



Meeting Notes

Joliet Water Conservation Stakeholder Group Meeting #1

Date/Time: Wednesday, May 25, 2022, 11am

Place: Zoom

Next Meeting: 6/8/2022

Attendees: Allison Swisher (City of Joliet, COJ), Angela Knight (COJ), Heidi Voirol (V3), AnnMarie Grooms (COJ), Maria Anna Rafac (Joliet Junior College), Alison Paul (Conservation Foundation), Sharon Merwin (Resident of Joliet), Devin Mannix (Illinois State Water Survey), Joe Krischon (Resource Environmental Services), Janet Henderson (Images, Inc.), Eric Bernacki (HOA), Briana Moore (Will County Green), Mike Bryson (Roosevelt University), Kayla Jacobs (Roman Catholic Diocese of Joliet)

Note: Allison and Alison are referenced as two different people, with appropriate name spelling.

Item # Item:

Introductions, Icebreaker

Introduce Joliet Alternative Water Source Program (AWSP)

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- Allison detailed the purpose, schedule and program funding for the Joliet Alternative Source Program. The program is a regional effort to replace Joliet's declining groundwater supply with a reliable, long-term supply of treated Lake Michigan water purchased from the City of Chicago by 2030.
- In 2018 the City of Joliet began evaluating a transition away from groundwater as a water source as the groundwater supply is not sustainable. Multiphase evaluations were performed before selecting Lake Michigan water that will be purchased from the City of Chicago.
- The communities of Channahon, Crest Hill, Joliet, Minooka, Romeoville, and Shorewood are forming a water commission to provide the water to the six communities.
- Program implementation schedule: The program is currently in the design phase stage. The program is to be fully implemented in 2030.
- The program is actively seeking funding for the project. A commitment from the City of Chicago for favorable rates was acquired. The program also closed on a WIFIA loan for a low interest federal loan. The program has received federal grants including one sponsored by Foster, Underwood and Durbin and Congressman Foster is supporting another \$5 million in grants for the program in 2022.
- Joliet has taken measures to ensure water conservation by replacing water mains and improving engineering efficiencies. The focus of the group is to help residents conserve water to reduce their costs.



Water Conservation Stakeholder Group (WCSG) Mission & Goals

- Heidi introduced the mission and goals of the group. Water rate increases are an inevitable part of continuing to provide clean water to Joliet. The City of Joliet wants to help its citizens reduce their water costs through conservation and education. This informal stakeholder group will work with City staff to identify water conservation initiatives and educational opportunities.
- 2 • The goal is to create a Water Conservation Plan to present to the Public Service Committee on 8/1/2022 and to eventually implement the plan. If needed the plan will be presented to the Joliet City Council.
- The tentative schedule was presented and is included in the PowerPoint presentation (attached).
- Based on a group discussion, it was agreed that the meetings would be held virtually for now.

Deliverables

- Create a Joliet Water Conservation Plan
 - There was a discussion of renaming it to “Joliet citizens’ conservation plan” to reflect changes made by residents and homeowners rather than engineering changes to be made by the City.
- 3 • Alison and Kayla mentioned that it should be “Joliet *Residents’* Conservation Plan”, rather than citizen, to become more encompassing.
 - It was agreed that citizen was not the appropriate term. Another option may be the “Joliet Community Conservation Plan” to include the business community.
- Implement the Water Conservation Plan

Discussion of Water Conservation Ideas

- A list of water conservation, education, and cost saving ideas was presented to initiate a discussion of items to be evaluated for the plan.
- Attendance at public events to promote water conservation is ongoing. Representatives from the Joliet AWSP are attending a Joliet Slammers game, Star Wars Fest, and Kidzfest.
- 4 • Other ideas included: subsidies similar to the one for rain barrels and low flow toilets, determining sources of additional funding for residents or the City, recognize local businesses for efficiencies, water efficiency audits, shower timers, find and fix leaks, promote low flow and high efficiency fixtures, and encourage native plantings that do not require watering.



