



Consortium Board Meeting Summary

FEBRUARY 2, 2022 CALLED TO ORDER: 6:31 PM ADJOURNED: 8:35 PM
QUORUM PRESENT – YES – 14 MEMBERS (MEETING WAS HELD VIA
ZOOM/VIDEOCONFERENCE)

Approval of October 6, 2021 Meeting Summary

Mayor Peter Truax made a motion to approve the October 6, 2021 Board meeting summary. Councilor Jeanette Shaw seconded the motion. The Consortium Board unanimously approved the October 6, 2021 Consortium Board meeting summary. (10:0:4) (Abstentions – Mitchell, Raber, Rosener, and Williams)

Public Comment

None

October Consortium Board Meeting Date

Rebecca Geisen, Regional Water Providers Consortium Managing Director pointed out that the original October 5, 2022 Consortium Board meeting date falls on Yom Kippur. Ms. Geisen advised that it was the recommendation of the Executive Committee to move the Board meeting to a different day. Consortium staff looked at Consortium member calendars for regular council, commission and board meeting dates to try to find a new date for the October meeting that would not conflict with those meetings. Several alternative dates were suggested. Thursday, October 6 was determined to be the preferred date for Board members. An updated meeting invite will be sent out.

FY 2022-23 Consortium Budget and Work Plan

Ms. Geisen reported that since the October Board meeting, Consortium staff worked with the Consortium Technical and Executive Committees to refine the budget and workplan to reflect strategic priorities identified by the Board and to minimize an increase in dues.

Ms. Geisen provided an overview of Consortium programs, a summary of the October Consortium Board strategic plan discussion and outlined budget and work plan recommendations from the Executive Committee.

Ms. Geisen advised that in December, the City of Portland provided staffing costs for FY 2022-23 which includes an anticipated 5% COLA and merit increases for staff. Last year, Mayor Wheeler made changes to staff merit increases and COLAs in May and the Board had to reapprove the budget at the June meeting. For that reason, the Executive Committee is recommending that the Board provisionally approve the budget to allow for updates based on final staffing costs, with final budget approval in June.

Ms. Geisen noted that the Executive Committee discussed several budget options. They generally support a lower increase in dues but were concerned about making service level and contingency cuts that may be difficult to restore. Post-pandemic, some costs will resume if the Consortium starts meeting again in person, printing and distributing materials, and attending events and trainings. Ms. Geisen explained that the Executive Committee recommended sharing three budget scenarios for Board consideration and discussion.

Option 1: Dues Increase of 5.2% (decrease in current service level)

Includes funding the priorities supported by the Board at October meeting:

- \$5,000 instead of recommended \$10,000 for Digital Campaign (\$18,000 total)
- \$2,000 – Translation services
- \$15,000 – Drinking Water Advisory Tool: Accessibility review (screen reader compatible) and making available in multiple languages
- \$1,679 – Update population forecast with 2020 Census data (\$19,385 total)
- (\$12,000) – in reductions
- (\$4,000) in material and services
- (\$5,000) Contingency
- (\$3,000) – exercises, training, and travel

Option 2: **Executive Committee Recommendation** - Dues increase of 5.9%

- Same as Option 1 but keeps contingency at \$10,000

Option 3: Dues Increase of 7% (maintains current service level)

Includes funding the priorities supported by the Board at October meeting:

- \$10,000 – Digital Campaign (\$23,000 total)
- \$2,000 – Translation services
- \$15,000 – Drinking Water Advisory Tool: Accessibility review (screen reader compatible) and making available in multiple languages
- \$1,679 – Updated population forecast with 2020 Census data (\$19,385 total)

Ms. Geisen noted that the Executive Committee also discussed that a provisional adoption of the budget could allow for the restoration of current service level cuts if staffing costs are reduced.

Commissioner Naomi Angier made a motion to approve the Executive Committee FY 2022-23 Budget and Work Plan recommendation (option #2) as presented. Mayor Peter Truax seconded the motion. The Consortium Board unanimously approved the Executive Committee FY 2022-23 Budget and Work Plan recommendation (option #2) as presented. (14:0:0).

Program Report

Bonny Cushman, Consortium Program Coordinator reported that Consortium staff worked with several members of the Water Communicators Network (WCN) to put together some evergreen (year-round) messaging that highlights how water providers work together to make infrastructure and the region more resilient to emergencies. The effort was in response to the Board's request to highlight the water providers' successes of meeting water needs during the February 2021 winter storm. The group developed a news release and social media content with plans to pitch the content to the media during a future winter storm event. The WCN worked with Ms. Geisen to develop content for a winter storm response presentation at the 2022 Pacific Northwest AWWA conference.

