



## **Regional Water Supply Agreement Administration Advisory Committee**

Meeting date: January 31, 2024  
Time: 12:00 – 2:00 pm  
Location: 533 E. Waterworks Dr., St. George, UT 84770  
Participants: Administration Advisory Committee members Zach Renstrom, Justin Sip, Afton Moore, Kelly Wilson, Kyle Gubler, Kress Staheli, Jeremy Redd, Rick Rosenberg, Brock Jacobsen, Scott Taylor, John Willis, Chris Hart, Dale Coulam, Nannette Billings, and Kaden DeMille. Washington County Commissioner Adam Snow and Victor Iverson were not present. Other meeting attendees are noted on the attached sign-in sheet.

### **Minutes**

#### **Welcome**

General Manager Zach Renstrom welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Staff Engineer Whit Bundy gave an update on water production, lot numbers and drought.

For 2023, the District produced 14.9 billion gallons of water, that is down 1.2 million from last year. The number of connections is 88,700, the number is up about 4600 connections from the previous year. The water produced breaks down as follows: District 50%, St. George 25%, Washington 8%, Hurricane 11%, Santa Clara 4%, LaVerkin and Toquerville 1%. The total number of lots in some phase of development is 73,113. The drought stage is currently zero.

#### **Discussion regarding digital documents**

Mr. Renstrom asked the board if they would like documents printed or sent digitally. The board said they would like to receive the meeting materials via email but have a printed copy of just the agenda.

#### **Growing Water Smart Conference**

Mr. Renstrom asked the committee for feedback on the Growing Water Smart Conference. Mr. Renstrom said that a bill with the Utah State Legislature that would allocate money for this program to be implemented in the rest of the state, so they wanted feedback from people who attended the conference.

Mayor Billings commented that it was positive for Hurricane City. There was discussion on the difference between land and water use. Hurricane City has not been asking some of those questions with their planning commission or City Council. It helped knowing what questions to ask, and to coordinate and talk about the issues. The liaison did an excellent job and helped with discussions and setting goals.

Mayor Chris Hart commented that he was skeptical and that it was a big ask to have eight important people from the city spend 2 1/2 days, but the participants left feeling it was valuable. The facilitator was terrific. USU is going to do some training next month with Ivins City to help develop irrigation standards.

Scott Taylor with St. George City Water emphasized the value of the experience was not just the specific information shared, but more importantly the communication and collaboration within the city. The significance of sitting down together with various departments, planning department, City Council, and legal. The forced interaction led to valuable conversations that contributed to improved communication and understanding between departments within the city.

City Manager John Willis thought it was highly beneficial. It provided an opportunity for an overview of everything happening within the county. Mr. Willis liked the general session within his own city that identified what is going well and what areas need improvement.

City Manager Kyle Gubler appreciated the collaborative aspect of the session and found the structure effective. He looks forward to further engagement and to concentrating on the established goals.

City Manager Afton Moore commented that Toquerville City appreciated the diversity of the presenters and facilitators. During one breakout group, one participant was the reviewer of the city's water conservation plan, so they received great feedback, eliminating the need for separate follow-up efforts.

Mr. Renstrom will report back to the Utah legislature that Washington County supports the Water Smart Conference.

### **Government entity conservation rebate program**

Water Conservation Manager Doug Bennett explained that the District is planning to offer conservation incentives for public agencies. In launching the program, the District is open to ideas so that the program aligns with the joint objectives of the city and the District. To enhance the effectiveness and transparency of the collaborative effort, the district proposes a structured approach to provide better data and information about the allocation of funds.

The District expects that much of the money for the program will come from the surcharges and the excess water use surcharges. The District is looking at a simple application form with some basic criteria to return some conservation funds back into the cities to help with their conservation projects.

Mr. Bennett shared a draft application and requested the board members and their staff let him know what they feel should be the structural components of the program and whether there is any confusion around the terms.

### **Regional Reuse System Overview and Update**

Reuse Program Manager Morgan Drake presented an overview of the regional reuse system. The District's 20-year plan anticipates about 24,200 acre-feet of new potable water becoming available due to the reuse program, which is more than half of the supply needed to serve the area's growing community.

Currently, Virgin River water that could be treated for drinking water is being used for secondary irrigation and agriculture. The goal of the reuse project is to implement additional reuse treatment and send the reuse water to the dry purple pipes for outdoor irrigation and then do an exchange with the agriculture water to free up drinking water.

Components of the reuse system include secondary irrigation reservoirs, treatment plants, and pipelines. At some point, the system will include advanced water treatment, where treated reuse is sent to drinking water reservoirs, then treated to drinking water standards.

