

**WATER ALLOCATION PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION/OUTREACH/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF MEETING

Aug. 23, 2003

Members Present:

Sandra Whitehouse
Meg Kerr
Lori Urso
Chip Young

Members Absent:

Mary Anne Barry
Sen. Susan Sosnowski
Tom Sandham

Water Resources Board Staff:

Connie McGreavy

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Dr. Whitehouse called the meeting to order at 1:10PM.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

As of this date, meeting minutes had not been completed, and as such, their review and approval was tabled for the next meeting.

III. ITEMS FOR ACTION

A. Education and Public Relations Committee: Education Message

Dr. Whitehouse emphasized that each WAPAC committee has big topical areas with big questions to answer. Eventually, the state will be allocating water, potentially through a permit system. The state is looking at ways to charge users for the true cost of water. Legislatively, it may be difficult to pass bills this year. The committee will work on two tracks: 1) media/public relations and 2) legislative education.

B. Water/Wastewater Committee Brochure—Feedback to WAPAC

Ms. McGreavy updated the group regarding the status of the brochure. The Water Wastewater Committee has not met for several months; thus, the brochure is not ready for final review.

IV. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

A. Review Education Messages from WAPAC Committees

Mr. Young proceeding to explain his analysis of the WAPAC committee's various education messages. He categorized the messages into two areas 1) public relations and 2) education & training. He also observed that several messages were data-related issues. Mr. Young went through each item on the spreadsheet explaining which messages were "linked". Both he and Dr. Whitehouse commented that public input into the process was important. Ms. McGreavy stated that public information meetings could possibly be held in 2004 in the monthly WAPAC meeting slot. Mr. Young emphasized the importance of being out front and shaping the message in terms of what legislators' constituencies will want including costs. Mr. Young offered the group a tag line/theme for a campaign: *We've been wet, we've been dry – we can't predict what 2004 will bring, but we have to be ready. Or, 2004: What's next? Are we ready?*

Some of the other points that Mr. Young brought out were:

- Water use is at the heart of what we need to educate people about
- Which uses are priority and which uses are preferred are key questions that the public will need to know as well as who decides
- We must answer the question, What is the benefit of data collection?
- We must assess whether people know whether/when their water is clean
- The importance of implementing best management practices
- The importance of explaining impacts

Ms. Kerr stated that to succeed, we need to pinpoint one or two main things. For instance, assuming full build out of the state, how much water do we need? Dr. Whitehouse stated that priority uses, preferences and a permit system will be contentious, and that businesses will resist permitting. Ms. McGreavy stated that the Out-of-Basin Transfer Committee would be recommending a permit program and a way to assist local decision-makers in determining water availability in the land use process.

In response to questions regarding a potential water allocation program fee, the use of water bills as vehicles for conservation messages and the purview of the RI Public Utilities Commission (PUC), Ms. McGreavy explained that the PUC only regulates a handful of suppliers and can authorize emergency rates if necessary. The Board has the authority to institute a WAP fee. She added that the PUC requires certain information on bills from the water suppliers they regulate. Mr. Young liked the idea of standardizing bills, perhaps using the PUC's guidelines. He added that there should be a minimum number of times water suppliers bill.

Dr. Whitehouse asked who would be writing the legislation. Ms. McGreavy responded that Ken Payne of the Senate Policy Office is on the WAPAC and slated to assist the Water Rates Committee with the WAP fee legislation. Dr. Whitehouse added that Andrea Hopkins at URI writes legislation. Ms. McGreavy explained the schedule and the role of the Joint Advocacy and Funding Committee. Mr. Young cautioned that the Education Committee did not yet know the "3 barks". Ms. Kerr suggested using the N. Kingstown Healthy Landscapes project as a way to draw messages out and to see what resonates. Mr. Young though some initial surveys might be positive to find out what residents care most about. He added that URI research provides good justification for positions. Mr. Young agreed to sort the matrix of education messages by category and potential highlight where legislation might be needed.

Ms. Kerr asked who would conduct training and who should be trained. She added that the RI Assoc. of Conservation Districts had a big training event planned, and Grow Smart RI is active in this area. She believed that 2-day modules could be structured to integrate into existing training programs. Ms. Kerr offered to devise a calendar of training events ongoing. Dr. Whitehouse emphasized that by January, the committee needs to know the key messages and start educating legislators. She did not feel education should wait for specific action on bills in hearings. Ms. McGreavy stated that the tie to economic development will be important, and that the Impact Analysis Committee had already briefed the Governor's policy advisors on its presentation before the WAPAC. Ms. Kerr added that it would be important to understand other environmental legislative initiatives, such as the Partners for Narragansett Bay initiative for an interstate bay management agreement. Ms. McGreavy agreed to share the legislation forming the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) and the associated Interstate Compact. She mentioned that RI does not have full representation on this commission and should fill in its membership slots. She will check the

legislation to see how appointments are made. The committee agreed that answering the “Who Cares” question is paramount and that we need to size up the opposing viewpoints.

B. Update on Student Interns/Journalists/Potential Stories

Mr. Young reported that he had made some calls to the Jamestown Water Dept. and to Bob Sutton, Planning Director. He is working on an article for *The Water Front* magazine. He is aware that the intern is working out of the Metcalf Institute office, but he has not had contact with Art Gold. He agreed to follow up and contact Peter Lord of the Providence Journal. He also agreed to contact other reporters who might be able to estimate how much a media strategy might cost, or he could project some numbers himself.

C. Rain Barrel Distribution Program Status

Dr. Whitehouse gave an update on the program, explaining that it all came down to timing. The RI Resource Recovery Commission agreed to let the Board piggy back their program and co-advertise. Dr. Whitehouse thought the committee should plan four distribution events starting next year (Feb, Mar, Apr, May) with added emphasis on Earth Day. She proposed legislation to subsidize the cost of the barrels as an incentive to buy them. Mr. Young thought it would be a good idea to involve the nursery sector in the distribution of barrels.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

A. WAPAC Report Outline and Timeline

Dr. Whitehouse hoped to have the committee’s report drafted by the next meeting.

VI. AJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Urso

Date