

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

**January 20, 2022  
Meeting Summary**

<b>Representative</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Present (P) Not Present (NP) Excused (E)</b>
Casey Kramer	District 2	P
Phyllis Farrell	District 1	P
Paula Holroyde	District 3	P
Jaclynn Simmons (Chair)	District 2	P
Britt Nederhood	District 3	P
Carla Sabotta	At Large	NP
Nancy Winters (Vice Chair)	At Large	P
David Hartley	District 1	P

Staff:

Larry Schaffner      Tim Wilson      Ami Peters      Nate Ensley

Guests:

Jake Wager

Introductions/Process/Correspondence (Jaclynn Simmons, Chair)

Introductions were made.

Public Comment

Jake Wager is interested in joining SSWAB. He recently moved to Thurston County in August 2021 from Texas. His background is in public service where he worked in Municipal Services for 30 years, including as City Manager for a small town in California. Jake spoke of his work for the City of Stanton where they were subject to the water quality board which was strict. One of his first tasks in his position was to deal with a \$130,000 water quality fine. He is acquainted with the topic but is interesting in getting involved in the community, contributing, and learning how this region works.

Amendments to the Agenda

No amendments to the agenda were made.

Meeting Summary

Phyllis moved to approve the meeting minutes for the November 18, 2021 meeting. Nancy seconded the motion. Motion carried.

### Utility Rate Credit Incentives (Tim Wilson)

SSWAB members had expressed some interest in learning more about the County's rate credit incentive programs, so Tim came to present on them to SSWAB. A review of these incentives will be included as part of the Stormwater Comprehensive Plan development undertaking.

There are two categories of rate incentives in place:

1. Lake Management District (LMD) & Special District Rate Reduction
  - Adopted in September 2002 – Ordinance #12829 (2002)
  - The driver – Commissioners had felt that lake management district furthered the utility's objectives by providing surface water conveyance systems.
  - Phyllis brought up Black Lake Special District. They apply chemicals to treat weeds. A resident posed the question; why are they getting stormwater reduction when they aren't doing anything for water quality?
    - This has been a conversation around Black Lake and the lakes that receive these rate reductions. Thurston County Public Works has been a part of these conversations since the lake management falls under their group. This question is ongoing, and Tim is working with Art Stary at Environmental Health to put together a Commissioner briefing on this topic.
  - There wasn't any accountability built in for these lake management districts previously, so code language was added to cover that in 2019.
  - Everyone who is a rate payer of the district gets a reduction.
  - When projects are being created, do water quality staff members go out and help lake management districts think through the projects using good outreach methods?
    - It varies. County staff are engaged when they can, but other times engagement hasn't been as good. In some cases, the community or steering committees are resistant to some of the stormwater utility's messaging.
  - There aren't any water quality metrics required to be submitted by the lake management districts. The language of accountability didn't come into the code until 2019. This is something we would want to consider during the Comprehensive Plan update.
  - Tim's slide #5 shows the breakdown of reduction amounts for each Lake Management District. The total 2021 rate reduction amount was \$100,098.14. To date, the County has only notified the districts of the 2019 code change and haven't held them accountable. The County is working with the districts they manage as well as the Black Lake Special District first.
2. Non- Residential Rate Credit Program
  - This part of the stormwater fee credit program began in 2012 as a pilot program. The program was made permanent with the 2019 code revision.
  - This program recognizes non-residential rate payers whose activities support the County's stormwater management goals by granting these parcel owners up to 50% credit on their stormwater rates and charges.

- Currently there are two school districts, one college, one governmental jurisdiction, one church, and one commercial business participating in this program.
- The total 2021 rate reduction for this program was \$55,548.76.
- There hasn't been a lot of outreach to promote this program in recent years.
- The State agency of Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction had worked with the County to promote this credit program to schools, but, as with previous attempts by the County, was unsuccessful in getting additional districts to engage in this program.
- David asked about the rate structure and what that looks like.
  - Tim mentioned that they are based on several factors and he would have to come back to SSWAB with more specific information on that. When you think of these types of programs and incentives, you are looking to further the mission of the utility.
- Larry added that schools are eligible for two different types of credits; one was related to environmental education program and the other one is similar to the one available for the commercial business for stormwater management operation. What we learned from the school-related credit benefit was the rebate went to the general fund. Thus, the staff doing the work to qualify for the rate credit didn't reap the financial benefits. With the two school districts on the list, it might just be a couple schools within those districts participating, not necessarily the entire district.
- Nancy asked whether the program going to continue?
  - Tim stated that there isn't any plan to pull it down. We hope to get feedback on these programs with the Comprehensive Plan development effort. To keep the credit programs moving forward, there needs to be a benefit realized for the utility.
- Nancy added that there might be a room for a project to integrate the ideas of Credit Programs, Environmental Justice Programs, and Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan. There could be a project for students to plant trees that equal their impervious surface areas. This could be done in overburdened areas to get stormwater management and Environmental Justice points.
  - Tim added that it is a good idea to engage youth and work across program areas. It will be considered going forward.
- Phyllis mentioned that with the rate reduction amount of over \$150,000 – what else could be done with those funds if this reduction wasn't in place? Entities receiving these credits should be doing these types of activities anyways and maybe we could use these funds to expand stormwater pollution monitoring instead.
  - Tim mentioned that this is something to consider going forward. We need to consider the burden of issuing rate credits on the average rate payer.
- Current 2021 rate reductions of \$155,649.90 represented only 2.23% of the SSWU total revenue.
- Tim went over some of the future considerations and questions included on slide 10.

