

MINUTES

Meeting of the Chicago Water Partners Advisory Council
(An Advisory Body to the Chicago Department of Water Management)
Tuesday, October 18, 2022

Held at the James Jardine Water Purification Plant
1000 E. Ohio Street, Chicago IL

Call To Order

The meeting was chaired and called to order by David Kohn, Deputy Commissioner for Regional Partnerships, Chicago Department of Water Management (CDWM) at 10:09 a.m. Mr. Kohn welcomed everyone, introduced himself, and asked everyone to please introduce themselves and to note their affiliation.

Roll Call & Self-Introductions

Meeting participants and representatives of suburban communities and water systems in attendance and/or affiliated with CDWM who introduced themselves were:

Andrea Cheng, CDWM Commissioner; Chris Lesniak, Water Superintendent, Bedford Park; Ben Daish, Finance Director, Berwyn; William Green, Director of Projects, Bridgeview; Wesley Barber, Interim Superintendent, Broadview-Westchester Joint Water Agency; Jason Zurawski, Superintendent, Brookfield-North Riverside Water Commission; Mark Lucas, Commissioner, Brookfield-North Riverside Water Commission; Gerry Surufka, Water Supervisor, Calumet City; Bob Frederickson, Deputy Commissioner, Calumet City; Lido Manetti, Water Dept. Director, Cicero; Tom Tomschin, Exec. Director of Housing, Cicero; Timothy Oakley, Director of Public Works, Des Plaines; Paul May, General Manager, DuPage Water Commission; Sal Stella, Director of Public Works, Forest Park; Rick Barger, Water Operator, Forest Park; Ron Maslo, Public Works Superintendent, Harwood Heights; Allison Swisher, Director of Public Utilities, Joliet; Joe Spain, Superintendent of Public Works, Norridge; Ramesh Kanapareddy, Exec. Director, Northwest Suburban Municipal Joint Action Water Agency (NSMJAWA); Ed McKee, Finance Director, NSMJAWA; Orlando Velasquez Sr., Water Operator, Oak Park; Mike Bills, Water & Sewer Superintendent, Oak Park; John Spatz, Advisor, Village of Oak Lawn; William Pazdzioch, Water & Sewer Superintendent, River Grove; Michael Cramer, Director of Public Works, South Holland; Steven Davids, Public Works, Stickney; Kathleen Henly, CDWM, Assistant to Deputy Commissioner Kohn.

Approval of Minutes

No prior minutes were presented as the body is in formation, communities/water systems are in the process of appointing their delegates, and no business has been conducted.

Committee/Working Group Reports

No reports were offered as formal by-laws to establish committees and/or working groups have not been drafted and adopted by the body.

Remarks of the Chair

Mr. Kohn began by thanking everyone for attending the meeting as the Advisory Council begins to organize itself into a functioning body. He said that Chicago is proud to be the premier water supplier to Northeastern Illinois and, together with the communities and water commissions that are part of the Chicago Water System, to provide the world's highest quality water to more than 5 million people representing forty-two percent of Illinois residents. He emphasized that Chicago deeply values the opportunity to provide water to all the suburban customers of CDWM and thanked everyone for being part of the Chicago "water family."

He briefly reviewed his role at CDWM, stating that he and Ms. Henly are responsible for managing Chicago's relationships with its suburban water customers in the newly established office of Regional Partnerships. In addition to supporting the formation and ongoing work of the Advisory Council, he said, they are the primary contacts for the communities and water systems served by CDWM and stand ready to help with any matters affecting Chicago's suburban water customers, including operational concerns, metering, billing, and any other issues that may arise. He said all Chicago water partners should not hesitate to contact him or Ms. Henly whenever the Regional Partnerships office may be of assistance.

Update on Advisory Council Formation

Mr. Kohn next offered an update on the formation of the Advisory Council and responses to surveys that had been sent to CDWM suburban customers to obtain feedback on initial questions concerning the body.

He reported that a significant majority of survey respondents indicated that they preferred to hold meetings of the Council – anticipated to occur quarterly during the calendar year – on either Tuesdays or Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. to Noon. Mr. Kohn also noted that a majority said they were comfortable with either in-person or virtual meetings, adding that because this new Council is subject to the Open Meetings Act (OMA), unless the Governor or the Illinois Dept. of Public Health were to declare a Public Health Emergency (which had been declared during the height of the COVID Pandemic but which now has expired), its meetings must be held in-person.

He also reported that several respondents expressed an interest in and willingness to host future meetings of the Council at their facilities, which he said was most welcome. He thanked Forest View, DuPage Water Commission, Norridge and Joliet for offering to host meetings going forward.

The survey results concerning the name to be adopted by the organization, he said, produced no clear favorite choice. Roughly equal numbers of respondents favored “Lake Michigan Advisory Council” and “Lake Michigan Water Partnership,” with several votes for “Lake Michigan Water Alliance.” Other suggestions included “Chicago Water Partners Advisory Council,” “Lake Michigan Water Collaborative,” and “Lake Michigan Water Authority.” To advance the discussion and obtain further views, Mr. Kohn opened the floor for comments and suggestions.

