

Attachment 1A
Meeting Summary
MEETING OF THE
DIRECTORS OF UTILITIES COMMITTEE
June 1, 2016
Newport News

1. Summary of the May 4, 2016 Joint Meeting of the Directors of Utilities Committee and Health Directors

There were no comments on, or revisions to the summary of the May 4, 2016 joint meeting of the Directors of Utilities Committee and Health Directors.

ACTION: The May 4, 2016 meeting summary was approved.

2. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

3. askHRgreen.org FY17 Goals for Water Awareness and FOG

The HRPDC staff briefed the Committee on the FY17 public education message priorities identified by the Water Awareness subcommittee and the FOG subcommittee for the askHRgreen.org program (see Attachment 1C).

Staff explained that the Water Awareness subcommittee identified primary message priorities, which will be promoted through funded media activities, and secondary message priorities that will be addressed using staff time and other resources:

Primary:

- Aging infrastructure
- Value of tap water (as a service & affordability)
- Wise water use (fixing leaks; indoor water-saving practices; outdoor watering best practices)

Secondary:

- Source water protection
- Choosing tap water over bottled

The HRPDC staff played the [radio ad](#) for aging infrastructure awareness to demonstrate the messaging targeted at the average citizen. During the discussion, it was noted that J.D. Power's [2016 Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study](#) showed that customer satisfaction is higher when customers are aware of their utility's efforts to improve or replace old infrastructure (*Post-meeting note:* for more information, see [J.D. Power press release](#) and [recorded webcast](#) on key findings). Utilities that ranked higher

in customer satisfaction had conducted outreach on the importance of investing in infrastructure.

The FOG subcommittee identified three message priorities to be pursued through funded media activities, with resources to be primarily devoted to priorities 1 and 2 below:

1. To prevent costly infrastructure repairs because of fats, oils and grease going down drains in commercial establishments and residences.
2. To prevent costly infrastructure damage due to materials flushed down toilets.
3. To encourage residents to reduce garbage disposal use, which may lead to clogged pipes.

HRPDC staff noted that, because benchmarking research showed little response to garbage disposal messaging, the subcommittee agreed to focus primarily on encouraging the proper disposal of FOG and to devote less media resources to reducing garbage disposal use.

The Committee expressed agreement with the Water Awareness and FOG message priorities identified by the subcommittees and did not have any additions or changes.

ACTION: No action.

4. Help to Others – H2O – Program Update and Memorandum of Agreement

The HRPDC staff summarized the Help to Others – H2O – Program fundraising results from the May 3, 2016 Give Local 757 event. Due to the failure of a server supporting the Give Local 757 website, donations could not be accepted during the morning hours; it is likely that those who could not access the site in the morning did not go back to the site later that day. Less than \$200 was raised for the H2O Program. HRPDC staff noted that the “magic faucet” radio remote spots, which were going on simultaneously with Give Local 757 at City Center in Newport News and at Mount Trashmore in Virginia Beach, did attract a number of people despite the rainy weather that day. Next year, HRPDC staff anticipates participating in Give Local 757 again, but will plan the radio remotes on a different day to allow staff adequate time to leverage social media to drive participation toward both events.

The Committee discussed the renewal of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for administration and management of the H2O program. All members of the Directors of Utilities Committee are members of the H2O – Help to Others – Program Board of Directors. The [2010 MOA](#) expired in 2015; HRPDC staff reviewed the existing language and recommends renewing the MOA through 2020. HRPDC staff will distribute the 2010 MOA for review. The Board will consider new officers at a future meeting.

ACTION: No action.

5. Organizational Structures for Operational Divisions

The Committee held a roundtable discussion on the organizational structures of water and wastewater operational divisions. Committee members shared challenges associated laborer/operator field staff hiring and retention, as well as administrative skill set development for supervisors. In general, several utilities noted that laborer and equipment operator positions are difficult to fill and that vacancies remain, despite the employment of temporary hires. This is also true for public works departments and solid waste management divisions. Often, those that are hired stay long enough to gain experience before seeking higher paying positions in the private sector. However, Newport News Waterworks recently rehired some former crew members who had left for the private sector; these employees appreciate the safer work environment at Waterworks. Some utilities with both water and wastewater systems have found it advantageous to train crews to maintain both systems and are able to staff appropriately and shift staff resources as needed.

