

# Meeting Minutes

Project:	OSDS Strategic Planning	
Subject:	Task Force Meeting No. 1, Revision 1	
Date:	Monday, July 22, 2019	
Location:	2664 Riva Rd, Independence Conference Room	
Attendees:	<p>Community Representatives:</p> <p>Jerry Pesterfield (Herald Harbor)          Jesse Iliff (Arundel Rivers Federation)          Lloyd Lewis (Mayo)          Ben Weschler (Linowes and Blocher LLP)          Sally Hornor (AA Community College/Severn River)</p>	<p>Anne Arundel County Representative:</p> <p>Jessica Haire (County Council)          Linda Shmett (County Council - Jessica Haire)          Matt Pipkin (County Council – Jessica Haire)          Matthew Johnston (Office of the County Executive)          George Heiner (Department of Public Works)          Karen Henry (Department of Public Works)          Ed Peters (Department of Health)          Cindy Carrier (Office and Planning and Zoning)          Chris Phipps (Department of Public Works)</p> <p>OSDS Strategic Planning Team:</p> <p>Jeff Eger (HDR)          Ed Shea (HDR)          Joe Sowinski (HDR)          Carita Parks (HDR)          Ziwei He (HDR)</p>

HDR facilitated Septic Task Force meetings on July 22, 2019. The objectives of this meeting are to review recent progress, including explaining the reduction in the proposed septic program from prior 20,000 connections to approximately 5,000 to 7,000, discuss upcoming Task Force meetings, review lessons learned from other conversion programs, discuss prioritizations and program areas, and discuss objectives of customer survey. The following is a summary of key points and action items:

1. Chris Phipps provided opening remarks and overview of task force schedule. The County is hoping to host working group meetings: The prior Land use working group will be combined into the other two working groups meetings (Policy or Fiscal); The Fiscal sub-working group meeting will be before the August Task Force meeting, and work on splitting the financial burden between state, homeowner, and the County; policy working group meeting will be in early September to discuss about incentive structure and target.
2. George Heiner provided overview of the progress since the last septic task force meeting in 2018.
  - a. The last septic task force meetings were centered around the objective of connecting 20,000 septic units, which was established around the 2012 Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP II) to provide the approximate 200,000 lb/year of N removal requirement. The 20,000 septic units were addressed in the conceptual large CIP program, with substantial infrastructure planned (estimated at \$ 1.5 Billion). See description below for proposed substantial reduction in the required septic program. The Task Force final report was issued in June 2018, which recommended a new voluntary septic connection process, prioritization

system, decentralized alternatives, enhanced public outreach, and gauging public interest in the value of water/sewer.

- b. HDR was selected as the program manager in 2018. As a result of recent efforts, including an “Integrated Program” approach to meeting the County’s TMDL goals, new concepts and alternatives were explored, e.g. minor system takeover (MST), cluster treatment (some are not cost competitive because of high upfront collection system construction costs), and water reuse in the form of managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR). The concept of an integrated program combines multiple methods to reduce total nitrogen load. Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) was studied as a more cost effective solution and at the same time provide water supply sustainability.
  - c. HDR also reviewed approaches with MDE in a recent meeting, and the meeting went favorably. Lloyd Lewis from Mayo Community asked for clarifications, and Chris Phipps clarified that MDE are willing to go forward and gather and assess more information. The County is currently doing test wells and forming a specification for a pilot facility that treats 5-7 gallons per minute from an existing water reclamation facility (WRF).
  - d. In a recent state effort to evaluate and assess progress of WIP II, WIP III was released and the 2025 reduction goals were further refined for each county. A side by side comparison for each sectors were presented. The State recognizes that WRFs are performing excellently, and modified approach accordingly. Septic targets are lowered. However, the individual sector goals are secondary to the integrated total goal.
  - e. **Action items and issues of discussion:**
    - i. **Jerry Pesterfield from Herald Harbor raised concerns about the lack of regulations to limit new septic tank construction in the County that could be detrimental to the septic conversion effort. Coordination with Office of Planning and Zoning will be necessary.**
3. HDR further introduced the goals and detailed elements of the integrated program and the preferred management strategy.
- a. Instead of 165,000 – 200,000 lb/yr reduction target under WIP II, the nitrogen reduction target for WIP III was revised to 100,000 to 130,000 lb/yr.
  - b. HDR explored a range of program components, such as stormwater impervious area reduction, large capital improvement program (CIP), MAR, MST, and NRU upgrade program of 200 per year (Department of Health confirmed that there were 189 upgrades last year, and is expected to upgrade more than 200 units this year). The preferred strategy was made up of MST at four private plants, septic conversions at 5,400 units, and MAR at Patuxent WRF. Because of this multi-sector approach, the number of septics converted is reduced from 20,000 previously to the current 5,400.
  - c. **Action items and issues of discussion:**
    - i. **Several members of the Task Force inquired if the current cost estimations include costs within the homeowner property line. HDR to check County’s cost estimation template. (Post-meeting follow-up:**

*the construction estimates included on site piping from the cleanout to the house, and a separate line item for septic tank abandonment. No costs were added for plumbing work in and around the house.)*

ii.