- Explore rate credit programs and decide if they achieve the original intent of incentivization
- Do the benefits achieved align with SSWU objectives? At times there have been resistant to messaging. Is that something that will work going forward? Is the information being put out there consistent with the SSWU messaging.
- Is it more cost effective to perform SSWU functions in house with education and outreach staff?
- Does placing the burden of fee reductions on ordinary rate payers cause inequity?

#### Stormwater Management Action Planning (SMAP) Overview (*Larry Schaffner*)

The SMAP was a new obligation introduced in the Phase 2 municipal permit during this current permit cycle. Larry presented an overview of the planning process.

- One of the criticisms of WA State's approach to stormwater management is that a lot of it looks at site by site impacts through implementation of the stormwater management manual. The SMAP process attempts to focus on cumulative stormwater impacts from development rather than single sites.
- Ecology introduced the requirement with the intent of helping answer the following two questions:
  - How can we most strategically address existing stormwater problems?
  - How can we meet our future population and density targets while also protecting and improving conditions in receiving waters?
- Summary of the process
  1. Assess MS4 receiving water conditions
    - Not looking at all the receiving waters – just ones that could potentially be adversely effective from our municipal discharges.
  2. Prioritize narrowed list of these receiving waters
  3. Develop SMAP for a high priority catchment area
    - The expectation for this assessment by Ecology is for jurisdictions to use available information. They have the option to collect additional information. Thurston County has a lot of good available information. As far as the catchment area, Ecology describes it to be 400 – 600 acres or a scale appropriate to the planning process. Ecology put out a guidance document to assist permittees in undertaking this process.
- Assess MS4 receiving water conditions
  - These assessments are currently under way. The County's robust asset management program already had the stormwater infrastructure mapped out. Our Geodata office and other staff members are working on this now. We are looking at the municipal discharge receiving water conditions and assessing what the potential municipal discharge influences are to those receiving waters. For example, do the discharges receive water quality treatment and/or flow control? What is the nature of the conveyances (i.e., are piped or vegetated ditches)?

- The assessment examines effects from water flow volumes and the contributing area's land use and pollution generating characteristics as well.
  - The planning process examines existing conditions as well as projected future conditions.
- Results from the evaluations will be used to develop a narrowed list of prioritized receiving waters to consider in the planning efforts next phases
  - Identify the receiving waters expected to benefit most from implementation of:
    - Stormwater facility retrofits
    - Land management strategies that act as water quality management tools
    - Strategic SWMP enhancements and targeted stormwater management actions
- Develop a SMAP for the selected catchment area
  - Identify specific stormwater management actions to protect water quality in the selected receiving water
    - These could take the form of retrofits, identifying the need for a targeted education and outreach campaigns, land management strategies, and/or enhanced maintenance activities.
  - Determine schedule & funding for implementing those activities and projects
    - Short-term actions (within six years)
    - Long-term actions (seven to 20 years)
  - Establish a process to adaptively manage the SMAP
  - This periodization process is similar to how we evaluate candidate for stormwater capital facilities projects.
  - Nancy added that there are some opportunities for the SSWAB to give input on step two and three. Who approves this once it is developed?
    - Ecology doesn't have the expectation to review and approve these plans. The jurisdictions have to provide documentation to demonstrate they went through the process. There will likely be an expectation in future permit reissuance to develop plans in additional catchment areas. Ecology acknowledged that many jurisdictions already undertake similar programs, including Thurston County. This permit requirement was to provide a nudge to those who hadn't.

#### Overburden Communities (Larry Schaffner)

This is another obligation introduced in the Municipal Stormwater Permit this permit cycle. This one calls on permittees to evaluate how their stormwater management programs may adversely impact overburdened communities. The permit specifically calls for assessing effects from education and outreach programs as well as public involvement and participation. There various types of barriers, such as parts of the County not having access to fast internet service. This can make achieving effective outreach and engagement via remote means challenging. Another example are language barriers where English is a second language.

