Ms. Geisen noted that so much has changed since the Board adopted the budget in February. Due to COVID-19, Consortium staff reviewed the budget and workplan and made a few adjustments, primarily around staffing and staffing costs. Ms. Geisen explained that the City of Portland has instituted mandatory furloughs and merit and cost of living freezes for FY 2020-21 so staffing costs were recalculated and are reflected in the revised budget. Ms. Geisen said in addition, it is likely that the Consortium will not participate in summer or fall events as planned due to the pandemic utilizing the Spanish language intern, so it has been deferred until the next fiscal year. Both of these actions resulted in a reduction in budget. Because changes were made to the FY 2020-21 budget and work plan, the Board will need to take action to re-adopt it.

Consortium Board members discussed the changes. It was decided in an effort to continue to build upon the Consortium’s outreach to diverse communities and not knowing how long the pandemic will affect public outreach activities, to leave the Spanish Intern line item in the FY 2020-21 budget and work plan.

Director Mark Knudson made a motion to approve the revised budget with the Spanish Intern line item retained. Councilor Jackie Manz seconded the motion. The Consortium Board unanimously approved the motion to approve the revised budget with the Spanish Intern line item retained. (15:0:0)

Ms. Geisen advised that Consortium staff will revise the budget and work plan to add back in the Spanish Intern line item and recalculate the dues spreadsheet and send them out to Board members.

Program Updates

Bonny Cushman, Consortium Program Coordinator reported that the Consortium has done great work on quickly developing COVID-19 messaging that focuses on your water is safe to drink and available; water providers will keep the water on; and to contact your water provider if you are having challenges paying your bill. A COVID-19 webpage on the regionalh2o.org website has been developed to house those messages as well as the contact information for all Consortium members. The webpage is available in both English and Spanish. Ms. Cushman noted that Consortium staff worked with the Portland Water Bureau to develop a one-page COVID-19 flyer produced in 15 languages. Social media ads were also developed for Facebook and Instagram and were sent out in 11 languages. Radio ads were created in English, Spanish and Russian. Two television interviews via Zoom were done to disseminate the messaging and a Spanish

e-newsletter was developed in cooperation with the Consortium's Spanish media partner KUNP to get the messaging out.

Ms. Cushman noted that the Consortium Conservation Program has been affected by the pandemic. School assembly programs were cancelled as of mid-March and the Children's Clean Water Festival and Garden Tour were cancelled as well. Consortium staff will be working with the school assembly vendors and Consortium Conservation Committee (CCC) to brainstorm ideas on how to adapt the assembly shows on-line for the upcoming school year if school remains remote learning.

Ms. Cushman advised that in the meantime, Consortium staff and the CCC have been working diligently on the summer outreach campaign which began this week. Media partner KATU produced three new :15 second ads focused on waterwise tips to air over the summer. Television stations are not currently doing in person interviews so the on-air interviews with media partners have been moved to later in the summer.

Ms. Cushman reported that the Emergency Planning Committee continues to meet remotely. Discussions have focused on COOP plan activation and how members have been responding to COVID-19 challenges. Consortium staff has worked on translating several of the emergency preparedness pages on the regionalh2o.org website in Spanish.

New Consortium Website Presentation

Ms. Cushman gave a presentation on the newly updated Consortium website and accomplishments for FY 2019-20. During the past fiscal year, Consortium staff in concert with the web programming consultants, have completed the content merge of our two URLs, conserveh2o.org to the regionalh2o.org site. Member websites and social media sites were reviewed to increase linking between the Consortium site and individual member sites. Consortium staff worked with member staff to gather input/feedback to help inform the new site architecture, usability and content. The new regionalh2o.org site was built to include more digital equity, better navigation and to accommodate the diversity of screen size, e.g. phone, tablet and computer.

Ms. Cushman provided some key takeaways from the Google analytics that track site traffic – how users find the site, what they are looking for. Ms. Cushman advised that the Consortium website is a valuable and integral part of the Consortium's public outreach strategy. New and one-time users make up the majority of traffic suggesting that people visit the site because they are searching for specific information. Direct traffic (typing in specific URLs) remains high which illustrates that having the URLs in print and media are key sources to site traffic. Conservation continues to remain the highest ranked content, but emergency preparedness content popularity is growing over time.

Users coming to the regionalh2o.org site and most importantly Consortium member websites – large and small – are significant traffic sources. Ms. Cushman shared some examples of how individual Consortium members are linking to the Consortium website and how it enhances the success of the regionalh2o.org site as the “go to” site for water conservation, emergency preparedness and regional water source information.

Board Elections

Ms. Geisen informed Consortium Board members that elections for the Board Chair and Vice-Chair were needed. Article 4 of the Consortium By-Laws contains the procedural requirements for officers. It states that the Board shall have at least a Chair and a Vice-Chair and that they must come from two different counties. The term of both offices is a one-year term with the possibility of a consecutive second year upon re-election. Elections must be done when a quorum is present, and a majority of the quorum must approve each position. Ms. Geisen advised that both Chair Fagin and Vice-Chair Manz have completed their first year of service and are eligible to serve a second term if nominated.

