

**Citizens Advisory Group
to the
Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee**

June 12, 2008

Attendees:

Ken Neely and Mike McVay (in Boise)
Michael Echanove
Mark Loaiza
Jim Mital
Joe Spoonemore
Julie Titone
Steve Robischon

Mark: Moscow intends to take all tenants out of billing process. If you own a piece of property in Moscow and you rent it out, the bill would go to the landowners and not the tenants. That will be counter to the conservation efforts we're trying to carry out. So owners would pass along flat water rate. If we allow this proposal to go forward, the tenant is going to have no incentive to conserve water because they'll get charged \$75/month for sewer and water. It's about to go before city council. We should take a stand for or against it. Contrary to tiered water usage we have promoted. Tenants are big part of housing market. The city is doing this because they have lost \$10,000 in uncollected water bills and \$8,000 in money spent trying to track down money. City can't document if problem being caused by a few or many residents. They're focusing on single family dwellings. Two others joined Mark in protesting this. We did agree owner should be ultimately responsible for bill. We suggested they charge a hookup fee and deposit. City looking into that. Not sure when this proposal will go to city hill. Bill needs to go to consumer so they can see how much they're using.

Julie: Does CAG have the ability as an advisory group to weigh in on such topics? Or do we advise PBAC to speak up?

Michael E: This falls within our purview. I can see where a renter who's not responsible for that bill is just going to let the water run, or ignore a broken toilet. Billing the consumer of the product is the most important way to control that.

Mark: It will be up to the owners to go after tenant for anything beyond that flat fee. Dan Schoenberg (partner in Palouse properties) and myself have written letter to city. Mark will forward copy to Mike to send to CAG, and will keep CAG informed. I think it will hit the Moscow city council's agenda in the next 90 days.

Jim: There should incentive to use less. (Julie and Joe agree.)

Michael: There's no reason why CAG couldn't send a letter to both city of Moscow and to PBAC expressing our position.

Mark: Let's wait until there is an actual proposal. I don't want us to miss the chance for us to respond to us as a group. I don't know what Pullman does. We asked how other cities handle it. Don Palmer said there is no consensus.

Michael: We can direct Steve to bring up this conversation at next PBAC meeting.

Steve: When I saw this on public works agenda, I sent an email to Moscow's PBAC representative stating that billing the landlord instead of the tenant would result in increased water usage. He didn't respond. They took it off the agenda.

Julie: Sunset Memorial Gardens has asked to be annexed by Memorial Garden cemetery in Moscow. The owner can't afford the \$10,000 annually to water. Question: Do cemeteries need to water? Twenty of 30 in Latah County don't. Should CAG and PBAC weigh in on the issue?

Discussion: Focuses on which cemeteries don't water – probably smaller rural ones. Can be an emotional issue for some people. If small cemetery is annexed to city, it will increase water usage. Should we send letters to cemetery boards raising the question, perhaps giving them alternatives on different types of grass that consumes less water. Have list of prescribed foliage, perhaps get WSU turf management club involved. It would be helpful for people to know the more desirable grasses used in their yards.

Jim: At Moscow cemetery, it's not reused water is it?

Steve: Cemetery hooked up to city, and city rules say they have to be. For a long time they got a really low water rate. City discovered that, said you have to pay like everyone else; cemetery responded by deciding to drill a well. County filed protest of that. Cemetery pulled back from drilling. Palouse Water Conservation Network suggested a compromise where cemetery could water trees, but not grass. (Julie: PWCN apparently did not get a response to that.)

Michael: Perhaps a solution is discontinued use toward August when you get the least amount of good from sprinkling water. That's one approach we're taking (in the town of Palouse). It comes down to best management.

Julie suggests we invite representatives from Moscow and Pullman cemeteries to talk about the issue. **Discussion:** Do they have long-term goal, do they have master plan, etc. Might also invite county commissioners. They might have insight to share with us.

Michael: That's a great idea for the July meeting agenda. (Julie agrees to help make arrangements.)

Discussion: About metered v. pumped... do cities keep track between what's being billed and what's being used. Steve will try to get information on that. Michael says it's a source of pride for city staff to find and fix leaks. Suggestion made to get Gary Smith, head of water utilities to speak to CAG.

Other business:

Minutes of last meeting approved.

PBAC report from Steve: Discussion of CAG recommendation that PBAC compliment people and entities who save water. Much discussion. Some thought it was a great idea. Others thought it would amount to PBAC members patting their own backs. Several people felt uncomfortable about that. Also worried about the political aspects, and whether they would also be expected to comment on those who don't do a good idea. Didn't come to a decision. PBAC asked Mark Storey to go back to CAG with the suggestion that the entities themselves announce that they've done something good. (Mark unable to attend tonight's meeting.)

