



Meeting Notes

Water Conservation Stakeholder Group Meeting #2

Date/Time: Wednesday, June 8th, 11am-12pm
Place: Zoom
Next Meeting: 7/20/2022
Attendees: Allison Swisher (City of Joliet), Heidi Voirol (V3), Angela Knight (City of Joliet), Stuart Dykstra (V3), Sharon Merwin (Joliet Historic Preservation Commission), Maria Anna Rafac (Joliet Junior College), Marian Francis (Resident of Joliet), Ann Baskerville (Sierra Club Illinois), Brianna Moore (Will County Green), Jeff Freeman (EEI), Joe Krischon (Resource Environmental Services), Wei Han (IDNR, Office of Water Resources), Victoria Watts (Images, Inc.), Eric Bernacki (Resident of Joliet, Clubland of Joliet HOA Board),

Item # Item:

Introductions - Icebreaker

Meeting 1 Recap

- 1
- Heidi reviewed the Joliet Alternative Water Source Program. The program will replace the declining groundwater source with treated Lake Michigan water by 2030. 6 member communities (Channahon, Crest Hill, Joliet, Minooka, Romeoville and Shorewood) will form a regional water commission to buy water from the City of Chicago.
 - As water rate increases are inevitable, the City wants to help its community members reduce their water costs through education and conservation.
 - The goal of the Water Conservation Stakeholder Group (WCSG) is to present a Water Conservation Plan to the Public Service Committee on 8/1/2022. Following that meeting, the goal is to implement the plan.
 - Eric asked if the plan is for all commission members, or if it is only for Joliet. Heidi and Allison answered it is only for Joliet as of now, however the other communities are invited to participate and the information will be made available to all of them.

Water Conservation Plan

- 2
- The ultimate goal is to put together, in simple text, a Water Conservation Plan for the Joliet community members. The Plan will be presented to the Public Service Community and possibly the City Council.
 - Heidi highlighted that the Plan should be actionable and not a wish list. The ultimate goal is to implement the plan. As such, there needs to be an evaluation of benefit, costs, and effort of initiatives to be included in the plan.
 - The Plan will not include the municipal improvements already in progress by the City of Joliet.



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Example Water Conservation Plans

- Heidi reviewed seven plans from other municipalities and highlighted the characteristics we want to see in our plan, as well as the ones we do not want to see in our plan.
- Bloomington, IN
 - The Bloomington Utilities Water Conservation Plan provided a list of conservation ideas, but did not include an evaluation of implementation, costs, or manpower.
 - Did include data about estimated water savings and an implementation phase.
 - Recommendations included notices to turn off automatic sprinklers and recommended water audits, school programs, leak detections, and peak water demand shutoffs.
- Elmhurst, IL
 - Elmhurst developed a comprehensive sustainability plan with limited focus on water conservation.
 - Elmhurst listed the conservation strategies and mentioned timeframe but did not discuss costs or manpower.
 - Visually appealing, a consideration for Joliet's future public facing document.
- 3** • Fort Collins, CO
 - Fort Collins prepared three separate documents: a water conservation plan, a water efficiency plan, and an annual report.
 - Program details were detailed, including: program costs, the number of customers impacted, anticipated water savings and labor costs
 - The plan also tracked implementation difficulty, which is important to consider
 - Some example initiatives: public education, usage tracking, native landscaping, and promoting water-efficient fixtures.
 - The annual report estimates the total annual savings of water conservation efforts by volume.
 - The community also developed the *Shift Your Water Program* which has actionable items residents can perform to conserve water. Examples: turning off outdoor irrigation system, performing a water audit, and shortening shower times. The program includes a pledge, and anyone with a signed pledge is eligible for prizes.