Mr. Kanapareddy said that since there are other Lake Michigan water suppliers in Illinois, he thought the organization's name should have greater specificity and perhaps include the word “Chicago.” Ms. Swisher mentioned that in earlier, informal discussions, she and others thought that including “Chicago” in the name might not be well received as the Council is regional in scope.

Mr. Kohn affirmed that CDWM had heard and understood this concern and said it was important that the name is acceptable to and supported by the partners participating in the new body.

Further conversation ensued, in which a consensus emerged that it would be appropriate to include “Chicago” in the name of the organization. A suggestion was made to adopt as the name “Chicago Water Partners Advisory Council,” which was one of the names proposed in the survey results. Commissioner Cheng mentioned that because “Chicago Water Partners” was the name of a prior consultancy group working with CDWM, the suggested name might produce some confusion, but said that if the name included the words “Advisory Council” that would probably be acceptable.

After additional comments had been offered, Mr. Kohn asked the group to indicate by show of hands if they approved “Chicago Water Partners Advisory Council” as the name of this new organization. **A majority raised their hands in agreement and this name was chosen by consensus.** Mr. Kohn thanked the members for their guidance and said that now that this decision had been made, CDWM would proceed to obtain a website address/URL that reflected the “Chicago Water Partners Advisory Council” name.

He next reported on members' responses to a survey requesting that they appoint Primary and Alternate Delegates to the Council. He said that many communities and water systems have appointed delegates but a significant number have yet to respond. He encouraged those who have yet to appoint delegates to please do so and emphasized the importance of all suburban water partners being represented on the Council.

He then reported that several communities and water systems had expressed interest in participating in a committee that will draft by-laws and rules of procedure for the Council. He thanked DuPage Water Commission, NSMJAWA, Joliet, Evergreen Park and Norridge for their willingness to assist with this important task.

Open Meetings Act (OMA) Compliance [5 ILCS 120/]

Mr. Kohn explained that the new Advisory Council is a "public body" as defined in the OMA and therefore must comply with its provisions. Among these, as noted earlier in the meeting, is that its meetings, in the absence of a declaration of a Public Health Emergency declared by the Governor or Illinois Dept. of Public Health, cannot be convened virtually and must be held in-person. Because the OMA states that such meetings are to be held at places that are "convenient and open to the public," going forward the Council will need to meet at public facilities that comply with this requirement.

He next reviewed other aspects of the OMA applicable to the Council. These include the requirement that meeting notices and agendas be posted online at least 48 hours in advance, that meeting minutes also be taken and posted (following approval at the subsequent meeting), and that an annual meeting schedule also be posted. He indicated that he is working with CDWM's IT team to fulfill this requirement by adding a new Advisory Council section to the department's website.

He added that while the Council's meetings generally will be held as open sessions, the OMA does allow for meetings or portions thereof to be closed to the public and media when necessary to protect sensitive or security related information, such as matters relating to "the operation by a municipality of a municipal utility." If a closed session is convened, the discussion must be preserved by audio or video recording.

He also advised the members that those appointed to represent their community or water system must complete the electronic training offered by the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Bureau at <https://foiapac.ilag.gov> within 90 days of their appointment and submit a certificate of completion to CDWM for its files.

Discussion of Future Meeting Dates

As the next matter, Mr. Kohn raised the need to identify the Council's 2023 quarterly meeting dates and opened the floor for suggestions. Discussion ensued, and consistent with the preferred meeting days/times conveyed in the initial survey of members, the following 2023 meeting dates were agreed to (all from 10:00 a.m. to Noon on the second Tuesday of the month): **March 14, June 13, September 12, and December 12.**

Old Business

None.

New Business

Mr. Kohn alerted the members that to assist CDWM with its strategic planning for Chicago's water system, he soon would be sending out a brief survey asking our water partners to share the flow rate data (i.e., the "peaking factor") of water they receive from the City. This information, he explained, will help CDWM better understand future system requirements needed to serve the City's regional water partners.

At this time, and on behalf of the DuPage Water Commission, Mr. May stated that he would like the City to provide greater specificity concerning the timeline for transitioning to the AWWA Cost-of-Service water rate methodology, information that is critical to their future planning and that he was certain would be welcomed by Chicago's other wholesale water customers. Mr. McKee and Mr. Kanapareddy of NSMJAWA agreed with this comment. Mr. May said that at the next meeting of the Advisory Council in March 2023, he would like to request that a representative of the City's Finance Department participate to address this matter, a request with which other members concurred. Mr. Kohn said he would convey this request.

Mr. Kohn again thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting and said that he, Ms. Henly, and everyone on the Chicago team look forward to working with them as the Advisory Council comes to fruition and begins to pursue its mission to enhance regional collaboration and provide guidance to CDWM. Before adjournment, he asked those members who expressed interest in serving on a committee to draft the Council's by-laws to please remain after the meeting's adjournment to briefly discuss next steps.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Council, Mr. Kohn asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Said motion was offered, seconded and approved by voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 11:11 a.m.