Ms. Cushman advised that the Consortium conducted an emergency preparedness-focused promotion in November and December that included a one-gallon water bag, two emergency preparedness print pieces, and disaster sanitation bucket stickers. All kit materials were available in English and Spanish. The promotion was advertised on social media, on the Consortium website, by members through their outreach, the Consortium's Regionalh2o News public newsletter, and in a KUNP Spanish language e-newsletter. Over 900 kits were distributed.

Ms. Cushman mentioned that the KUNP Spanish language newsletter recently went out to approximately 27,000 recipients. The newsletter focused on three things people can do to prepare for winter weather.

The Consortium developed three new messaging toolkits that contained social media content, website links, and sample newsletter articles for members to use in outreach to their customers. Toolkit topics included information, tips, and resources about the value of water, critical infrastructure and resiliency, and indoor water conservation. Each toolkit is available on the member page or by request. Staff also conducted a member survey to gather input on toolkit use and future topics. The February toolkit is focused on National Engineers week and the March toolkit will highlight Fix-a-Leak week. Ms. Cushman encouraged Consortium Board members to share the messaging on their own entity websites and social media channels.

Ms. Cushman reported that work continues on the Urban Area Security Initiative grant funded how-to video translation project. The \$110,000 grant is being used to translate the Consortium's

three emergency preparedness videos into 10 languages. Listening sessions were held with community members to get feedback on the video topics, what they anticipate might be barriers for their community to do the preparedness work, and input on how to best get the videos out to the community once they are completed. Video production will begin in late February/early March. It is anticipated that the videos will be available in fall 2022.

Consortium staff and a planning group consisting of members from all three Consortium working committees began planning a curtailment-focused tabletop exercise that will take place June 2, 2022.

The Consortium is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Messaging is being developed to share via social media, i.e., Facebook, Twitter, and other channels. Ms. Cushman shared the newly developed Consortium 25th anniversary logo.

Director Report

Ms. Geisen 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 October.

Provision of Emergency Drinking Water Framework Plan: Ms. Geisen reminded Consortium Board members that the Consortium is working on a Provision of Emergency Drinking Water Framework Plan in partnership with the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO). UASI grant funds were awarded for the development of the Plan that will explore how emergency drinking water will be distributed in the event of an emergency. The Plan will also provide policy recommendations and tools for individual water providers planning for resiliency and emergency water supplies.

Ms. Geisen reported that the project is moving along well. Two workshops have been held. The third workshop, a regional tabletop exercise, is scheduled for March 31 to vet the framework plan. Ms. Geisen noted that once the project is completed, a more detailed presentation will be brought to the Consortium Board.

2022 Oregon Legislative Session: Ms. Geisen advised that Consortium staff is currently following two bills that they recommend the Consortium support: HB 4057 and SB 5067. The two letters were included in the meeting materials.

HB 4057: Requires spray sprinklers (for lawns and landscapes) to meet minimum energy efficiency standards. The bill requires an integral pressure regulator for spray sprinklers which allows them to use water more efficiently and aligns with EPA WaterSense efficiency standards.

The Consortium Executive Committee approved sending a letter of support for HB 4057 as this legislation is in line with policy that the Board has previously supported.

SB 5067: Requires that owners and operators of bulk oil and liquid fuel terminals conduct and implement seismic risk assessments. The letter is a joint letter from the Consortium, Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies, Oregon Water Utility Council and the Oregon Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network.

Councilor Lisa Batey made a motion to send a Consortium letter of support for SB 5067. Mayor Peter Truax seconded the motion. The Regional Water Providers Consortium Board unanimously approved the motion to send a Consortium letter of support for SB 5067. (14:0:0)

Commissioner Mingus Mapps advised that the Covid-19 crisis has significantly increased the amount of past due bills for the people the City of Portland serves. Some of that debt is owed by the owners of multifamily dwellings and it can be difficult to collect this debt without negatively affecting tenants. The Portland Water Bureau does not have an existing mechanism to collect payment while protecting tenants. Multi-family tenants are particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of owner non-payment of utility bills. As a result, Portland is exploring options to add legislative authority to collect water accounts the same way it collects sewer-only accounts by allowing them under state statute to be collected as a lien against the property that is then collected through the county tax assessor each year. This would be a potential legislative proposal for the 2023 session. Commissioner Mapps commented that providing an alternative collection method other than shutting off water service to multifamily properties and their tenants would help advance racial equity goals for the City and helps to honor our responsibility to serve all members of the community.

Commissioner Mapps asked Consortium members who are interested in collaborating or trading ideas on this proposed legislation to reach out to him or Edward Campbell, Interim Deputy Director with the Portland Water Bureau.

