

CITIZENS' WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CWAC) MINUTES

November 10, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

Webex

Public Participation through call in number (listen only)

1-720-650-7664

Access code: 146 311 7675

Members Present: Janet Marlow (Chair), Tom Coker (Vice-Chair), Jay Campbell, Richard Eason, David Patterson, Angie Binder, William Gondrez

Absent: None.

Staff Present: Marshall Brown, Greg Baker, Jo Ann Giddings, Sherry Scaggiari, Dan Gallen, Natalie Brower-Kirton, Elizabeth Roberts, Gail Thrasher, Greg Hansen, Sonya Gonzalez, Jessica Roode

Visitors Present: None.

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The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

**1. Approval of Minutes – September 8, 2020**

The September 8, 2020 minutes were approved.

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**2. Introductions/Public Invited to be Heard**

None.

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**3. New/Old Business**

None.

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**4. Communications Update**

G. Baker stated, the Homestake Reservoir pilot project is still pending the State Engineer's final report, but that he hopes to receive it by the end of the month. He also advised that while there has been increased news coverage of water lately, it has not impacted Aurora.

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**5. Quarterly Financial Report**

J. Giddings reviewed the quarterly financial report, summarizing that revenues are up due to increased water usage and collected development fees. While expenses are a bit behind at

present, they are within normal margins. In addition, water connection and tap fee revenues that have been collected through the third quarter have almost reached total revenue of last year.

J. Giddings also stated, that in an effort to assist customers who have been affected by COVID-19 in any way possible, an application for financial assistance has been submitted for Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) funds. The billing and customer service group has also looked at resuming shut-offs for non-payment in the future, but they are working with customers to assist them through the current situation by providing several different payment options.

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## 6. COVID Testing in Wastewater

S. Scaggiari presented an overview of the Wastewater-Based Epidemiology (WBE) sampling for COVID-19 being conducted at Aurora's Sand Creek Water Reuse facility.

Per S. Scaggiari, Aurora Water is working in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), Arapahoe County and other state wastewater facilities and epidemiologists to sample and report on SARS-CoV-2 Ribonucleic acid (RNA) concentrations in wastewater influent. Pooled samples are collected by the Aurora Water Quality Control Lab at the Sand Creek Reuse facility and then sent to a laboratory. Colorado State University's lab is handling the samples for the CDPHE with any overflow testing taking place at Metro State University. GT Molecular is handling the samples for Arapahoe County.

Approximately sixty percent of Colorado's population is represented by participants in the study.

Aurora Water is currently drawing one sample, twice weekly for CDPHE's use and one sample weekly for Arapahoe County (Addendum: Per S. Scaggiari, as of November 30, 2020, Aurora Water is currently taking twice weekly samples for Arapahoe County). Accumulated charted data sets represent a trend of RNA concentrations not a specific number of cases. Between October 4 – October 29 concentrations of SARS-CoV-2 RNA has doubled over that time.

Wastewater-Based Epidemiology (WBE) sampling has been utilized several times in the past to assist with infectious disease detection for programs such as the Global Polio Eradication Initiative and studies which investigate opioid use in communities. In the case of COVID-19 detection, WBE is being used to complement current infectious disease surveillance systems, by functioning as an early warning system for disease outbreaks on a community level. In most instances, a person's body begins to shed the virus a couple of days prior to someone showing symptoms of the disease. By testing and charting the virus' RNA concentrations within the samples, CDPHE and other agencies may be able to receive early indicators of where possible community outbreaks may be taking place.

Funding for the testing came from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act via the CDPHE and Arapahoe County.

J. Marlow asked, when did Aurora Water begin testing samples? S. Scaggiari responded that testing began approximately around the end of July/beginning of August (Addendum: Per S.

Scaggiari, as of November 30, 2020, she confirmed Aurora Water began testing in mid-August).

R. Eason asked, will testing be continued for projects beyond the COVID-19? S. Scaggiari stated that she did not foresee testing continuing beyond the current project without further evaluations of the possible benefits continued testing would provide Aurora versus the cost prohibitive aspects of the testing itself.

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## **7. Godfrey Ditch Project**

D. Gallen presented an overview of the Godfrey Ditch Project which is located near Greeley, Colorado and due west of La Salle, Colorado.

Per D. Gallen, the river diversion project was initially completed in 1870 when the Section No. 3 Ditch Company built a ditch to divert water from the South Platte River for agriculture, dairy and milling purposes. There are two recorded appropriation dates for the system, one on March 10, 1870 and one on March 15, 1873, which totaled fifty-seven cubic feet per second (cfs) of water. In 1910 the ditch was damaged by flooding, at which point it was rebuilt by the re-named Godfrey Ditch Company. Extending approximately four miles in length, the Godfrey Ditch irrigated up to 2,000 acres of land at its peak.

As of November 2020, Aurora owns eighty-three of one hundred and sixty shares or approximately fifty-two percent of the Godfrey Ditch.

In 2013 there were significant floods in the area which caused the Godfrey Ditch river diversion to be essentially washed out. Following the floods, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declared the region a disaster zone which opened up funding for recovery efforts. On behalf of and with the support of the Godfrey Ditch Diversion board, the Middle South Platte River Alliance (MSPRA) requested funding through FEMA to rebuild the diversion structure. The funding obtained totaled \$2.4 million dollars in federal funding to rebuild the system. Between 2013 and the present day, MSPRA has transferred the grant to the Coalition of the Poudre River Watershed (CPRW). CPRW is now working with the Godfrey Ditch Diversion board to implement the construction project.