Chair Fagin opened the meeting for nominations.

Mayor Russ Axelrod nominated Mark Fagin and Jackie Manz for Board Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. Director Mark Knudson seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. The Consortium Board unanimously approved the nomination of Mark Fagin and Jackie Manz for Board Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. (15:0:0)

Ms. Geisen reported that in addition to the Chair and Vice-Chair elections, the Board needs to elect new county-representative Executive Committee (EC) members. She explained that the counties will caucus and select their representative. Membership is entity specific; allowing the entity’s Board alternate to attend and vote at EC meetings. The terms of office will be for two years with the Board allowed to appoint consecutive terms for county-representative members at its pleasure. Ms. Geisen advised that the EC meets three to four times a year in advance of the Consortium Board meetings. The EC identifies major policy issues and makes recommendations to the Board. The EC reviews the annual work plan and budget and provides input and recommendations to the Board.

Board members broke out into Zoom breakout rooms to caucus by county. Board members representing Clackamas County appointed Director Mark Knudson from Oak Lodge Water Services. Board members representing Multnomah County appointed Tom Lewis from Rockwood Water PUD. Board members representing Washington County appointed Commissioner Jim Duggan from Tualatin Valley Water District.

Multnomah County's selection of Tom Lewis left an at-large vacancy on the Executive Committee. Director Mark Knudson nominated Mayor Russ Axelrod for the at-large Executive Committee position. Councilor Jackie Manz seconded the motion. The Consortium Board unanimously approved the nomination of Mayor Russ Axelrod for the at-large Executive Committee position. (15:0:0).

COVID-19 Response Discussion

Consortium Board members shared how their entities have been responding to challenges during the pandemic.

City of Beaverton:

- Quickly offered grants to restaurants and bars that were hit immediately having to close because of the pandemic.
- Immediate suspension of water shut-offs.
- Council made the decision to delay increases in water rates. Will reevaluate the decision in November. Delayed increases in SDC.
- Modified how crews work together to maintain social distancing. Limiting number of staff in City vehicles.
- Developed outreach and communications plan to inform customers water is safe to drink, don't flush wipes, and other COVID-19 related messaging.
- Have increased use of PPE for crews and other employees.
- Have been reviewing water use and bill payment trends. Have seen a slight increase in residential water use and in late payments.

Oak Lodge Water District:

- In March, declared an emergency.
- Deferred shut-offs.
- Staggered work crews.
- Developed messaging related to flushable wipes.
- Created new emergency customer assistance program that includes a time payment agreement signed by the customer that defers fees and payments up to six months interest free. If customer provides on-time payments on payment plan for 90% of the balance, customer will receive 10% discount. In addition, offering temporary bill payment relief which waves up to 50% of the bill for two billing cycles (4 months) for residential customers. Non-residential customers can receive up to \$500 discount.
- Had planned for a 3% rate increase but settled on 0.5% increase earmarked to fund customer assistance program.

City of Portland:

- Upon the stay at home order, immediately ordered all staff that could telework to do so and provided alternative work hours and/or reduced the number of working hours for employees based on their unique needs.
- Established social distancing, per person vehicle limits, high touch surface and vehicle cleaning, and self-check screening requirements for field staff reporting to buildings, facilities and work sites.
- Obtained and dispersed personal protection equipment to essential staff reporting to city work sites.
- Limited crew staff members to working with same small set of coworkers to contain any possible outbreaks -- “quaran-teaming”.
- Ceased shutoffs of water service for non-payment upon the stay at home order and restored service for non-payment shutoffs that occurred prior to the order and waived reconnection fees.
- Made sensible budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year to reduce overall rate impacts to customers.
- Staff throughout the entire city workforce, both non-represented and union members are taking up to 80 hours in unpaid furloughs to reduce personnel costs. Merit pay and cost of living raises have been suspended.
- Partnering with Prosper Portland and the Bureau of Environmental Services to create a Small Business Program for Utility Relief (SPUR) that will provide a total of up to \$1 million of utility bill credits to small businesses affected by the shutdown. Relief is a credit on the utility bill. Application process begins July 8, 2020.
- Continue to implement and support telework for as many staff as possible until either the risk of person to person Covid-19 transmission is abated through a vaccination program or medical treatments and support staff that must report to city work sites to perform their jobs with strict operating protocols that limit person to person transmission exposure among co-workers or customers.

Rockwood Water PUD:

- Focus on personal safety, continuity of service, and revenue tracking.
- Office was closed immediately. Implemented teleworking where possible.
- Initiated self-report daily healthy assessment protocol for staff. Establish hand-sanitation and disinfectant protocols.
- Staggered work shifts/starting times. Constructed cubicle isolation barriers and cancelled all in-person meetings where possible. Switched to videoconferencing.
- Develop return to work policies and procedures.
- Updated business continuity plan and mutual aid agreements.

