

**THURSTON COUNTY
STORM AND SURFACE WATER ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

**June 9th, 2023
Meeting Summary**

| Representative | Representing | Present (P) Not Present (NP) Excused (E) |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Jake Wager (Chair) | At Large | P |
| Edward O'Brien | At Large | P |
| Britt Nederhood | District 3 | P |
| Nancy Winters | At Large | P |
| David Hartley (Vice Chair) | District 1 | P |
| Zahid Chaudhry | District 3 | E |
| Phyllis Farrell | District 1 | P |
| Daniel Vlad | District 2 | E |

Staff:

Larry Schaffner, Nate Ensley, Nicole Ross, Corey Bennett, Commissioner Carolina Mejia

Introduction and Opening Remarks (*Jake Wagner, Chair*)

Introductions and brief backgrounds made. Noted why Zahid and Daniel were unavailable to attend.

Commissioner Carolina Mejia visited for the *Introduction* portion of the meeting. Commissioner Mejia addresses the SSWAB and receives an introduction to each of the members, their experience, and goals for the SSWAB retreat.

David discusses the limitations of bi-monthly meetings and wants to see a more comprehensive plan/policy for storm and surface water for the entire County that goes beyond responding to regulatory policy.

Edward shares that he has ideas about what to expand into or change depending on how the retreat goes.

Phyllis wants to focus on monitoring stormwater pollution and coordinating with Thurston County and other organizations, as well as addressing future pollution.

Britt wants to focus septic and water quality issues throughout the County, regarding which Commissioner Mejia mentions a recent meeting about septic seepage, which is accessible on YouTube.

Nancy mentions that stormwater is the biggest carrier of toxins to Puget Sound and wants to see the County invest in that rather than applying for grants.

Jake looking at evaluate the effectiveness of programs being run by contrasting with other jurisdictions, wants to better educate both SSWAB and citizens, and wants to meet more frequently.

Commissioner Mejia invited brief comments from each of the staff.

There will be a presentation of the outcome of the retreat from the SSWAB to the BoCC in August.

Commissioner Mejia thanks the SSWAB members and leaves.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Self-selection by members to breakout groups (*Jake Wagner, Chair*)

Jake makes the executive decision to assign members to the breakout groups himself. Groups and member assigns are:

- Stormwater Planning/Program: Nancy Winters and Jake Wager
- Public Outreach/Education: Britt Nederhood and Phyllis Farrell
- Capital Projects/Facilities: Edward O'Brien and David Hartley

Open forum idea exchange (*Jake Wagner, Chair*)

A motion to go out of quorum will be sought for breaks, breakout group internal discussions, and lunch.

Jake notes to Outreach/Education group to focus on how the SSWAB needs to be better educated in order to reach out to the public.

Time provided to members to provide their ideas on flip chart to each of the other breakout groups and review the various background maps provided by staff. Breakout groups received instruction to record on the flipchart pads using red to indicated high priority items, blue for medium priorities, and black for general ideas.

Motion to adjourn by Jake.

Nancy seconds.

Motion approved.

Recording ends.

Break

Breakout group internal discussion

Breakout groups commenced their individual discussions and captured their ideas on the flipcharts.

Breakout group presentations (20 minutes each)

SSWAB returns to quorum for presentations. After presentations, SSWAB will vote on highest priorities throughout the whole group.

Capital Projects/Facilities Breakout Group: David Hartley presents

High priority: concerning merits of the fee credit program. This does not relate to the capital improvement projects (CIP), but involves encouraging County to review the fee credit program for its appropriateness for businesses, business services, places of worship, schools, hospitals, etc. Not for residences. No current program to monitor CIP effectiveness unless required by a grant. Are CIP investments well spent and doing what they're supposed to do? Is the program proportionate to an expanding population and water resources affected by stormwater management?

Medium Priority: more public outreach to communities where capital improvement projects take place. Maybe create a presentation or offer ideas of how that would be conveyed. Educate more people about stormwater and stormwater management in general.

General Priority: Is the CIP program adequately resourced to follow through on Stormwater Management Action Plan (SMAP) actions? SMAP is the Department of Ecology-mandated program for Phase 2 permittees to define a focus area for stormwater plans to either improve or protect an area. What/how would SSWAB do about this question? Are we using existing CIP resources to meet priorities?

Public Outreach/Education Breakout Group: Phyllis Farrell presents

High priority: self-education and education for SSWAB members, particularly on the Equity Index and monitoring station maps. Hazardous algae blooms identification in lakes from runoff. Carry out outreach with stronger voice. Lawn care, use of pesticides, other education. Use of pesticides has gone up in 2022.

Generate ideas for how SSWAB members can reach out to their communities. Need help in how to do that. Suggested preparing a speaking kit that could be used to reach out. Suggested creating

talking points to use for engaging local organizations like Homeowners Associations (HOAs). Suggests coordinating with County to reach out. Need to increase effort to hear/learn about public issues.

Medium priority: Gain an understanding on pollution monitoring efforts between city and other organizations.

Maybe having presentations on coordination among regional partners. Looking for honest evaluation where they interacted or disagree and whether SSWAB needs to insert themselves to improve inter-jurisdiction coordination.

Stormwater Planning/Program Breakout Group: Jake Wager presents

High Priorities: intensify engagement with TC Comprehensive Plan & Stormwater Comprehensive Study. Expand performance metrics and determine what value are those metrics are. Further conversation for future meetings.

Medium Priority: Looking at how the County operates and maintains its own facilities and infrastructure. See if SSWAB has suggestions to improve these efforts. Having the money and resources to pursue these expanded programs. What is the amount of acreage receiving stormwater treatment? Consider evaluating forest canopy cover for a performance metric.