The scope of the project includes the following: removing the existing diversion structure, constructing a new diversion structure with fish and boater passage, restoring the natural floodplain contours, partially remove an existing berm to reconnect with the floodplain, grading portions of the South Platte River channel and conducting stabilization work, and revegetate the construction footprint, while removing weeds and phreatophytes. The time line for the project was broken down into three phases. Phase 1 was completed between June 1<sup>st</sup>-July 15<sup>th</sup> and dealt with fish passage and the riffle structures. Phase 2's time frame was established as July 15<sup>th</sup>-September 15<sup>th</sup> and focused upon the diversion and riffle structures. Phase 3 extends from September 15<sup>th</sup>-December 1<sup>st</sup> and deals with plugging the old ditch, creating the new ditch and revegetating the area.

Currently, the project is in the process of installing Obermeyer bladder gates and a sand gate at

the diversion and first riffle point on the South Platte River. The purpose of the bladder gates is to allow for safe and efficient operations of the river diversion. Resulting in increased safety for company staff and negate the need to move large pieces of equipment into the river.

A. Binder asked, how many shares does Aurora currently holds of the Godfrey Ditch and what was the percentage of the ditch that Aurora owns? D. Gallen advised that Aurora owns eighty-three of one hundred and sixty shares or approximately fifty-two percent of the Godfrey Ditch. The benefits gained from Aurora being a shareholder stem from the system's strategic location and its senior water rights, which reflect a more consistent yield versus some junior rights.

J. Marlow asked, what amount of water is currently being delivered by the system? D. Gallen provided that the ditch has an appropriated rate of fifty-seven cfs, that amount of water received from that amount depends upon how many shares the individual owns. Aurora's eighty-three shares represent approximately 29.6 cfs. Based on engineering he current consumptive use estimate of these shares are approximately eight hundred acre feet of water. This volume of water should service about 2,000 households. The numbers will be finalized in a future Change of Use Water Court case proceeding.

R. Eason asked, what ultimately will the City of Aurora do with the water from the system? D. Gallen advised that the city is currently in the process of conducting a couple of studies: the North Campus Master Plan and the Lower South Platte Master Plan. These studies are in the process of evaluating how the Godfrey Ditch shares, in conjunction with other shares that are owned by Aurora, can be utilized and accessed in the most efficient ways by the city.

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## **8. Environmental Education & Outreach Annual Report**

N. Brower-Kirton reviewed the 2019-2020 Environmental Education & Outreach Annual Report for the department.

This year, due to COVID-19, the education department needed to adapt to various restrictions in place that impacted their in-person programs. Current Aurora Water Education and Outreach programing includes: youth education, continuing education for teachers and education materials for the general public. Since its beginning in 1994, the water education program has seen a marked increase in engagement with youth via their programing, from five hundred students reached with thirty presentations during the 1994-1995 school year to 17,480 students reached with 397 presentations. And even with the various restrictions in place due to the pandemic, the team was able to maintain similar outreach numbers that were achieved during the prior year by reaching over 17,000 students.

During Spring 2020, modifications to the education and outreach programing were made to accommodate the shifting restrictions that has accompanied the pandemic. In person presentations for all audiences modified in a number of ways: some were recorded as WebEx based programs which could be accessed at any time, others were conducted virtually via multi-media platforms and where in-person attendees were participating, social distancing rules were applied along with a reduction in the number of persons allowed to attend a single event.

N. Brower-Kirton also highlighted Aurora Water’s role in assisting in the Statewide Water Education Action Plan (SWEAP). Participation stems from the, “Outreach, Education and Public Engagement,” goals of the Colorado Water Plan (CWP) through the State. People from across the state were gathered together to discuss what exactly is water education, what should be done in order to meet the goals outlined in the CWP. Aurora Water was a core collaborator in the creation of the plan and in 2020 Aurora Water endorsed the plan.

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## **9. 2020 Application & Interview Process**

G. Baker provided a reminder that the Committee will be focusing on application reviews and interviews at the next meeting. As with prior years, there are three seats open on the Citizens’ Water Advisory Committee every year that either need to be extended or filled.

Per requirements from the Council, the CWAC members must interview for all vacancies, including reappointments. Traditionally interviews are held on the Committee’s normal meeting day in December. This year the interviews will be conducted virtually on the WebEx platform. Currently, there are three submitted applications, including that of A. Binder. G. Baker has recently posted about the CWAC vacancies on NextDoor which means additional applications may be incoming.

In the past, the committee has conducted fifteen to twenty minute interviews which allows for seven to eight interviews to be completed in the evening. The Committee is permitted to review and vet the applications, select members for interviews and ask additional questions. The Committee does not have to interview everyone who has applied.

R. Eason asked, if he had been appointed to a one-year term last year? G. Baker advised he will confirm if that was the case and contact the committee members before the next meeting.

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## **10. Reminder – Chair/Vice-Chair Election in January**

G. Baker provided a reminder that the Chair and Vice-Chair elections will take place on the first committee meeting of the year in January 2021.

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## **11. Review Tentative 2021 Meeting Dates/Times**

G. Baker advises that the list of proposed meeting dates can be located at the end of today’s packet. He confirmed that the second Tuesday of the month still works for all committee members.

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## **12. Review Follow-Up Questions Generated at this Meeting**

J. Marlow asked if there were any follow up questions that needed to be addressed? There were

none.

G. Baker reminded everyone that J. Marlow requested for a presentation on wildfires and their effect on the watershed. He also asked for the committee to provide ideas for possible upcoming presentations to be made for future meetings.

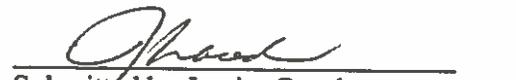
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**13. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

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Janet Marlow, Chair  
Citizens' Water Advisory Committee

  
Submitted by Jessica Roode  
Administrative Specialist, Aurora Water

Adopted: 11/10/2020