

CAG minutes Nov. 12, 2008

Present: Michael Echanove, Jerry Fairley, Michael Yount (guest), George Grader, Dan Boone, Pat O'Neill, (guest, Whitman Co commissioner elect), Steve Robischon (guest), Jim Mital, and Joe Spoonemore

On phone: Keith Stoffel of DOE and Mike McVay at IDWR

Updates:

PBAC – Steve reports that Julie was present at the October PBAC meeting, and (per Julie) got input on the Q&A list regarding the WSU water reuse facility. Paul Kimmell, PBAC member, offered to take the suggestion that the Pullman Chamber of Commerce hold a public forum on the topic of the facility, and invite WSU President Elson Floyd to speak. Also, Steve reviewed for PBAC Jim Osiensky's controversial Water Summit report on Osiensky's theory that the Grande Ronde Aquifer could be much larger than commonly thought. Steve also gives brief report to CAG on WRIA watershed meeting. He says that research framework remains top priority of WRIA.

IDWR: No report. Mike asks to be put on as ex-officio member in place of Ken Neely.

DOE: Keith has no report. Steve asks if it's true money is about to break loose to expand the WSU water re-use project to include habitat improvement. Keith finds a letter sent on Oct. 27 to Mike Leonas and Kevin Gardes at WSU and the City of Pullman, saying that funding for wastewater reuse ... will forward the letter to Steve and Michael. (The letter includes mention that value of mitigation value is \$1.5 million, including wetlands on northern side. Notes funding for second phase available until June 2011; only planning money is available immediately)

CONSERVANCY BOARD: Joe reports that it's quiet, but the board is getting close to completing its bylaws.

Open forum:

Michael introduces Pat O'Neill, Whitman commissioner elect). Pat explains he learned a lot from his hard-fought campaign, he also attended water summit and found it very educational. I've said for the last 30 years ... that water is one of the most precious resources we're going to have. notes that people spend billions of dollars on bottled water. When campaigning, people talked with him about runoff, and rain water catchment. Regarding the aquifer, people are concerned about how much water WSU and Pullman are using. A lot of farmers are doing a superb job

using water. Regarding development, you can't stop progress, you need new ideas about how to deal with it. Regarding the Hawkins project, people are "pretty mad about how the whole thing was handled." They didn't find out about it until the news of buying water from Moscow. Joe asks what it is that upsets people. Pat replies that people were taken by surprise... "They want to make sure they've got water for farming. That's what it comes down to."

Steve comments that Pat's predecessor, Jerry Finch, was a member of PBAC. Theoretically, there could be another member appointed in January. Michael says he hopes Pat will consider joining either PBAC or CAG.

Jerry reports on annual meeting of Palouse Water Conservation Network, (one of the originally petitioning groups that requested of IDWR that led to formation of CAG). This year, there was a panel discussion of the aquifer, especially related to Jim Osiensky's Palouse Water Summit presentation. Jim had declined to be on the panel because of negative feedback he'd received after his remarks – which some people took to mean that the aquifer is apparently limitless, so why worry. AT the annual meeting, Jerry tried to clarify Osiensky's remarks, who apparently was trying to convey the serious lack of information we have about the aquifer. The presentation also included Allyson Beall and Fritz Fiedler of Waters of the West, talking about how everyone can be involved in protecting the aquifer through the use of interactive modeling. It was a successful meeting, and was reported by KRFP radio, and is posted on the web (and will be posted at www.pwcn.org, per Julie). Julie said the best thing about the meeting was Jerry's comment that aquifer depletion is a topic that needs to be engaged by the broader community, not just a small group of concerned people who talk to each other about it. Jerry notes that the aquifer problem is a social problem, not a science problem. He notes that the WOW participatory model gets people involved. "What we really need is an informed and involved public."

Michael notes that a friend had read in the paper about Dr. Osiensky's comments, and "see the aquifer is bigger than anyone thought, and this is all very good news." Michael hoped there weren't a lot of people who got that impression. Jerry: People tend to see what they want to see. Even if the aquifer were as big as all of Washington, that just means that other people are pumping it, too.

Dan mentions importance of partnering to resolve resource issues, rather trying to stay ahead of the next judge's decisions.

OLD business:

Regarding a letter of support for WSU water re-use facility. Michael had conversation with Helen Harrington of IDWR, who said it was her agency's policy not to interfere with Washington's water issues, so she is not inclined to write a letter to Washington's governor in support of water reuse facility. Michael has not been able to connect with Moscow Mayor Mary Cheney to see if she would write a letter of support to Washington's governor.

Julie suggests amending the Q&A sheet on the water reuse facility to note that the Department of Ecology is willing to provide money for wildlife mitigation. Michael suggests spending Q&A to local governments and chambers asking for their support. Discussion of sending two letters out: One from PBAC/CAG to governor and legislators in support of the water reuse facility; and the other to local organizations in Moscow/Pullman area soliciting their support, and also the local newspapers.

Michael makes a motion to send both letters, and the motion passes unanimously.

Julie and Jerry note that PWCN members generally support the use of reclaimed water, but are unlikely to endorse the WSU water re-use facility because of its relationship to the golf course, which they believe should not have been built.

The meeting ends with discussion, prompted by Michael and led by Jerry, about artesian wells and why Pullman wells are no longer artesian and Colfax wells are (Jerry's theory is that Pullman's relied on the small College Hill for recharge, and Colfax draws on a much larger area).

Joe moves to cancel December meeting; motion carries, with one nay vote. Next CAG meeting set for Jan. 8.

Michael offers to mention water re-use facility at December town hall meeting of legislators in Pullman; he will alert other CAG members to that event.