4. Within the septic sector, HDR identified conversion areas essential to program success by performing prioritization of program areas.
  - a. Currently, four criteria are being identified as the prioritization factors: number of parcels within the Onsite Wastewater Management Problem Areas (OWMPA), number of parcels within the state Critical Area, proximity to existing sewer infrastructure (length of proposed piping to the existing tie in point), and cost per pound of nitrogen. The factors were scored and weighted differently in various scenarios using an Excel spreadsheet.
  - b. Three scenarios were run with the four factors taking different weights. The three scenarios identify sets of different management areas to provide 53,000 lb nitrogen removal. The top five management areas are found to be identical across all scenarios.
  - c. **Action items and issues of discussion:**
    - i. **Matthew Johnson from Office of the County Executive asked for a copy of the spreadsheet for distribution to the Task Force members. HDR to clean up spreadsheet and send out to the members.**
    - ii. **Matthew Johnson from Office of the County Executive mentioned that sea level rise in 2050 should be a criteria of prioritization. Jerry Pesterfield stated that homeowner costs are more impactful than sea level rise.**
    - iii. **Jessica Haire from the County Council mentioned that three factors should be considered as part of the program: partial deferral of cost (which are currently in place for the poor and the elderly), lengthening period of bonds, and prioritization to get subsidy.**
    - iv. **Linda Shmett from County Council – Jessica Haire’s office questioned how homeowner willingness to pay could be effectively gauged. The County answered that mostly through outreach and education efforts, especially the survey that is due to send out in the recent future. In the survey, the County can gauge how much residents value water, and look for a sweet spot for subsidies. The survey can also be used to brand this effort and provide residents with financial information.**
    - v. **Sally Hornor from AA Community College/Severn River recommended that health impacts be included as a prioritization factor. Ed Peters from the Department of Health explained that this is part of OWMPA criteria.**
    - vi. **Jerry Pesterfield emphasized the need to educate the community. If the residents are not familiar with the septic system and do not care about failing septics, the possibility of them willing to pay for connections would be low.**

5. Other septic conversion programs across the nation were discussed. HDR reviewed 11 septic conversion programs, and interviewed representatives from Olympia, WA and Suffolk County, NY.
  - a. Most programs prioritized areas of implementation.
  - b. Mandatory programs need to have robust financing on the front end.
  - c. It is important to gauge willingness to pay in voluntary programs.
6. HDR presented the objectives of the customer survey and a communication plan. Currently, the County is still at the very beginning of the timeline.
  - a. The objectives are to gather a baseline understanding of resident attitudes towards water quality, and measure willingness to pay by those who may connect and others. HDR hopes the information out of this survey will guide the policy on subsidies and gain a better understanding of affordability, and a better strategy to brand and communicate this effort.
  - b. The survey will be conducted through a variety of ways, and tested before broad implementation. The timeline will be 4-6 weeks as specified by the market research firm. 1,200 completed surveys are needed to obtain statistically significant results, and the return rate is anticipated to be 12% - 18%. The survey will not be identifying the County as the recipient of the information, and it is because key decisions are still being made and campaign plans are not in pace yet.
    - i. **A number of Task Force members commented about not identifying the County as the originator because it may cause subsequent PR problems. The County is to discuss the issue internally and come to a decision.**
    - ii. **Task Force members want to better understand where the survey will be distributed, in terms of homes with or without septic, and areas prioritized for connection.**
7. **Additional issues of concern:**
  - a. **George mentioned the representative of Edgewater Beach asked if the County can assist with the homeowner side of cost of connection from property line to house.**
  - b. **Jerry Pesterfield mentioned needing to revisit front foot assessment in the code, and suggested assessment on the basis of lot size instead of front foot. There was precedence in Heritage Harbor and should be considered for the County-wide program.**
  - c. **Jerry Pesterfield expressed that OSDS conversion should be a homeowner decision (i.e. voluntary).**