

CHESAPEAKE BAY AND WATER RESOURCES POLICY COMMITTEE WEBINAR SUMMARY-DRAFT

May 15, 2020

LINK TO ALL MEETING PRESENTATIONS AND MATERIALS:

<https://www.mwcog.org/events/2020/5/15/chesapeake-bay-and-water-resources-policy-committee/>

1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLE CALL

2. CBPC MEETING SUMMARY APPROVAL

Members approved the draft summary of March 2020 CBPC webinar.

3. WATER UTILITY MANAGEMENT AND MESSAGING DURING COVID-19

Dave McDonough, WSSC Water, shared highlights of WSSC Water operations and public messaging during COVID-19.

- There has been regional covid-19 coordination, including with Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, who are served by WSSC Water (1.8 M customers)
- WSSC Water is using FEMA's incident command process, which is normally implemented for short-term incidents.
- Internal WSSC Water has formed 3 task forces:
 - Personnel
 - Policies for covid-19
 - Maintaining operations, safety for employees (PPE, cleaning and sanitizing workspaces), managing illness
 - Remote operations: Functional telework
 - Teleworking has been going very well and the call center metrics have shown positive customer response.
 - WSSC Water has had live stream events with all 2300 employees; has weekly communications; and is coordinating messaging with county partners.
 - Revenue and billing task force
 - Tracking federal, state and local covid-19 legislation, including fiscal support for customers.
 - Communications with customers about affordability and potentially higher water bills.
 - Tracks costs, makes financial projections, and is developing a WSSC Water savings plan
 - "New normal" task force to integrate all of these spheres.
- Public messaging has focused on: Safety and reliability of tap water, keeping wipes out of pipes, and water conservation to keep bills down, beware of water scammers, as well as appreciation for the essential water and wastewater employees.

Member discussion

- Is WSSC tracking covid-19 in wastewater? WSSC Water has had a conversation with an area university and would be eager to participate in the study, both to contribute to the science and to understand worker exposure.
- Question on affordability. WSSC Water has a page on their website,

wsscwater.com/assistance, with more information on affording water and sewer bills and payment plans.

- A member asked a question on rate increases. WSSC Water is projecting a \$148 M loss in revenue due to covid-19, so they will have targeted cuts. If anyone would like more information, Mr. McDonough said he can put them in touch with the right people.

4. AG TASK FORCE UPDATE

A. Lindsay Smith presented local and regional efforts to support growing food security and food system resiliency concerns.

Ms. Smith highlighted ways local leaders could help:

- Support food banks, food pantries, and other food providers with financial contributions, volunteer services.
 - Remember providers serving especially vulnerable populations (i.e. Latinx communities)
- Support stronger safety net programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) - The HEREOS Act in Congress would increase SNAP benefit levels by 15% - and food policy advocates like DC, MD, and VA Hunger Solutions.
 - SNAP is proven program that supports people to get the food they need and invests dollars back into the retail economy.
 - Benefit levels need to be increased.
- Make connections to the regional food economy when possible (i.e. farmers, food hubs, restaurants)
 - Invest in coordination of food assistance, technical assistance and other services to farmers, food entrepreneurs, and restaurants. This can help address food insecurity and economic recovery. Some of our region's local food councils and initiatives like the Mid-Atlantic Food Resilience and Access Coalition are playing these important roles.
- Use an equity lens. Some minority farmers and organizations serving low-income communities of color are experiencing inequities in their ability to respond to needs.

B. Councilmember Craig Rice reviewed some Montgomery County initiatives:

- Montgomery County outlined three basic needs: clothing, food and shelter. The county has worked to eliminate evictions due to difficulty making mortgage and rent payments. Those who have never been food insecure have found themselves in that situation; this is in addition to those who already were food insecure.
- Montgomery County has more than 160,000 students in school system and 35% qualify for free and reduced meals. MCPS has established many meal distribution locations in the County.
- There have been 600,000 unemployment claims filled in Maryland. Over 200,000 unemployment applications have yet to be processed by Maryland, so those individuals are without income.
- Need to support SNAP benefits and support our local agricultural producers. The county has created new Food Security Task Force to coordinate response:
 - Operationalizes *COVID-19 Pandemic Food Security Response Strategy*
 - Made new funding available to emergency food assistance providers and others
 - On-going collaborations between public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders to support food and nutrition needs of residents.

C. Councilmember Rice stated that the CBPC Ag and Food Task Force has been working

diligently for almost a year to bring the Ag & Food Commission to fruition. While it was important before covid-19, the pandemic has shown how food security is even more important. Councilmember Rice encouraged members to follow through with the financial commitments they made at the March meeting, saying we realize this will be tough, given that city and county budgets are strapped. However, these are necessary investments to build our resiliency to carry us through this pandemic—we need to develop innovative ways to address food insecurities for our region.

Member discussion

- Chair Stehle echoed that covid-19 has highlighted the importance of the region's ag and food security and shown that leadership and progress falls to local governments.
- Councilmember Rice asked members to continue with their financial commitment to continue to stand up the Commission. For example, Montgomery County had to examine sources of funds coming from their department of environment and food council. He said by date certain (next week or two), COG will need a commitment.

5. CBPC PAPER COMPETITION PRESENTATIONS

Chair Stehle set the stage for the presenters. He said this was the inaugural Paper Competition. He was encouraged by former Chair Dyballa to follow his ambitions to create this Competition to engage with the next generation. He said the competition was successfully launched and completed during covid-19. Chair Stehle thanked the judges, including Vice Chair Laurie-Anne Sayles, and John Reich, who is with the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research. He congratulated all of the students that applied and shared their ideas, and thanked Dr. Meredith Epstein, University of Maryland Institute for Applied Agriculture, who encouraged her students to submit papers for the Competition. The two top authors have been invited to present today.

