



Our wAater Public Advisory Group Meeting #1 Summary

Meeting Date: October 19, 2021

Meeting Time: 4:30 – 6:15 p.m.

Location: Independence Room - 2664 Riva Rd, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Welcome

Chris Phipps opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanked them for volunteering their time and participating in the Public Advisory Group. The project team and Public Advisory Group members introduced themselves.

Anne Arundel County Department of Public Works (DPW)	HDR	Public Advisory Group
Chris Phipps	Ed Shea	Tammy Domanski, Anne Arundel Community College Environmental Center
George Heiner	Rahkia Nance	Sally Hornor, Magothy River Association
Beth O'Connell	Hannah Billian	Erik Kreifeldt, Severn River Association
Chris Murphy	Meghan Robinson	Lloyd Lewis, Chesapeake Environmental Protection Association
		Doug Nichols, Greater Severna Park Council
		Jerry Pesterfield, Heritage Harbor
		Tim Williams, Water Environment Federation (retired)

Purpose and Objectives

George Heiner reviewed the agenda and objective of the first meeting. He explained that the purpose of the Public Advisory Group is to provide feedback on the Our wAater program, specifically what DPW could be doing differently or things that are being done right and should continue. The objective for tonight's meeting is for the group to provide input on the Our wAater program, the Integrated Management Plan (IMP), and how to best engage with the public. George also provided a brief overview of how the Department of Public Works (DPW) is organized, and how three of the five bureaus (Engineering, Utility Operations, and Watershed and Protection) are involved with the Our wAater program.



Our wAAtEr

Ed Shea provided information on the development of the Our wAAtEr program and progress to date within each of the five components:

- Septic-to-Sewer Connections
- Groundwater Resiliency
- Stormwater Improvements
- Small Systems
- Wastewater Treatment Enhancements

Rahkia Nance then provided details about each of the components.

- With regard to the Septic-to-Sewer Connection Program, Erik Kreifeldt suggested that some residents think that communities or residents that are in closer proximity to the water (and are contributing more pollution) should therefore pay more when converting from septic to sewer. All residents will pay more by waiting for septic tanks to fail. He also noted that from his experience, the cost associated with the Septic-to-Sewer Connection Program is what people have a hard time accepting, not the information being presented or that a consultant is involved in supporting DPW. He added that converting to the public sewer could increase home value, which is a possible selling point to communities. However, that did not gain much traction when presented to his community (Pendennis Mount) because there wasn't information available to support that statement.
- Jerry Pesterfield suggested that DPW should work more directly with Homeowners Associations and ask them to host the meetings.
 - George Heiner noted that DPW takes a more passive approach because it is intended to be a voluntary, community-driven process, and that in some cases the HOA has been somewhat reluctant to be seen as leading the effort.
- With regard to Small System Upgrades, Chris Phipps noted that capital costs come from the Bay Restoration Fund, and maintenance costs after improvements would be challenging for the owner. For example, if the mobile homes in Waysons Corner do not make the upgrades, an owner might sell the property to a developer, displacing tenants.

Integrated Management Plan (IMP)

Hannah Billian led the discussion on the development of the draft IMP, and its key elements, and reviewed project ranking.

- Jerry Pesterfield asked a question about Clean Water Act Section 304a water quality criteria and if there are any teeth to enforcement. Chris Phipps responded that the criteria are typically codified at the state level for permitting and that DPW would have to evaluate more specifically how these criteria may drive efforts under the Our wAAtEr program.
- George Heiner noted that Small Systems was added as a new project to the capital budget for the FY 23 cycle. The IMP includes a 30-year investment schedule that shows higher spending in the earlier and later period, and lower spending in the middle. The earlier period is informed by projects currently in the CIP, while future projects are identified based on known investment needs and do not reflect a budget request.
- Jerry Pesterfield noted that the total investment curve needs to flatten because in reality it probably won't change much over time. Jerry suggested connecting the dashed line across the anticipated



trend and referring to anything under that line not in the bars as “unknown.” He also suggested clarifying that investment dollars are not escalated to future years of implementation.

Final Discussion, Wrap-Up, and Next Steps

- Doug Nichols asked if the Bureau of Watershed Protection and Restoration (BWPR) projects fall under Stormwater Management? Bear Creek was years in the making and very successful. He noted he has been following it since 2015 and was surprised the visibility on that project is not higher. Chris Phipps agreed and accepted this recommendation to highlight the project.
- Jerry Pesterfield asked what has been set aside for OSDS and what has been used in the program so far? He also asked if any communities have converted to public sewer. Chris Phipps and George Heiner explained that many applications have been received, but to date no communities have moved to the petition process. (No funds are currently set aside specifically for the program up front, the costs for the subsidies and deferments would accrue over time.)
- Doug Nichols asked who is paying for all of the cost items in the Septic-to-Sewer program. Chris Phipps explained that revenue comes from the water protection fee and utility fee. New development is subject to the Capital Facility Connection Charge (CFCC), and a certain amount of that goes toward capacity building in the infrastructure and replaces aging infrastructure.¹ Every year DPW examines the cost to support the revenue, and we review the overall capital program to determine the most effective way to allocate funds.
- Sally Hornor asked how communities are selected for the Septic-to-Sewer Connection Program and if they are all waterfront? She also asked if there is any proactive outreach/engagement with homeowners associations and community representatives. Rahkia Nance explained that residents express interest in the program through the website or by emailing DPW. If approximately 20% of a community's residents have reached out and are interested, then DPW follows up to arrange a meeting and provides further information. While eligible communities are not all waterfront properties; all waterfront properties are eligible since they are located in the Critical Area. Outreach has included a press release issued in May 2021, which is how most residents learned about the program. There have also been social media posts about the program.
- Doug Nichols asked if a glossary of terms and acronyms associated with the program could be provided. Ed She noted that there is an abbreviations list in the Integrated Management Plan and the team will review to see if more terms should be added.
- Lloyd Lewis asked if the County be making a statement about PFAS (polyfluoroalkyl substances) and noted it would be nice to see coverage of it in subsequent (Advisory Group) meetings. Chris Phipps acknowledged that PFAS has become a concern for DPW and that one challenge is that the detection limits are above the EPA's advisory threshold. The team will give more attention to PFAS in upcoming public meetings.

¹ New connections that are made from existing residences through petition projects are also subject to the CFCC.



Future Meetings

There was a discussion regarding future meetings and whether to hold a December meeting during which it was agreed that scheduling a December 2022 meeting would be useful. DPW will make arrangements for scheduling the future meetings with monthly meetings through February 2023.²

Closing

Rahkia Nance thanked everyone for their participation and encouraged the participants to visit the Our wAater webpage (ourwaater.org).

- The Public Advisory Group will meet on the third Wednesday of every month, except for December, when the group will meet on the second Wednesday of the month. Meetings will be held in the Independence Room of the Heritage Complex, 2664 Riva Road, Annapolis MD. Rahkia Nance will send calendar invitations for each meeting.

² This summary of the discussion on future meetings has been modified for clarity. DPW was not able to schedule the room for all of the specific dates and times discussed during the meeting. Future meeting dates and locations will be discussed at meeting No. 2