CITY OF FLINTLogo, schematic

Description automatically generated

Sheldon A. Neeley

**Mayor**

**WATER SYSTEM ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Wednesday, April 12, 2023  
5:30 P.M.-7:00pm**

**Friends of FPL Room, Flint Public Library**

**Meeting Agenda –**

Call to Order

I.          Roll Call

II.         Approval of Agenda

III.        Public Comment

IV.        New Business

1. Discussion with Scott Dungee, Flint Water Plant Supervisor
2. Possible: Discuss with Entrice Mitchell, Flint Sewer System Supervisor
3. Alert Flint
4. Discussion with Diane Russell, EPA

V. Old Business

1. WSAC application and nomination process
2. Setting WSAC priorities

VI.        Scheduling future meetings

VII. Adjournment

**MEETING NOTES**

Ben Pauli is audio recording the meeting.

Plan to use facebook live in the future

Meeting called to order at 5:39 pm

Ben Pauli - yes

Laura Sullivan -yes

Nancy Love -yes

Gena Smith - yes

Jaren Smith - yes

Lawrence Reynolds - yes

Shawn McElmurry - yes

Wendy Brown - no

Nayirrah - no

Agenda review

Scott Dungee present

Entrice Mitchell invited and hopefully coming

Diane Russel, EPA, expected

Agenda with changes noted: move LR, 2nd NGL, approved

***Public Comments***

LR:Recent water main break resulted in relatively rapid dissemination (text, on TV). Acknowledged improvement in the timing of information flow to the community.

***New Business***

* Scott Dungee, Flint Water Plant Supervisor
* Line break
* Chemical feed building online, undergoing fine tuning, makes operations easier
* Dort well renovated, pump station is in service for 30 days, 95% done.
* Elevated tower construction plans underway, then will be publicized prior to work starting
  + power wash
  + repaint exterior, letter it
  + adding mixers inside
  + inside is total renovation to todays standards (last renovation in 2012)
* Q&A: What is the consequence of the tower being out of service for 2 months? (BP)
  + Trying to anticipate the problems
    - all safety precautions will be in place before tower is taken out of service
    - have evaluated all
    - have worked with service center (distribution center staff) and city engineer to
    - 2 summers ago had elevated tower out of service for 5 days and had 12 water main breaks during that time. They were random and not necessarily due to tower.
    - Have to determine where the pressure relief units are placed.
    - Pressure relief values are manual and so will require manual monitoring. Will have to be added to the current work load of field crew.
    - 4 pressure devices throughout City of Flint.
  + RFP includes needing 6 pressure relief devices to be put on the system to reduce pressure to avoid main breaks
  + now have vfd pumps (varying speed) so can maintain pressure better in distribution system
  + anticipate main breaks during 2 month period
* Q&A: Is it wise to be taking the tower down during warmer weather when more water used? (LS)
  + Yes, the “main break season” is the winter; fewer main breaks in the summer
  + State has mandated that the city do this work, and the city determined that this is the best time.
  + Cedar Street will be back in service before the tank is taken down?
* Q&A: Should the community reduce usage? (BP)
  + No limit on amount of water. Issue is the PRESSURE of the water.
  + None of the sites in the city have low chlorine and bacteria per Scott
* Q&A: How many homes have to have a problem to convince the water utility that this is not the time to shut down the elevated tower? (LS)
* Q&A: Federal emergency order (ACO) that mandates to do a number of updates. Must be completed by Dec 31, 2023. Already on a one year extension. No more extensions. Clarification with BP
* Q&A: Two storage reservoirs that do not provide pressure (SM)
  + Cedar and Dort are both 20 MG each
  + elevated reservoir has been in place in 1952 when the city was making water.
* Q&A: Will there be power blasting on the outside? Will they use full containment and ambient air monitoring? (Peter ??)
  + Yes. Full containment when external blasting happens (only occurring at the top of the tank)
  + Last time maintained / painted is 2008
* Q&A: Worried about low pressure events, etc during this
  + Have you had incidents where you need to add more chlorine? No - using routine chlorine dosing right now.
* Q&A: Used to have 50% leakage. (BP)
  + It has improved and is less than that.
  + Former study found 300 leaks.
  + Follow up: didn’t # breaks increase? Yes, referred to 2016 where pipes went through a lot.
* Q&A: Under prior governor, there was discussion about replacing the entire system. Now, no such discussion. Emphasized need to get it done under this budget or it won’t get done.
* Q&A: What are the biggest issues that the water system needs to have addressed beyond Dec? (BP)
  + Water mains.
  + every summer use 35 automatic flushers and place in places where they have complaints or WQ issues or known problems.
  + one 4” main that goes to a dead-end with one house
* Q&A: When discussing 120” break, discussed problems getting some valves to open/close. Have all valves been exercised?
  + Yes.
  + 500,000 gpd from county - just to keep fresh, but if need more flow have to go to county, they have to open valve (flint doesn’t have control of it)
  + Flint exercising valves that are 15 years old or less. Anything old, no because they do not want them to break. There was an attempt in 2017 or so to test the valves and if failed then replaced then.
  + Unclear if they have a valve replacement plan for the old valve.
  + ***ACTION:* This committee would like to see the list of valve inventory - what are the valves, their age, their status?**
* Q&A: How can this committee help you? We believe we can help the water utility but we do not have a good record of information flow to the committee. How can we change that? (SM) Then, (BP) added: we have ears around the community that can help the utility and sometimes the utility wants to get information out that we can help them frame how to do that effectively. We are looking for ways to build a bridge in a two directional way between the utility and WSAC. Also leads to confidence building. Helps define pathways when people can feel heard. Not intended to be accusatory or judgemental but want to make the relationship more substantive. (LR added):
  + Would it be reasonable to advise people to have 3 gallons of water before repairs. Fill the bathtub with water for flushing toilets.
  + Messaging is tricky
  + Gena and Ben had tour of water treatment plant. Scott has offered to open treatment plant for tour and meeting. WTP is now a black box to community
  + ***ACTION***: Follow up conversation with Scott on how to improve communication and partnering opportunities. (Katie the publication person)
  + Laura: would it be possible to in advance with a website providing daily updates ? First what is happening, 2nd that it is being monitored. Show that the utility is worried about main breaks and taking many steps to try and prevent such events from happening.
* Concerns raised about the emergency communications system (AlertFlint) by members of council and social media…people thought it would be an emergency alert system, over the weekend they received an alert about an easter egg hunt. There are multiple reasons not to use for other business, people may be less likely to signup or more likely to unsubscribe and (2) there is concern that people will be desensitized. Concern that this will be used by mayor as political messaging system
  + Mayor Neeley Response: “Alert Flint is part of a holistic communications strategy to engage our community. Alert Flint enhances our communications and broadens the reach of accurate information about City of Flint government. All alerts go through the Mayor's Office, via the Communications Director.

