

Madison East Side Water Supply Engineering Study 2010-11

The Intersection between the Expert and the Citizen

The following listed items represent a gleaning from comments recorded at an initial meeting of some twenty-three community 'advisors' held in the Water Utility's conference on October 8th, 2010. The meeting was held to garner advice from people who had been involved in previous water utility projects where public engagement was a significant part of the project(s). Attendees included community people, City Alders, Water Utility Board Members, and Water Utility Staff

The intersection between experts and citizens plays a critical role in the ultimate outcome of any public project.

By paying attention to the comments recorded here we can take skillful steps to establish a path forward that supports an excellent experience by the involved public, the water utility staff, and the consulting team.

Trust

- Will anyone take the results of Citizen Advisory Panels (CAPs) seriously?
- How can we build better trust in the water utilities from the public?
- How can we overcome fear of contaminated water and get clear thinking while honoring that fear?
- How will trust play out? (public trust in experts and experts trust in the public)
- How can we overcome the skepticism about how seriously the utility takes citizens?
- Start with goals & interests & identifying common goals & interests
- Principles of working together need to be clearly articulated
- Want consumers to have input into the criteria for decision making

Behavior / Values

- Will decisions (at least in part) be based on reverence for the natural resource (aquifer drawdown)?
- Will people be "open-minded"?
- Is it legitimate to hold tightly to, and promote, my views on water quality (that is, VOCs are worse than levels of Fe & Mn)?
- Will we address the values that are behind the technical/engineering decisions?
- How do we value non-technical expertise?
- Don't want expert to tell me...I know there is information & expertise I don't have, so balance collaborative weighing & balancing to reach a solution. There's more than one solution or way to reach the solution.
- Want officials to be accountable to public interest. Want values and opinions to be heard & incorporated into decisions.
- Balance technical knowledge & expertise with values

Information / Knowledge

- Does the public know about VOCs at Well 15?
- What did the water utility learn from the public involvement process in 2007 for Well 3?
- What worked with Well #3 Public PP?
- Will decisions be based on data – not seat of the pants
- How will info flow?
- How does an engineering approach (numbers and cost) incorporate non-numerical public input?
- How can we make data available to people with varying levels of expertise and allow people access to raw data?
- How will knowledge be shared with those who are new to aquifer and water pipes?
- How will the public be informed where the process is at?
- How will the results of the CAP(s) be shared with the public?
- How do we share information in a meaningful and understandable way?
- How can we better communicate our work on the CAP to the neighbors?
- Range of technical solutions available, pros/cons, criteria for deciding

Outcomes

- How can this process influence the capital improvement plan timing?
- My concern: Quality water consistent for all customers.
- How do we improve water quality for area under study?
- How can we establish standards /work toward exceeding EPA requirements (eg. recent news about manganese)?
- What is the end result?

Implications

- How community sentiment is best elicited and received in a project of this nature?
- Equity of decisions and their consequences

Complexities

- Mn has been a problem at Well8 for so long, why keep waiting to put on a filter?
- How can we clean up potential sources of contamination?

History

- We failed to find a site last time, what makes you think this time will be different?

The Players or ... The Balance of Power

- How can we bridge the citizen/user vs. engineer/expert divide?
- How can we get staff to respect citizens even though they (the citizens) aren't experts?

Concerns

- How will this p. participation review affect other ongoing projects & CAPs?
- Will this process be evaluated in a systematic way?
- How do folks feel about expanding #8 in Olbrich Park?
- My concern is the impact of high pumping of wells and pollutants.
- What are the water utility's largest concerns regarding water quality?
- Will surface water impacts be considered in planning?
- Can you "mitigate" VOCs with technology? How?
- What are the technical concerns of the neighborhoods?
- ? Do we have the right data?
- What effect will this process have on the Zone 4 process?

Options

- Will decisions include a full range of options – (such as increasing diameter pipe, pressure pump) not just drilling a new well?

Water

Conservation

- If we make a serious attempt to encourage individual homeowners to use less water and work with largest customers (Oscar Mayer, UW, Meriter) – how much do we think we could reduce avg day use #? Peak day use #?
- How strongly will the water utility encourage water conservation in long term planning?
- How will water conservation be handled in east side study?
- Does the long range plan consider the option for gray water use?
- What policies & techniques can we employ to encourage conservation?

Demand

- How has changed population/development projections changed the need for a new well?
- How does the expansion of the city affect our planning?
- How certain is the water utility on the water demand projections?

Quality

- How do we insure the quality of drinking water for future generations?
- Can Mn, Fe and VOCs be truly effectively filtered out to meet public concerns/health?

Well Siting

- What are the current criteria for siting a new east isthmus well?

**Compiled by Bert Stitt, public engagement consultant to the Madison Water Utility
East Side Water Supply Engineering Study of 2010-11**