Discussion: Mark suggests military approach of "after-action review" not saying individuals did good job, but rather saying we did well here, here is where we need to do better. Julie suggests someone, perhaps PBAC, write an annual "state of the aquifer" report. Mark suggests having it presented at the water summit. Who would do that so it was fair, unbiased? Several agree this is a good way to get public attention/headlines. Joe says it's appropriate to celebrate those who do well.

Michael: It's kind of sad that you can't thank people for doing a good job. I think we should table that discussion for now.

A vote is taken to table the discussion of PBAC letters of commendation. It passes unanimously.

Steve: Originally, there were annual action plans for the ground water management plan. In 2001, PBAC stopped that, saying it's not our business to tell people how to meet your targets. ... The goals are being met. Discussion: Stay under the bar, and no one's going to bother you.

Steve reports that Hawkins Development will have its own sewer treatment. (As for drilling a well) I think they're keeping their options open.

IDWR rep Mike: Report that aquifer modeling project continues, will be next meeting in August.

Jim asks IDWR: Is this Hawkins development common? Answer: No, quite unusual. Water used coming from Idaho, benefit going to Washington. Jim asks if that will be taken into consideration by IDWR. Ken: "We'll pose that and try to get a response to you for July meeting." Jim also asks if there is any update on North Idaho water rights

adjudication. Answer from **Mike: Looks** like they're going to go ahead, ask for public comment. Initial meetings further north in Sandpoint weren't received well, but we can pose the question about whether process can go ahead on Palouse, where adjudication has been more favorably received. Not aware of any dates set for North Idaho.

Joe Spoonmore: No updates from water conservancy board.

Open forum:

Mark L: I've been told Pullman has been picked as a test site for water quality and that any hard surfaces in Pullman will be taxed based on square footage of hard surfaces. It's got quite a few people upset. This could be counterproductive to development, and further promote Hawkins site because people will want to build outside the city. Joe: What they're doing is creating a tax structure so they can afford to construct storm water system. Federally mandated. Michael: DOE in Washington added 29 additional communities that had to comply with the stormwater permits, and Pullman was one of it. Steve: Pullman needs to raise \$4.5m over 5 years. Be \$7 month for each unit (average household), it's managing stormwater. Clarkston's in same boat. EPA manages it on the Idaho site, state has suggested that city and UI also have to comply. Those with large parking lots can get credit for good management practices. Pullman disputing it. Steve: Washington going to make some moves to allowing people to legally harvest rainwater.

Michael: We need to get legislators involved in 2009. We've got to get back on top of framework project, money set aside by state of Idaho. We need to develop a game plan if we're going to get a long-term project going.

Discussion: What happened to \$2m discussed by Idaho to be allocated to Palouse Basin.

Ken: It has been finalized, and starting July 1 funds for this fiscal year will be available for a staged progression of basin studies. Treasure Valley and Rathdrum Prairie first out of chute. Palouse is 2011. Will be spent on aquifer characterization.

Michael: Framework study is subset of characterization study. What are chances of getting some money early to start data synthesizing on basin. Ken: none of us are sure how it's going to shake out it. If you have something like that and you can put a proposal in writing together, I think it would look favorable. Michael: We are ready to go with that. It would be a good use of public money to get some of the data collected and going, you could perhaps save a year or two on a characterization study. Estimated at \$250,000 to synthesize existing data. How would we coordinate Idaho and Washington money for feasibility work? **Ken:** I'm not sure. I don't know what the legislature's intent will be with state lines. It's a question we're going to have to think about.

Michael: I'm interested in building a coalition between Washington and Idaho legislatures. We as a CAG need to move forward with. We've done some work on the Washington side with legislators and DOE. We'll keep you in the loop. It's win win win for everyone.

Jim: If we could get some money loosed before 2011, we'd gain a lot of efficiency.

Mark: It would also help out with adjudication. **Steve:** One of the pessimistic side notes about this is that the state of Idaho technically set aside the money, but every year IDWR has to get appropriation each particular year. Palouse money hasn't really been appropriated. **Ken:** That's how we understood it. But would some flexibility next year? I can't answer that.

Steve: The framework study has gone through as the No. 1 priority in Washington's Water Resource Inventory Area, part of watershed planning act. Watershed plan finished in fall 2007, now there are 60-some studies being prioritized.

Michael: That would be our greatest contribution. We've got to get the framework study off the ground. Unless the CAG objects, I'll continue down that road. (Encouragement given.)

Next meeting set for July 10 at 6:15 p.m.

Meeting adjourns at 8:12 p.m.