

Second Generation Plan CAG Meeting Minutes

Bassett Creek Water Management Commission

June 25, 2001

Attendance: John O'Toole (chair), Bridget Jodell (for Ed Cochrane), Alan Kuentz, Karen Cheseborough, Al Lundstrom, Rita Nystrom, Helen LaFave, Sue Weinberg, David Fellman, Lynn Schwartz, David Stack, Lois Eberhart, Karen Chandler

Meeting Handouts

CAG Recommendations for Public Education/Public Involvement
Focus Areas for Public Education and Public Involvement Plan

Preliminaries

Chair O'Toole called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. The meeting minutes from 5/21/01 were presented with no comments. Chair O'Toole reviewed the agenda. He repeated the purpose for the CAG, which is to develop an education program that involves citizens in the activities to inform the public of the goals, programs, and activities of the Commission. The CAG will also review and comment on the Technical Advisory Group's methods to measure the progress and success of the Commission.

At the May meeting, the CAG moved ahead into what the education plan would look like and had some questions for the Steering Committee concerning the message(s) to be communicated. The Steering Committee was sensitive to the issues brought up by the CAG, but did not feel they were in a position to give specific instructions and direction at this time. However, the Steering Committee does want an education program developed that would foster public involvement in the activities of Bassett Creek WMC.

Ms. Chandler handed out a list of recommendations made by the CAG that will be ongoing and discussed at each meeting.

One question raised was when does the TAG anticipate having something for the CAG to review. Ms. Chandler told the group that it is taking longer than expected for the TAG to wrestle with all of the issues and the TAG will need to meet at least two more times before a review product will be ready. One of the tasks the TAG is working on is to develop a program to "grade" the cities and the Commission on the performance of their duties.

Chair O'Toole announced that the future meeting schedule for the CAG is as follows: (1) a meeting in July; (2) no meeting in August; and (3) depending on the progress of the TAG, evaluate if a meeting in September is necessary. Ms. Chandler said the TAG will probably take the month of August to establish the method of conducting an ongoing performance analysis therefore the CAG would not have anything to review from the TAG until at least September.

Begin Developing Public Information and Public Involvement Program

Sample communication plans from Browns Creek and Scott County were sent to the CAG to review before today's meeting. Ms. Chandler presented three focus areas for the CAG to concentrate on as recommended by the Steering Committee. Each focus area has a goal. The focus areas are as follows:

Focus Area A – Bassett Creek Information
Focus Area B – Public Involvement
Focus Area C – Changing Behaviors

Ms. Chandler worked through the focus areas with the CAG to develop how the goals can be achieved, identify target audiences, etc. The target group will largely be the same and avenues of communication will be similar. In some cases, the messages will be different, changing with the audience slightly.

Focus Area A – Bassett Creek Information

What objectives are needed to inform and raise awareness of the BCWMC? Currently, the Commission is required to prepare an annual report. The CAG agreed that the messages for the Commission need to be identified. Watershed awareness/boundaries is important (where and what it is). In Plymouth, small areas within the Bassett Creek watershed are being targeted (e.g., Parkers Lake). Cities are doing their local effort, but those efforts need to be tied into the larger watershed as a whole.

The Commission's messages need to be identified to help tie into other cities' efforts. What does the public need to know? The general public may not understand the concept of how the effects of a watershed can affect a larger area. Communicating the activities within the watershed is important and informing the public that a board of commissioners exists and is concerned about bettering the environment. [Rita Nystrom] I like the idea of sending out a newsletter.

The group discussed the purpose and role of the Commission and how to communicate that to the public. They also discussed personal impacts on the watershed (e.g., dumping oil into the ground on personal property).

Chair O'Toole likes the newsletter concept because it would serve as a reporting function with contact information available to the public (key officers, telephone numbers, website information). The newsletter could contain a calendar of events going on within the communities, a "feature" section, a map showing boundaries and area details, and information about the Commission (i.e., how it is funded, activities, etc.). Another thing to think about is the regularity of the message (i.e., one time, weekly, monthly, yearly).

One CAG member would like to see more of the funds used for enforcing existing regulations and less on education. Chair O'Toole added that the Commission has permitting authority, but does not have authority to enforce regulations. Enforcement is addressed through the seven cities that are members of the Commission. The importance of the education component is to also raise awareness with developers and businesses that perform work in the watershed.

[Rita Nystrom] Cities are limited in enforcing some regulations or ordinances. For instance, phosphorus ordinances may be in place, but cities cannot enforce individual usage of phosphorus-free fertilizers. People need to know why phosphorus is damaging to the water resources. Social pressure helps to change behaviors where cities are limited.

In summary, regarding the message, the group agreed on the following:

- General information on what is the watershed
- The importance of the watershed and the Commission
- Where does the money come from? How is it spent?
- Accomplishments/activities (historical)
- Current projects and related activities
- Possibly developing a teaching unit for teachers as a way of reaching school children (at least general information) (Changing Behavior)

There will be “boiler plate” (repetitive) material that is repeated throughout other messages the Commission wants to communicate.

Target audiences would be broad for Focus Area A. Specifically, seniors, city council members, residents (not everyone is a homeowner), businesses, organizations, city staff, developers. City councils will be a key audience because that is where the funding is initiated.

What type of form should this message take? Websites, newsletters, brochures (handouts), local newspapers. Chair O’Toole would like to see a request for information form on the BCWMC website. Trade publications may be a way to communicate to developers.

Focus Area B – Public Involvement

Before starting this focus area, the group discussed how a project taking place in a neighborhood can be effectively communicated to the public so that citizens have an opportunity to offer input as part of the project.

[Al Lundstrom] Maybe projects need to be a stand-alone focus area (public involvement in specific projects). It would be beneficial to give the public an idea how much funding is budgeted for projects each year by the Commission.

The following information needs to be communicated in the messages for involving the public in specific BCWMC projects:

- What is the project?
- How much will it cost?
- When will the project take place? Timeline?
- What do I get out of it?
- Why?
- Where is the money coming from?
- What will the project look like when it is completed?
- How can I influence the process or learn more?
- Where do I plug in?
- What is the process that got this project started?
- Who made/makes the decisions?

The messages will always include “what is the Commission?”

Focus Area C – Changing Behaviors

What are the messages?

- Positive/negative impacts of individual actions at home and in the watershed (e.g., controlling milfoil). The public responds to stories of bad behavior (pouring gasoline down a sanitary sewer).
- Indicators of success
- Tie into general message about the watershed
- What is the alternative to positive choices we make (such as changing the perception of appearances)?
- Identify laws and regulations

The group discussed behaviors that have already changed (e.g., recycling) and how that was accomplished.

In the past, the Commission published a press release discussing the flood control project, miscellaneous newspaper articles, and annual reports. One suggestion made for people working online is to offer a

request for weekly updates on certain topics while visiting the BCWMC website. This is a low cost method of getting communications out to the public.

What will the message format look like?

Education in a box (stenciling toolbox) for scout groups, etc., classroom videos on why water management is important

How do we distribute the message?

Demonstration projects – neighbors-sponsored.

Enticement-something to draw people's attention. Awards/rewards for good behavior

Events

News releases

Coordinate and sharing the knowledge and information between cities and agencies

Remove barriers to reporting good behavior/communications

Action: Ms. Chandler will reformat the information discussed today. It's possible that the target audiences and delivery messages can be developed using the general topics discussed at this meeting. The plan will be revisited at the next meeting.

Next Meeting and Agenda

- July 23, 2001, 4:30 p.m., City of Golden Valley, City Council Conference Room
- Continue developing public education/involvement program