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- McHenry County, IL
 - McHenry County developed a detailed Water Resources Action Plan which includes a review of the County's data, water resources, water issues and land use.
 - The plan discussed the concept of conservation pricing—modifications to rate structure are being evaluated by Joliet's water and sewer rate consultant and will not be part of this plan.
 - Some initiatives the plan promotes: outdoor water use restrictions, promote native landscaping, rain water harvesting, graywater use, green building ordinances, support for high efficiency fixtures, check for leaks using water meters.
 - The plan made recommendations specific to businesses including one for food services industries and hotels.
 - The plan did not discuss costs, implementation, or duration of the recommendations.
- Naperville, IL
 - Naperville developed an environmental sustainability plan. The plan did not have a focus on water conservation. The plan clearly stated the program goals and provided a timeline and detailed workplan that listed funding sources.
- Oak Park, IL
 - Oak Park created a Water Conservation and Efficiency Plan. The community performed an extensive survey of all residents to determine water usage in different areas, and promoted reducing outdoor water usage.
 - Recommendations included: replacing older fixtures, reducing outdoor water consumption, and checking for leaks. Businesses are encouraged to replace spray valves, provided conservation informational cards and to utilize WaterSense irrigation.
 - They had a specific goal of reducing potable water consumption by 3.2%. The plan outlined recommendations and strategies. It did not detail costs or water savings.
- Will County, IL
 - Will County presented their Energy & Conservation Plan in 2021. The plan also included a survey of residents. Water Conservation was not a focus of the report.
 - The plan recommended water conservation education.



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Example Plan Discussion

Heidi asked the group to give feedback on any of the plans that were highlighted.

- Many plans discussed education, native landscaping and customer water portal alerts as initiatives.
- Eric liked the Fort Collins, CO sheet with labor cost, and such. He mentioned that since his HOA has sprinkler systems that draw from retention ponds, perhaps we could steer the source of others systems towards the same idea. When he waters his plants, the spigot draws from the retention pond, not from the building.
- Allison likes the Shift Your Water and the pledge and incentives for residents. The Joliet Rethink Water campaign can easily be used to promote water conservation in that way.
- Heidi mentioned it would be nice if there was an interactive feature to click on and ask, “how much water will I save if I do this?” If the water is converted into dollars, it means more than the gallon amount to the customer.
 - Eric asked if something like that could be built into the billing site or the actual bill. Allison responded that Joliet could easily add it to the bill, and they can do a water bill insert to get the message out. Emphasizing the correlation to cost will incentivize people to change their habits.
 - A calculator would be informative and may change behaviors as money matters to people.
- Maria Anna likes the breakup between indoor and outdoor initiatives. Toilets are the most indoor consumers of water. She also liked combination of outreach to residential and commercial owners.
- The EPA water sense calculator was mentioned as another resource—it calculates how much water is saved from performing certain water conservation techniques.
- Allison mentioned Ann’s idea of familiarizing people with their indoor plumbing, because most people don’t know much about their plumbing, so they can’t recognize and diagnose their problems.

Draft Plan Outline

- Heidi presented the rough draft outline.
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- The initiatives are broken down by Municipal Responsivity, (rebate programs, information campaigns, water conservation ordinances, etc),by Education Initiatives, (public outreach); by Outdoor Conservation, (restricting irrigation and rain barrels); and by Indoor Conservation, (high efficiency fixtures and checking for and repairing leaks).



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- Sharon suggested changing Homeowners Association (HOA) to Neighborhood Council, because not every neighborhood has an HOA.
- Maria asked if this was for residents only. Allison responded that the commercial sector is important, and it can be evaluated and may be included.
- Eric mentioned perhaps it could be as simple as updating ordinances for new construction. Allison responded that there are ordinances in place already. Potentially the City could consider bans on sod, or require native plantings for commercial developments. Jeff noted that in Joliet car washes need to recycle water and manufacturing plants need to utilize closed-loop systems.
- Stuart noted that the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) has a model water conservation use ordinance that may provide some guidance.
- Heidi discussed the inclusion of feasibility matrix to assist in evaluating the possible initiatives.
- Jeff suggested that the plan should include a section of the water conservation efforts that the City has already accomplished. The City has focused on the reduction of non-revenue water, it has rain barrel and toilet rebate programs in place, performed a municipal water audit, and implemented the recommendations in the audit. Allison agreed that previous accomplishments should be noted.