With respect to supervisors, qualification requirements vary between different utilities and it is difficult to find candidates with the appropriate combination of field experience, administrative skills, education, and technological proficiency. It was noted that, to provide training in administrative skills, Hampton requires employees moving into management positions to complete a 12-week City-sponsored human resources program.

ACTION: No action.

6. SSORS Reporting Criteria

The Committee discussed the criteria for reporting a release through the Sanitary Sewer Overflow Reporting System. It was clarified that the 2002 document, "Standard Operating Procedures for Assessing and Reporting Collection System Releases," was prepared for the Committee by the Capacity Team and that reportable releases include those that enter state waters or may reasonably be expected to enter state waters. The Committee noted considerations for properly containing and recovering spilled material in grassy areas to prevent impacts to groundwater.

ACTION: No action.

7. Groundwater Update

The Committee discussed recent and upcoming meetings of the Eastern Virginia Groundwater Management Advisory Committee (EVGMAC) and Workgroups. It was clarified that there was an error in the meeting agenda and the next [Eastern Virginia Groundwater Management Advisory Committee](#) (EVGMAC) is on June 24, 2016, not June 13, 2016.

The HRPDC staff summarized the recent discussions of Workgroup #2A, Alternative Management Structures. The workgroup, which is largely made up of representatives from NGOs, agriculture, economic development, and regulatory agencies, is trying to identify management structures that would provide more options for permittees to deal with permit reductions.

Two concepts are under consideration (see Attachment 1D): (1) a forum for groundwater permit holders for information sharing and establishing relationships that would improve conflict resolution; and (2) the use of voluntary allocation agreements for groundwater permit holders. Regarding the forum concept, the Committee noted that technical solutions may be more forthcoming if the forum was run by a non-regulatory agency; a forum may help facilitate future permitting cycles. It was also noted that a forum to talk about groundwater status is needed. New groundwater monitoring data should be made available for discussion; the state should dedicate resources to monitoring and regular status reports.

Regarding the use of voluntary agreements, a strawman document was developed and the workgroup is considering whether new regulations are needed to protect the permit holder. The Committee noted that existing voluntary agreements are for delivery of raw or finished water, not for the extraction of groundwater, and the permit process should not result in some permittees having unused allocation such that they can sell groundwater rights to other permittees that are in need of more water. It is very unlikely that any local governments would volunteer to reduce permit allocations, especially when the number of non-permitted users continues to grow and contribute to groundwater use. The HRPDC staff urged the Committee to participate in the 6-2-16 Mission H2O Groundwater Subgroup conference call to express these concerns.

ACTION: No action.

8. Mission H2O Virginia Groundwater Subgroup

The Committee discussed the Mission H2O Virginia FY17 Groundwater Subgroup work plan. In general, the Committee agreed that the Groundwater Subgroup is a useful resource and worth the expenditure of reserve funds.

In a unanimous voice vote, the Committee members present at the meeting agreed to participate in the FY17 Groundwater Subgroup work plan and expend \$10,000 of Regional Groundwater Program reserve funds to pay for the Committee's portion of the work plan cost. The HRPDC staff will follow up with the localities not present at the meeting for their electronic vote on the reserve fund expenditure.

ACTION: The Committee voted in favor of participating in the Mission H2O FY17 Groundwater Subgroup work plan and expending \$10,000 of reserve funds to pay for the Committee's portion of the work plan cost.

9. Regional Groundwater Mitigation Program Memorandum of Agreement

The Committee discussed the draft MOA for the Regional Groundwater Mitigation Program, which was distributed on 5-3-16 for review and comment through May 23, 2016. No recommendations for revisions or changes were submitted to the HRPDC staff.

The Newport News Office of the City Attorney asked about the intent of the MOA and expressed concerns with the language of the document and potential financial liability. The Committee reviewed the background of the program, the MOA, and the mitigation requirements of state groundwater permits. The HRPDC staff requested that the Newport News Office of the City Attorney send suggested language for the Committee's consideration.

ACTION: No action.

10. Other Business

There was no discussion of other business.

ACTION: No action.