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- Joliet is developing a customer water bill portal that will allow water customers to monitor their usage, set notifications if usage exceeds the expected amount and can indicate if a leak is suspected. The portal will offer tips on how to resolve a suspected leak.
- Eric asked if there is a plan for businesses, rather than just residents. Business conservation ideas may be considered as part of this plan.
- Alison mentioned that reaching out to the schools about adapting water education into the curriculum would be a positive way to promote water conservation. She suggested a Joliet Area water challenge where a baseline of water usage would be determined and then develop a plan to decrease it. The winner would show the greatest percent of decrease.
 - Allison noted that there have been previous initiatives to supplement the curriculum, however, it has been challenging to get it implemented. She recommended that the group find a champion in the school district to help them implement this plan.
 - Maria mentioned that prior outreach to the curriculum directors for the public high school science departments had been successful but that she had struggled to connect with staff at the private schools. The issue is those individuals change. We need to reach out to them, and host a specific meeting, then we can champion a campaign in the same vein as seatbelts: sing the ABCs while brushing teeth but keep the water off. At the high school level, we could make videos, implement the Joliet Water Challenge, make TikToks, have an online presence. All to create a generation that can understand water conservation.
- Mike asked what the Joliet water usage is, to get a feel for how much is utilized by residential versus commercial and industrial. He also inquired about the water loss in the system. He also wants to make sure that we acknowledge the anticipated price hikes of the water program. The residents either do not know what's happening, or they know what is happening and they are intimidated by it. He wants to keep that in mind so we can give them contextual information based on how much they will be paying.
 - Allison cited the approximate 30% water loss that Joliet has, and the water main replacement program the city is implementing. She shared a chart from 2020, saying 64% of water usage is residential, 29% is non-residential. However, revenue from water sales to residents is only 59%, while the non-residential sector pays more. The water rate is slightly lower for a resident than for a commercial or non-residential user.
- Allison noted that one of the biggest challenges is reaching all people. The City has tried through e-blasts, mailing, etc. Some of the hardest-to-reach populations are non-English speakers, those that do not have access to technology, and seniors. The Plan should highlight a strategy to reach all. Kayla noted the importance of issuing information in Spanish. The group would like to develop neighborhood champions.
- To reach more people, Eric encouraged working with HOAs as they have efficient ways to disseminate information to residents. The City has already started working with the HOAs and will continue to build on that opportunity.



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- Eric recommended a rebate on recycling days, like Will County Green, and perhaps get an extra rebate on high efficiency washers or dryers, or dishwashers.
 - Brianna said their recycle events are typically for electronics, and they have a good turnout, but there aren't that many that recycle washing machines.
 - Allison said that implementing more rebates and subsidies is a focus. There's a requirement for water sense and new fixtures in new constructions in Joliet.
 - Perhaps this group could come up with other ordinances to promote water conservation, like sod bans. It was noted that ordinances like this could face opposition.
- Provide incentives, penalties and recognition for water conservation.
- Conducting free ISTC water audits for businesses and residents to determine water usage and opportunities for conservation.
- Graywater reuse is also a major example Maria mentioned. It's not currently allowed by Illinois Plumbing Code, but if we could implement that, it could take indoor water usage down by 40%. It's a much bigger issue, but it's a huge benefit if we stopped flushing drinking water.
- Directly working with businesses to help them conserve water, such as not immediately serving water at a restaurant, installing low-flow toilets, etc.

Homework

- Provide example water conservation plans
 - Suggest water conservation initiatives
 - Email them to Heidi (hvoirol@v3co.com) within the next week or so, so we can present the first draft of this plan at the next meeting.
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The meeting adjourned at 12pm.

The foregoing is considered to be a true and accurate record of all items discussed. If any discrepancies or inconsistencies are noted, please contact Angela Knight, the writer, at aknight@joliet.gov.