



Whatcom County Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC) Meeting

JUNE 6, 2023

Members Present:

Justin Clary, Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District
Richard Whitson, Commissioner Water District 13
Ellen Baker, Commissioner Glacier Water District
Mike Kim, City of Lynden
Rebecca Cayen, Commissioner Water District 13
Dave Olsen, Whatcom Water System Services
Carson Cortez, City of Sumas
Steve Hrutford, City of Blaine
Rollin Harper, City of Everson

Staff Present:

Laurette Rasmussen, Whatcom County Health and Community Services
James Hayes, Whatcom County Health and Community Services
Chelsea McGlothan, Whatcom County Health and Community Services
Patrick Hull, Whatcom County Health and Community Services
Sue Sullivan, Whatcom County Health and Community Services
Richard Rodriguez, State Department of Health
Laura McLaughlin, State Department of Health
Krista Chavez, State Department of Health
Gary Stoyka, Whatcom County Public Works

Sue introduced herself and stated we need to nominate or recommend a chair to chair this meeting.
Rebecca stated she wants to nominate Justin Clary. Justin accepts chair position.

1. Introductions

The meeting of the Whatcom County WUCC was called to order by Justin on Tuesday, June 6, 2023 at 5:35p.m.

2. Overview of CWSP

Sue provided an overview of the Coordinated Water System Plan (CWSP) and there should be a consideration of an update of the CWSP. CWSP is a plan for public water systems within the critical water supply service area which was established by Council which includes all of Whatcom County. Certain portions of Lummi and Nooksack Indian Reservations are excluded. The plan contains population projections and compares water demands to water rights capacity to identify systems with adequate versus inadequate supply. Water utilities are given exclusive rights to provide service to the designated service areas and need to identify any changes. Utilities have sufficient rights to meet current and projected full build up and demand. Those with inadequate water rights, the WUCC, recommends several measures



such as interties and consolidation. CWSP also includes minimum design standards for water systems and these apply only to new or expanding water systems. It also outlines administrative procedures for directing applicants with development proposal that require potable water service in the unincorporated areas.

There was discussion of the update of the Comprehensive plan, scoping schedule, timeline of adoption, and proper review by stakeholders. If the comprehensive plan includes a certain amount of anticipated growth, the CWSP will include language of how water purveyors will serve areas assigned and potential coordination/ consolidation strategies, particularly in areas that are adjacent to one another.

3. CWSP Implementation feedback from WRIA1 Planning Unit and WUCC

Sue stated she reached out to WRIA1 for feedback and sent that feedback to WUCC. Sue synthesized and discussed what was in the WRIA1 document.

- Concerns about water associations – diluting contaminated potable water from other sources that meet standards
- The water district caucus impresses upon how the county should encourage systems to work together to meet future demands but recognizes that some systems may not be willing or able to cooperate in terms of resource sharing
- The environmental caucus discussed incorporating climate change in an update of the CWSP
- Adopting some water use efficiency strategies to meet goals
- Integrate land use planning and water resources planning

Sue stated the Ag caucus had some notes and she noted, the CWSP does not address agriculture use. They wanted to see guaranteed 18 inches of water for all productive areas of ag zone.

The group discussed how a water supply plan is a water demand plan. Some purveyors have water rights in a historically recreational area, but since COVID, the demand had turned into full-time residency use, with many working remotely. The group discussed recognizing the impacts of COVID in a potential CWSP update with a shift to more in-home use.

Other cultural/ community water expectations, especially in affluent areas include outdoor irrigation. Water systems have significantly less water available for new development due to this shift in expectations. In order to make up for an increase in demand, systems will have to rely on the exempt well because they will have less water available. This will have to be a factor in future planning.

A discussion regarding water consumption and in general, systems are the same or improving in efficiency as people are more water conscious.

Justin stated he would concur with the Environmental caucus's comments on climate change.

4. Nexus between PDS Comp Plan Update and CWSP

Sue stated target was to push out an RFP in January 2024, timeline being about 18 months, with limited funding. The update is expected to be minor, unlike the 2016 major update.

Sue provided list of potential updates:



- Update the demographics stated in the comp plan
- Include climate change planning
- Water use efficiency
- Receivership – strengthening the language and putting in place an agreement for receivership

A discussion regarding the rationale of the PUD assuming receivership. One member stated that the PUD is a county wide entity that has been able statutorily to operate water utilities. Another member asked for the legal reasoning.

Options for small systems that are struggling include consolidation and the Department of Health has grants available to look into consolidating systems. Grant funding for this will be opening up again in August 2023 and there are \$50,000 grants for systems to explore the possibility of consolidating versus non-consolidating.

Sue stated, lastly, how best to do a state of the union of the water systems and where we might prioritize that in relation to the demand or where the demand might be increasing related to development. If the committee is for this, how might we prep a study looking at the state of union of the water systems in the county to plan effectively for development in the county. Discussion regarding the inclusion of the Whatcom Water Alliance's efforts towards water conservation should be incorporated in a future CWSP update.

A discussion regarding emergency connections and where they are and a GIS resource with the Port of Bellingham. State DOH commented on a directive that shared facilities should be explored and recommended if feasible

Shared facilities meaning interties, common transmission means, storage. In the last plan those elements were addressed at some level, mainly interties or potential for interties and maybe that is something that needs to be explored deeper this go around.

A recommendation for the CWSP update was to keep the focus narrow as possible, limiting areas to address and amend. WUCC can make such recommendations accordingly.

5. Recommendations for CWSP Update

Justin asked for a motion from a WUCC member to request the county revise the CWSP with a focus on updating

- Demographics
- Water use efficiency – including climate change aspects
- System receivership/consolidations
- Overall state of the union of the water systems
- Focus on shared facilities component of the plan

There was discussion on what a “state of the union” inclusion means. In terms of assessing water demand, one of the best sources for getting a closer assessment of water demand and supply are the individual



water system plans. A good starting point would be how many plans are current in the county. In those plans is a 10- and 20-year view of demand and legal water supply.

One member asked for more time to discuss the above updates with their constituents before motioning to update the CWSP. An amendment of the original motion was as follows.

Rebecca motioned to recommend the county consider the elements in a potential CWSP update. Ellen seconds motion. Justin stated there's a motion to amend the motion. Rollin asked which topics that are a part of this motion. Justin shared the potential updates to the CWSP:

- Demographic section
- Water use efficiency section – inclusion of the climate change aspects
- Inclusion/review of receivership as well as system consolidation to the plan
- General overall review of water systems
- Shared facilities between water systems – interties, storage, transmission lines

Justin asked for votes on the amended motion. Amended motion passes with no opposition.

Rollin stated he appreciated the comments that were provided by the planning and other caucus' that went out to everyone and sees a lot of value in the topics that were brought forward.

6. Public Comment

No public comment.

Dave asked if there is something that they need to come prepared for at the next meeting. Sue stated she will craft a list, schedule another meeting so everyone's on the same page regarding what's being voted on.

7. Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 6:39pm.

Next meeting is TBD