Discussing how to educate new SSWAB members – perhaps a mentor/onboarding partner.

Enforcement information needs to be added into metrics.

Lunch

Motion by Jake to recess for lunch
Seconded by Edward
Approved

General discussion

SSWAB reconvenes into quorum. Jake suggests prioritizing lists from the groups via vote, transferring the top priorities to the white boards.

Eight items selected in all. Jake suggests further narrowing or including additional items, if needed.

Adoption of mission statement, strategies and priorities; appointment of editing committee

SSWAB begins reviewing and discussing the resulting identified priorities from each breakout group as summarized below.

Stormwater Planning/Program:

Nancy suggests that addressing funding regarding rates and grants is not necessarily within the SSWAB's purview, that it is within the purview of the County's Commissioners and Planning Commission advises what the budget requirements would be rather than acquiring funding themselves. This leads into discussion about what is actionable by the SSWAB versus what is actionable by the County.

SSWAB would encourage staff and the BoCC to explore any and all grant opportunities, and SSWAB determines what they consider trivial and what is needed or already being done. Nancy asks what Thurston County spending is compared to other counties and other municipalities.

Action item for themselves is to get educated about the comparative needed support for stormwater programs that are underfunded.

Jake addresses the potential obstacle in not achieving greater performance with certain programs and activities and addressing the commissioners regarding the lack of resources for these programs, encouraging them budgeting appropriately for these resources. The discussion included an emphasis on SSWAB being concise and clear with their language.

If the SSWAB recommends increases monitoring, it then brings into question how to do that without the available funding. Currently the SSWAB has eight items to discuss bringing forward to the Commissioners and expanding the monitoring system and funding with it.

Phyllis suggests reviewing the entire County budget to see what room is for SSWAB, but Jake disagrees saying it is the SSWAB's job to suggest resource needs and the BoCC's to decide.

Capital Improvement Priorities:

Reviewing the CIP received the most votes. This flows into a discussion about the SSWAB reviewing the comprehensive storm and surface water study and potentially going to Commissioners with recommendations for greater support for the Utility.

Second priority was suggesting that when a CIP goes into the community, the scope of public outreach should be greater than what is normally provided. The existing focus centers around road closures, signage, mailboxes, timeframes, and details on the specific project itself. CIP project signage provides the opportunity to also include the project's purpose and benefits. Currently signs posted on these projects do provide this information, but only provided if the Department of Ecology or specific grants require them. Signage advertises public meetings under certain circumstances within a subdivision or neighborhood. Staff is currently trying to determine how to advertise public meetings in areas that are not located in neighborhoods such as a future project off Highway 101, and who the stakeholders involved would be. The goal is to work with staff to decide which projects to implement these strategies.

Third priority is investigating the completed project's effectiveness (i.e., are the intended project outcomes being realized). Some grant-supported projects require a post-project effectiveness monitoring requirement. Effectiveness monitoring protocols for all CIP types do not exist.

Outside grant requirements, no requirement for post-project effectiveness monitoring. SSWAB's interest involves only those CIPS that relate to stormwater.

Conducting a cost-benefit analysis of CIP and rate reduction (i.e., credit) program was not listed on the priority list but was mentioned. The credit program for some non-residential rate payers allows for discount for actions they are required to do now by regulation anyway. Larry says the staff has raised this issue too. Regarding the question businesses are getting discounts for doing what is required, Larry says that the discounts are based on inspection self-reporting, but staff suggest that this program should be sunset. One of the findings by staff involved the lack of participation in the rate credit program. Reasons include the rates were too low to justify the effort needed to realize the benefit to participation. In addition, for schools, the money saved went to general funds rather than the program areas doing the work to qualify for the rate credit benefits.

The County is utilizing consultant services for a comprehensive stormwater and surface water study. The effort includes producing two papers on topics identified that we wish to have investigated in greater depth, so the issues raised during this retreat could be candidates. SSWAB wants to hear about this study/paper in detail when the process begins.

The scope of the stormwater and surface water comprehensive study includes an analysis of revenues, funding needs, current rates and rate structure, and the effectiveness of rate system. It will also provide recommendations.

Outreach/Education Priorities:

High priority is outreach to County partner agencies and constituents which encompasses local communities, HOAs, community-run boards/groups, etc. Ascertain how the County intersects, coordinates, and supports WSDOT and Ecology's stormwater efforts. SSWAB wants to establish a two-way communication to assist with improving clarity and education between groups. This could involve reaching out to WSDOT and having them present, as well as communication SSWAB's process to others. One suggestion is to have a meeting between organizations that specifies one or two topics at the time and discussing the coordination that takes place between County staff and other jurisdictions. Outreach involves determining which agencies to reach out to with the help of staff. We can look to other counties like Kitsap to see how they handle outreach and education.

Another suggestion is for SSWAB members to reach out to local HOAs to join their meetings to present relevant topics and projects. Some HOAs are created, among other things, as financial guarantee for their neighborhoods to maintain their stormwater facilities. The discussion on HOA roles included financial liability, and how the County enforces maintenance on a case-by-case basis.

Jake asks how the SSWAB would like to proceed on the eight items discussed.

One person from each breakout group was tasked to produce written notes that will be included in the presentation to the BoCC on August 2nd. The SSWAB wants this work completed by the end of June to polish product for their approval.

Britt, Nancy and David assigned to write up breakout group notes.

David Hartley move to adopt all three breakout group key priorities.

Jake Wagner seconded.

Motion carried.

Adjourn

David Hartley move to adjourn (2:06pm).

Britt seconded.

Motion carried.