Yes, Alert Flint is an important tool for emergency situations. It is also an important tool for communicating general city services messages, to be used alongside traditional media tactics like press releases, press conferences, social media, and the city website.

We are carefully tracking analytics to ensure that we are not overwhelming residents with too many messages. People can disengage from this voluntary system at any time, but so far, we have only seen engagement increase with each alert message we have deployed. We will definitely continue to use all available tools to communicate with residents about non-emergency situations, especially city services.

This week, we used Alert Flint to communicate about the detour routes for Saginaw St. during the brick restoration and infrastructure project. This isn't an emergency situation, but it's useful information for residents, and we will continue to use Alert Flint in this way.”

* + Website that says community updates and emergency notices are goal of AlertFlint.
  + Can we recommend that city modify to provide means for subscriber to opt in/out of specific messages (i.e., can get emergency, can opt out of community updates)?
    - ***ACTION: Committee consensus to recommend this change, and make sure that “emergency notification” can be a distinct option to opt-in for***
    - Alert system was used appropriately during water main break

Ben: Logistics are extremely challenging, printed on home printer, etc. Getting really worn out. Faith has been trying but stretched very thin. Not a single city person attending. How do we take the good work and discussions happening at council meetings and getting it both into the community and getting community input into the council? Ben Pauli apologized for how he broached the idea of getting a facilitation contractor but much of it was motivated by desperation. Wants to make sure we are effective for the community. With that, Diane can talk about opportunity:

* **Diane Russell, USEPA agenda item**
  + EPA offered to provide funds to hire an outside contractor with expertise to assist with logistics.
  + Contracts through headquarters - usually used through superfund program. Helpful for community groups to facilitate discussions and maintaining consistent sharing information.
  + Recognizes the council is voluntary, and is trying to bring community engagement resources to support these voluntary efforts.
  + we can select from menu of options for services we wish to utilize and we can revoke at anytime
  + Diane wrote project context
  + Discussed the contract.
  + Anticipated tasks would be done by the people hired.
  + Q&A: residents of Flint are still in a lawsuit with EPA. How do we ensure the Facilitation Support is independent and not under the control of the USEPA?
  + Community advisory groups (CAGs). EPA does not select who is on CAGs and they often disagree with each other.
  + Committee has not been successful in getting City of FLint officials to respond. A professional whose job it is to do this may change dynamic.
  + Jeanna - main contractor is Eastern Research Group (ERG) that will extend contract. More coordination with advisory council.
  + ***ACTION:*** Project goals, project tasks, Project context, work products, qualifications of provider are all editable.
  + Process for selecting contractor? What would the council's role be? Dianne believes we may be able to assist with reviewing applicants. Dianne will confirm with contracting to determine what role we council can play.
  + What is EPA’s role in the current order (as in the elevated water tower)? EPA is very much involved because of the emergency order. Once this ends, the state will be the primacy agency once the order ends.
  + There was a meeting with the utility, state and USEPA enforcement team this morning.
  + Q&A (LR): We exist because of the LCR. There is supposed to be a state water council. There should be someone overseeing water councils. Someone from EGLE is supposed to be supporting the council. Ben tried for months to get this person to attend but they stopped responding.
  + This contract is funding from USEPA. Does city need to approve? No, per Diane.
  + By state law, no requirement to have WSAC council go through city council processes to get council members.
  + LR suggests that we should inform the mayor just to do our due diligence (tell them “fyi: here is what we are going to do”. If the mayor says no, then we can go to the state. If they do not respond, then go to the USEPA and say we want support to complete this.
  + Dianne: she could execute this contract without approval of City of Flint.
  + ACO did mandate that some committee (FWIC) had to serve in emergency management group.
  + ***ACTION:*** Dianne will send to word document to Ben. Ben will circulate word document for edits.
* Issues with city not agreeing to all nominees that have been put forth. Need to understand what is going on and impact on the credibility of the Council.
* City charter is driving the process of nomination, city council vote, and onboarding for the council.
* People nominated are waiting months
* Tasks - next agenda:
  + review guidance for WSAC
  + move contract forward