Larry has reached out to staff but also wants input from SSWAB to make sure we aren't adversely affecting these communities. What approaches should the County consider that would serve overburdened communities more effectively. This is going to be an ongoing discussion and conversation.

David added that this issue is multi-faceted and complex. We are trying to look at it through the lens of stormwater. The communities that this is trying to engage has so many challenges. Trying to do something about stormwater would be to work through organizations that are supporting these communities. To deal with this issue, we have to take advantage of existing efforts, such as groups that are already supporting these communities. There are church groups, food banks, and so many other groups that are points of access to underserved communities.

Britt added that financial incentive is going to be important to engage underserved populations. The possibility of redirecting \$155k out of the LMD project to do \$100k project that serve water quality or stormwater goals and the challenge would be the same that we have now. How would we get the word out about those funds being available to those willing to work with us on stormwater and water quality? The project focus could allow underserve communities to find a project that serves their environmental interests. They would have seed money coming from the County. This would encourage this participation.

Nancy added that there is a group called Interfaith Works that represents a lot of the faith communities in Thurston County. One of their missions is social justice. You might be able to ask them to take on a project to maybe they know a lot of this stuff. They run some of the shelters and take on other projects. Nancy sits in on those meetings and recently heard that they are looking for something related to the environment to do.

This topic could be set up as a SSWAB subcommittee.

#### SSWAB Vacancies (Jaclynn Simmons, Chair)

SSWAB members privately discussed Jake Wager's application and experience.

Phyllis moved to send a recommendation to the County Commissioners to appoint Jake Wager to the SSWAB. Paula seconded the motion. Motion carried.

SSWAB is unique among other County citizen advisory boards and commissions in that SSWAB has a pathway, by resolution, to provide input to the Commissioner on their member appointments to SSWAB.

David asked if there has been consideration to have a SSWAB subcommittee committee dedicated to recruitment and membership.

- Recruitment is something that SSWAB members should be currently doing as part of our community outreach. There have been instances where other community groups and advisory committees have reached out to support SSWAB member recruitment.

Larry added that SSWAB should consider reaching out through other community groups and advisory boards or have a subcommittee dedicated to recruitment. In the past, the County Commissioners have requested that there be a pool of applicants for them to consider in making appointments.

Nancy asked for some brainstorming for outreach approaches considering barriers presented by COVID and doing that through Zoom.

Phyllis added that people might want to know what they can do to help.

Larry pointed out that the SSWAB has done a lot to support the County. For example, establishing performance metrics, suggesting content for the SPLASH newsletter, and provided recommendations regarding the stormwater Capital Facilities program.

There was a discussion about having a subcommittee for membership recruitment, however Nancy and Jaclynn both wouldn't be able to run the subcommittee. David added that he doesn't feel like his roots are deep enough in the County to be recruiting people and he isn't able to lead a subcommittee for that. However, he would be willing to go to a group to speak on behalf of SSWAB and ask for applications. The goal would be to have a pool of applicants. David would be willing to try to do some recruitment in his area.

Jaclynn mentioned the local colleges and mentioned that is how she found out about SSWAB. Also, the Chamber of Commerce might be a good place to contact and get some business interest.

Larry added that there are a lot of businesses in unincorporated Thurston County that are also rate payers.

David asked about eligibility for being on the SSWAB. If a person lives in City of Olympia but owns a business in unincorporated Thurston County, can they still be on SSWAB?

Larry encourages diversity geographically and in perspectives to provide input to the County.

A person must live in unincorporated Thurston County to be on the SSWAB.

Casey used to be on the Chehalis board, and he would be willing to reach out for recruitment. Also, utilizing the social media folks of Thurston County to reach out again to let people know we have vacancies.

Recruitment conversations will be ongoing by SSWAB members during the general discussion portion at future meetings.

#### SSWAB General Discussion (SSWAB Members)

- May meeting may need to be moved due to member (Larry, Nancy, and possibly Jaclynn) schedule conflict.

- Remember to submit an agenda topic submission form to the subcommittee to review and find space for it on a meeting.

#### Action Items

- Larry will work with Jaclynn to prepare template for SSWAB member recommendation to the County Commissioners
- Casey will reach out to folks on the Chehalis board to look for SSWAB member recruitment
- David will reach out to folks for SSWAB member recruitment in his area
- Larry will reach out to communication folks to post again on social media about SSWAB member vacancies
- Talk about May meeting reschedule plan at the next agenda subcommittee meeting

**The next meeting will be March 17, 2022.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:34 pm