A. Hailey Clark, University of Maryland Institute of Applied Agriculture, Farmland Preservation Policies

- Award Winner
- A 4th generation dairy farmer, but she plans to go into hemp farming.
- Her presentation focused on ag land preservation.

B. Ann Prevas, University of Maryland School of Law, Smart Growth and Urban Agriculture Policies

- Studying environmental law
- Presentation focused on incentivized priority area zones for urban agriculture—to target food security and bring opportunity to residents and students who normally wouldn't have time opportunity.

Member discussion

- A member asked how their generation can be encouraged to get involved in agriculture. Both Ms. Clark and Ms. Prevas said their interest started young, for Ms. Clark through 4H and growing a lima bean plant, and for Ms. Prevas, through her school. They both said it is important for students to have the opportunity to visit local farms and experience ag firsthand. Councilmember Rice said urban agriculture allows for students not normally exposed to agriculture to try it.

6. STAFF UPDATES

Heidi Bonnaffon and Karl Berger, COG staff

A. "Major Watersheds of the COG Region" map overview

Heidi Bonnaffon presented the online major watersheds map with clickable sub-watersheds. She asked members of the committee if there was additional information they would like to

see in the popup windows in the future. Several members said impervious surface percent cover would be useful information.

B. Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week (CBAW) (June 6-14) outreach preparations

Heidi Bonnaffon walked members through the CBAW Outreach Plan, noting that June 6 was focused on the Potomac River and noted Shannon Moore's #BayinYourBackyard hashtag and theme for local trash clean ups, etc. There is a sample Proclamation in the Outreach Plan. She said our region has been top in the Bay watershed for resolutions and on social media and she hoped this year would be the same.

C. Briefing about inclusion of climate change in state watershed implementation plans (WIPs)

- Karl Berger briefed members that the Bay Program has been modeling how climate change is predicted to impact dissolved oxygen in the Bay watershed, Overall, climate change is expected to negatively affect dissolved oxygen in the deeper waters of the Bay, which is the key driver of the level of nutrient and sediment reduction required by the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load.
- Virginia and the District of Columbia have already planned for the additional nutrient and sediment reductions to mitigate climate change in their Phase III WIPs, while Maryland will need to plan for additional reductions in its 2021 milestones. The general level of effort likely to be needed by the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia is detailed in the General Updates.
- Potential talking points for the September 25th CBPC Forum – to be discussed at the July 17 committee meeting – are:
 - Whether loads from wastewater treatment plants, which are largely unaffected by climate change, should figure into the process by which the Bay Program will allocate responsibility for climate change mitigation.
 - Whether the additional reductions to mitigate climate change impacts should be achieved by 2025 or lengthened out beyond 2025.
 - Note covid-19 impacts on local budgets and how that will impact the ability to meet the planned WIP III reductions, particularly in stormwater.
- The CBP's Principals' Staff Committee is slated to make climate change decisions in late 2020 or early 2021. The September Forum affords an opportunity to engage with the principals or their delegates.

7. MEMBER UPDATES

- Councilmember Jackson shared that Virginia Tech and City of Alexandria have a partnership for Virginia Tech's upcoming innovation campus, called "Tech on Tap" formerly at Port City Brewery. The April session was on gardening. This month, May 28, they will hold a session on food distribution on May 28. Here is a link to a recent covid-19 report as well <https://aaec.vt.edu/extension/resources.html>
- J. Davis said that 75% of the city's recreational revenue is received March through August, so Greenbelt's and others' budgets are hurting.
- Supervisor Gross Chesapeake Bay Stakeholder Advisory Group is scheduled virtually for June 4. She is concerned that anything environmental has been getting short shrift and need to make a push that even during a pandemic the environment should not be pushed aside, and other members echoed this.
- Chair Stehle mentioned that next week COG will share a link for COG apparel. Here is the link: <https://www.logosoftware.com/shareandsell/?store=mwcog>
- COG will tweet about the Paper Competition award winner.

8. WEBINAR ADJOURNMENT

Chair Stehle adjourned the webinar at 12:00 p.m., reminding members that there is a CBPC special planning session scheduled for June 12 to discuss plans for the remaining 2020 meetings.

ATTENDANCE

Members and Alternates:

Amy Jackson, Alexandria
Cindy Dyballa, Takoma Park
Craig Rice, Montgomery County
Dan Sze, Falls Church
J. Davis, Greenbelt
Jon Stehle, Chair, City of Fairfax
Kenny Boddye, Prince William County
Laurie-Anne Sayles, City of Gaithersburg
Libby Garvey, Arlington County
Maria Mackie, College Park
Mary Cheh, District of Columbia
John Boland, District of Columbia
Penny Gross, Fairfax County
Ross Litkenhous, Falls Church
Gretchen Mikeska, DOEE
Jeff Seltzer, DOEE
Joel Caudill, WSSC Water

Karen Pallansch, Alexandria Renew
Norm Goulet, NVRC

Pam Kenel, Loudoun Water

Steve Shofar, Montgomery County

Guests:

Ann Prevas, University of Maryland
David McDonough, WSSC Water
Hailey Clark, University of Maryland
Meredith Epstein, University of Maryland

COG Staff:

Christine Howard
Heidi Bonnaffon
Karl Berger
Katie Dyer
Lindsay Smith
Lisa Ragain
Lisa Reynolds
Steve Bieber
Steve Walz