After Action Tabletop Exercise: Ms. Geisen reported that on December 7, 2021, the Consortium hosted a virtual After-Action Tabletop for members to debrief on the multiple, often concurrent emergencies that took place starting in March 2020. The event consisted of a series of breakout sessions wherein managers and administrative staff, operators, communications staff, and emergency managers discussed their specific experiences in response, recovery, and lessons learned. There were over 40 participants from 19 member agencies. Objectives of the tabletop were to: share lessons learned; improve response to future events; identify continuous improvement of regional response; and identify resource needs for future grant proposals. Ms. Geisen shared outcomes of the exercise including lessons learned; challenges; positive changes; and opportunities for improvement.

Oregon Office of Emergency Management Presentation

Ms. Geisen introduced Andrew Phelps, Director of the Oregon Office of Emergency Management. Director Phelps joined the Consortium Board meeting to share information about the role of the

Office of Emergency Management (OEM), new changes, staffing, and funding that are on the horizon as well as OEM's role in supporting water utilities in planning, response, and recovery.

Director Phelps advised that changes to the OEM structure came out of the 2021 legislative session with the passage of HB 2927 which took OEM out of the military department where it has been housed since 2007 and created its own independent cabinet level agency, the Oregon Department of Emergency Management. With this change came an influx of resources mostly through federal grants. The department has grown from 46 FTE to 97 FTE which is a strong signal to how important emergency management is to the State of Oregon and a recognition of how under resourced emergency management has been across the State.

Director Phelps noted that the shift to an independent department has allowed OEM to establish a regional program that consists of six local regions each with two staff members that work directly with local jurisdictions to address preparedness and response issues and hazard mitigation and disaster recovering planning. Director Phelps commented that to be able to provide this kind of assistance to counties and cities and have a better connection to Salem can be a game changer.

Director Phelps advised that the key to leveraging state resources and expertise to support maintaining/recovery of critical drinking water supplies during an emergency is to foster, grow and maintain strong connections with county emergency managers. The county emergency managers are key connection points to OEM. County emergency managers can help with messaging, talking points, arranging mutual aid needs, preparing elected officials, etc., and should be able to help build the communication and resource infrastructure needed during an emergency.

Director Phelps gave a brief overview of the State Emergency Support Functions (ESF) categories. The State of Oregon is divided into 18 emergency support functions. Each ESF has a lead or co-lead state agency. Director Phelps explained that water is a little unique in that there is no state-wide water utility, like transportation or public health, therefore, in Oregon ESF 3 – Public Works is managed by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) which is the closest Oregon has to an infrastructure agency. Director Phelps noted that this is not ideal but that other state agencies also support water such as DEQ, Oregon Health Authority, and the Oregon Water Resources Department. He emphasized that it is to build better relationships between water providers and the State to ensure that water has a seat during the activation of any state emergency coordination center.

Director Phelps shared ideas on what the Regional Water Providers Consortium can do to support OEM and their work.

- Let OEM know what's happening early as a potential event is unfolding. This allows OEM to begin to mobilize resources and lean forward. The State response network and infrastructure resources are not as nimble as local jurisdictions.
- Talk to each other about preparedness. Ensure workers and their families are prepared. Prepare staff for extended operations.

- Talk to policy makers about what the expectations are for them and the resources that are needed during an emergency.
- Develop mitigation grant projects/applications. Pursue mitigation and hazard grants. Utilize federal grant money that is available.

A question/answer session followed Director Phelps presentation. Consortium Board members thanked Director Phelps for the information and discussion.

Meeting Attendees:

23 Total Members		
Quorum = 12		
Councilor Laura Mitchell and David Winship – City of Beaverton	Commissioner Naomi Angier and Todd Heidgerken– Clackamas River Water	Mayor Peter Truax and Greg Robertson – City of Forest Grove
Robin Pederson – City of Gresham	Commissioner Debbie Raber, Jessica Dorsey, Tonya Bilderbeck, and Tacy Steele – City of Hillsboro	Councilor Lisa Batey – City of Milwaukie
Erica Rooney – City of Lake Oswego	Director Kevin Williams and Sarah Jo Chaplen – Oak Lodge Water Services	Commissioner Mingus Mapps, Eric Noll Gabriel Solmer and Edward Campbell – City of Portland
Director Tom Lewis and Kari Duncan – Rockwood Water PUD	Councilor Tim Rosener and Rich Sattler – City of Sherwood	Mayor Jules Walters – South Fork Water Board
Councilor Jeanette Shaw – City of Tigard	Councilor Bridget Brooks, Nic Westendorf and Rachel Sykes – City of Tualatin	Commissioner Jim Duggan, Tom Hickmann, and Carrie Pak – Tualatin Valley Water District
Commissioner Carol Wild and Mike Grimm – West Slope Water District	Martin Montalvo – City of Wilsonville	Andrew Phelps – Oregon Office of Emergency Management
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 Lake Oswego, Raleigh Water District, City of Sandy, Sunrise Water Authority, City of Troutdale, and City of Wilsonville.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 1, 2022 via Zoom/videoconference