- Implemented shut-off moratorium in March and continue to track revenue through bi-monthly billing to determine affects from COVID-19.
- Direct calling all delinquent customers to offer payment assistance.

Tualatin Valley Water District:

- Focus on maintaining employee health; providing reliable water operations and customer service; customer support; and financial response.
- Revised operations to maximize working from home and focus on single unit field work. Operating entire district in Emergency Operations mode. Incident Command structure is coordinating the water operations. Leadership Team meets daily to address policy issues. Board of Commissioners briefed regularly.
- Enhanced cleaning of vehicles, equipment and the high touch surfaces in the office.
- Only critical work is done with a multi-worker unit. A review process including job analysis is performed by supervisors and reviewed by the EOC in advance and standard operation procedures were developed for main break repairs.
- An activity dashboard was created to record and track the activity of the work being completed in the new mode of operations. The district has made significant progress in updating records, mapping location of infrastructure, inspecting and repairing meters and hydrants and other tasks that support reliable system operations.
- Suspended shutoffs and late fees. Reconnected customers who were disconnected for nonpayment prior to event. Continued to respond to customer's need over the phone and in the field.
- Indicators established to monitor the financial impact from COVID-19.
- Planning a phased approach to reducing expenditures, delaying capital programs to respond to revenue needs.
- Updating billing/collection process to address impacts of suspended shutoff policy.
- Developing a COVID-19 Customer Emergency Assistance Program to assist customers with arrearages.

Additional comments:

- Lake Oswego has implemented many of the same customer programs and assistance. Councilor Manz gave kudos to Kari Duncan, Plant Manager for the rapid response and seamless shift into the “new normal” with regards to plant operations. The Lake Oswego Council is proud of their staff and continued operations.
- Commissioner Raber gave a huge shout-out to the City of Hillsboro staff who also function as staff for the Joint Water Commission. Hillsboro staff has been

reaching out to commercial customers/businesses with information on the importance of flushing the water system in buildings as they begin to re-open to prevent legionella. Commissioner Raber thanked the Consortium staff on the work they've done to enhance the ADA compliance of the Consortium website.

- Commissioner Angier noted that Clackamas River Water has also implemented many of the programs and procedures mentioned by the presenters and commented that it is great to see all of the water providers on the same page.
- Mayor Axelrod thanked Board members and their staff for all that they are doing to keep their staff and customers safe and with water. He commented that the innovation is remarkable and how cities, counties and water providers are coordinating and working collectively together is amazing. Mayor Axelrod suggested that messaging could be developed to illustrate the positive ways water providers have come together and are unified in their desire to provide safe drinking water to their customers especially during the pandemic.
- Councilor Brooks gave a shout out to the City of Tualatin staff for their hard work protecting the safety and health of their citizens by continuing to provide safe drinking water during this time. Councilor Brooks noted that not all people, especially first nations, have access to safe drinking water all the time so whatever messaging may be developed needs to keep that in mind and be culturally sensitive.
- Councilor Barth expressed his appreciation of the Sunrise Water Authority staff for their excellent, well executed response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that perhaps at the October Consortium Board meeting, if it looks like things are getting back to "normal", there could be some sort of after-action report given to debrief on what worked well and what could have been done differently.
- Councilor Raber asked if the Board might consider continuing to hold future Board meeting via Zoom even after it is safe to meet in person. She noted that it would save on travel time for Board members as well as money on room rental, food, recording services, etc. This topic could be part of the after-action discussion. Mayor Truax commented that he believes in-person meetings are crucial. He noted that Zoom could be a good addition to face to face interactions/meeting but not to replace them entirely.

Chair Fagin thanked the Consortium Board for sharing their thoughts/ideas and participating in tonight's discussion.

Meeting Attendees:

22 Total Members

Quorum = 12

Councilor Mark Fagin (Board Chair) and David Winship – City of Beaverton	Commissioner Nancy Angier – Clackamas River Water	Mayor Peter Truax– City of Forest Grove
Commissioner Debbie Raber and Niki Iverson – City of Hillsboro	Councilor Jackie Manz – City of Lake Oswego	Director Mark Knudson – Oak Lodge Water Services
Commissioner Amanda Fritz and Mike Stuhr – City of Portland	Director Tom Lewis and Brian Stahl – Rockwood Water PUD	Councilor Sean Garland – City of Sherwood
Mayor Russ Axelrod – South Fork Water Board	Commissioner Gary Barth – Sunrise Water Authority	Councilor Tom Anderson and John Goodrich – City of Tigard
Councilor Bridget Brooks and Jeff Fuchs – City of Tualatin	Commissioner Jim Duggan – Tualatin Valley Water District	Commissioner Carol Wild and Mike Grimm – West Slope Water District
Rebecca Geisen, Bonny Cushman, Riley Berger, and Patty Burk – Consortium Staff		

Consortium members agencies not represented by elected officials at this meeting included the City of Cornelius, City of Gladstone, City of Gresham, City of Milwaukie, Raleigh Water District, City of Sandy, and City of Troutdale.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 7, 2020 via Zoom/videoconference