Water Conservation Plan Discussion

- Water Conservation Ideas Discussion – The current list of initiatives was presented and discussed
 - Angela presented Ann's ideas about familiarizing the homeowners with indoor plumbing to allow for better troubleshooting and maintenance to prevent leaks. She highlighted that Nicor Gas customers can receive a free indoor water conservation kit that includes some high efficiency fixtures.
 - Reaching people and getting them interested in the topic is the biggest struggle. Making sure the residents of Joliet see conservation information is part of the implementation.
 - Joliet is trying to encourage water conservation through public outreach events. A recent appearance was at Star Wars Day, raffling off a rain barrel and 150 entered.
 - The new customer portal, Sensus, can be programmed to set alerts for water use, vacation water-use alerts.



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- Adding subsidies and rebates, additional sources of funding for residents.
- Many plans encouraged native landscaping. Other outdoor conservation ideas include rain barrels, sprinklers, etc.
- Prompted by Heidi, Angela asserted that the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center (ISTC) does not perform free water audits for residents.
 - Maria questioned if we could partner with the plumbers' union to point out leaks and opportunities for conservation. Plumbers interact with consumers directly. Perhaps a program could be developed with them to promote conservation.
- There are green building practices that focus on water conservation.
- Jeff mentioned a restaurant education initiative. There was mention of pledges, water bill inserts, and more educational programming.
- Maria did a bit of research into the education aspect. In the school districts, there are curriculum committees and there are individuals that lead those committees. Arranging a meeting with those people could be beneficial. It is a long-term initiative, but we have a lot of headway we can make there. Gathering them together and letting the committee lead the conversations, as well as pointing out where good places are to insert water conservation initiatives into education would be productive.
- Marian asked if sewer and sewer consumption will increase in addition to the rates of water. Heidi responded that the only thing increasing due to the alternative water source program will be the water rate. Sewer rates are also evaluated annually and adjusted accordingly depending on the revenue requirements for that system.
- Marian asked if Joliet could write their own code for graywater use. Heidi responded that the Illinois Plumbing Code would supersede the municipal code.
- Perhaps a subsidy could cover plumbing help for low-income households? There is a program through Will County, Water Assistance, that provides assistance to Will County individuals or families who are threatened to have their water service disconnected or are delinquent on their water bill.
- Marian asked if people that have swimming pools could pay a higher rate—she was answered by Heidi, who said they already would be paying more because they would be using that additional water.
- Alison and Eric mentioned there is a plan for the DuPage Water Commission that is worth looking at, since they have lots of good information on their website.
- Eric asked if it is an actionable goal to push this out to other communities. Heidi said the first goal is to push it out to Joliet. The other communities are welcome to anything we develop and invited to these meetings, but it is not a defined goal to have any of them adopt the same practices that Joliet will develop.



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Initiative Feasibility

- The City team will take these initiatives and create a matrix and evaluate them against criteria the WCSG determines is important.
 - Current criteria: estimated water savings, implementation schedule, labor costs, program costs, difficulty of implementation, public support, and funding source.
 - Eric said it comes down to figuring out how to calculate all of the numeric values in the criteria.
 - Brianna asked for clarification between labor costs and program costs.
 - Heidi said a program cost was giving out shower timers to people. Going house to house, however, is a labor cost.
 - Stuart asked if it would make sense for “labor costs” to be “labor effort” that are then translated to program costs?
 - Allison responded that we could estimate staff time and cost, but there is the question of staff availability or whether there would need to be outsourcing. Fort Collins tracked out a whole cost to that.
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Moving Forward

The next meeting will be held on July 20, 2022. The City will send out a draft of the Conservation Plan around July 13, 2022 for review by the Stakeholder Group to discuss at the meeting. Members are encouraged to continue to submit additional water conservation initiatives and evaluation criteria.

The meeting adjourned at 12:13pm.

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