The project components will be implemented in phases. Upper East side is underway, Chief Toker Reservoir is under construction, and Upper West side is underway as well. Warner Valley Reservoir is in the future, it still requires more planning and feasibility studies.

George Elliott is the project manager overseeing the reservoirs and Trinity Stout is the project manager over pipelines. St. George City and Ash Creek will be over their respective facilities. Saint George City and Ash Creek Special Service District are critical partners as are each of the municipal partners.

The regional reuse system aims to improve drought resilience by efficiently reusing the water. Potable reuse is planned to enhance drought resilience even further by maximizing water reuse over multiple cycles. The 20-year plan includes groundwater optimization studies to protect groundwater and the Virgin River water, considering their current constraints. Implementation of reuse will enhance system flexibility, allowing the distribution of reuse water to various areas. This will help protect local agriculture.

Ms. Drake provided a funding overview. Saint George City, Ash Creek Special Service District and the District have worked together to secure over \$20 million in funding from various grants. In addition, there is a pending application for an additional \$20 million.

The grant awards contain deadlines to qualify for the award. To implement the regional reuse system, all the partners must sign reuse authorization contracts. The necessary contracts are grouped into three different categories.

Treatment Contracts: To be executed with St. George City and Ash Creek Special Service District.

Delivery Contracts: To be executed with each municipal partner.

Reuse Exchange Contracts: To be executed with each irrigation and canal company.

The treatment and delivery contracts adhere to specific code requirements under the Wastewater Reuse Act. The plan is to deliver the reuse water under the existing terms of the Regional Water Supply Agreement (RWSA).

### **2024 Outreach Overview**

Communications & Government Affairs Manager Karry Rathje explained some of the District's communications and outreach plans for the year 2023.

The District did ninety-one media interviews, thirty community presentations, thirty infrastructure tours, twenty-five landscape workshops, a 50% increase in our social media followers, a legislative infrastructure tour with all our state legislators, and the Chief Toquer Reservoir groundbreaking.

Washington County used 1.2 billion gallons less water in 2023 than 2022, with a 5% increase in connections. There have been more than one-million square feet of grass replaced. The District is getting state and national attention for its conservation efforts.

The District would like to educate the community on water resources in general, where their water comes from, and how it gets to their home. The goal is to increase awareness and participation in conservation programs and support infrastructure development projects.

The District currently uses social media, digital ads, redirecting ads, streaming ads, and billboards. The District will use direct mail targeting non-functional turf areas in the community and encouraging participation in the grass replacement program. The District is also running campaigns about grass replacement and irrigation compliance.

Ms. Rathje explained the importance of amplifying message reach and gave some examples. Mayor Staheli came to the District office and did an overview about water conditions and the grass replacement program. When the cities and the county share the District's social media posts, there is a significant uptick in website visits and applications to rebate programs. If all municipal partners would share the district's social media posts, they would reach about 37.4 thousand more residents.

The District would like to encourage the cities, county, elected officials, staff, community leaders and residents to actively participate in water conservation efforts, such as landscape conversion, water audits, planning, touring facilities, investing in infrastructure, integrating water-wise technology, leak detection and repair, showcasing water-efficient plants and trees.

Ms. Rathje expressed a desire to document and celebrate conservation efforts through photos and write-ups and the intention to provide recognition of the work being done in the community and share the knowledge with a broader audience.

Mayor Billings asked if there was a way for the city to know who in their community is doing landscape conversion so they can do a personalized story about someone in their own community. Ms. Rathje responded that the District will send information to the cities with the names of residents participating in the landscape program.

Mayor Staheli commented that he agrees with Mayor Billing's idea because personal stories contribute to building and sustaining community interest and participation.

Scott Taylor asked about the direct mail campaign. Ms. Rathje explained that it sends a letter or postcard encourage recipients to consider the landscape rebate program, but it is generic and not personalized to specific individuals.

**Other**

Mr. Renstrom discussed House Bill 280, which is related to water connections. Mr. Renstrom reported that there is controversy surrounding the bill and there are doubts about its passage. The bill proposes imposing a tax on every water connection, the collected money would be sent to the state, and a board would allocate the funds back to the cities. The bill is primarily driven by cities' requests to the legislature for funding assistance for infrastructure projects.

***Consider approval of November 29, 2023, minutes***

***Kelly Wison made a motion to approve the November 29, 2023, minutes, the motion was seconded by Rick Rosenberg, and all voted aye.***

***Next meeting: Wednesday, May 29, 2024, from 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm***

The meeting was adjourned.

*Mindy Mees*

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Secretary