

MINUTES

Meeting of the Chicago Water Partners Advisory Council (CWPAC)
(An Advisory Body to the Chicago Department of Water Management)
Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Held at SeatGeek Stadium, 7000 S. Harlem Ave., Bridgeview, IL

Call To Order

The meeting was chaired and called to order at 10:10 a.m. by David Kohn, Deputy Commissioner for Regional Partnerships, Chicago Department of Water Management (CDWM). Mr. Kohn welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their participation. He also thanked and acknowledged the Village of Bridgeview and its Director of Village Projects, William Green, for hosting today's meeting. At this time, Mr. Kohn asked everyone at the meeting to facilitate a roll call and to please introduce themselves.

Roll Call & Self-Introductions

In addition to Mr. Kohn, meeting participants and representatives of suburban communities and water systems in attendance who introduced themselves were:

Patrick Hastings, Director of Public Works, Village of Schiller Park
Pete Sanchez, Utilities Foreman, Village of Schiller Park
Kevin LasCola, Chief Water Operator, Village of McCook
Marcus Gonzales, Utilities Staff, Village of McCook
Thomas Brandstedt, Village Engineer, Village of McCook
Wesley Barber, Superintendent, Broadview-Westchester Joint Water Agency
Michael Schroeder, Supervisor of Public Works, City of Blue Island
Gerry Surufka, Superintendent, City of Calumet City
Ken Walsh, Water Operator, South Stickney Sanitary District
Jason Wells, Foreman, Central Stickney Sanitary District
Andy Karpinski, Water Commissioner, Village of Alsip
Allison Swisher, Director of Public Utilities, City of Joliet/Grand Prairie Water Commission
Seth Jansen, Management Analyst, Village of River Forest
Chris Lesniak, Water Department Superintendent, Village of Bedford Park
Michael Ward, Water Plant Operator, Village of Evergreen Park
Paul May, General Manager, DuPage Water Commission
Ramesh Kanapareddy, Executive Director, Northwest Suburban Municipal Joint Action Water Agency
William Green, Director of Village Projects, Village of Bridgeview
Colleen Kelly, Director, Justice-Willow Springs Water Commission
Jason Zurawski, Superintendent, Brookfield-North Riverside Water Commission
Justin Keller, Water Programs Strategist, Elevate
Kathleen Henly, Asst. to the Commissioner, Chicago Department of Water Management
Elizabeth Weber, Attorney, Chicago Department of Water Management
Tom Guth, Superintendent of Meters, Chicago Department of Water Management
Julio Godinez, Foreman of Machinists, Chicago Department of Water Management

Public Comments

Mr. Keller was recognized and introduced himself, mentioning that Elevate is a non-profit organization based in Chicago that focuses on issues pertaining to heating, cooling, power, and water. Since the CWPAC addresses water related issues in the region, he said Elevate wishes to stay up to date on its discussions, and he added that he was pleased to attend today's meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Kohn thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for introducing themselves. He then turned to consideration of the minutes from the previous meeting of December 10, 2024, noting that draft minutes of that meeting were sent in advance to the members of the CWPAC for review and asking if anyone had any additional comments on or corrections to the minutes. Hearing no further comments, Mr. Kohn stated that he would entertain a motion to approve the draft minutes.

A motion to approve the minutes of December 10, 2024, was made by Mr. Kanapareddy and seconded by Ms. Kelly. Mr. Kohn then called for a voice vote to approve the minutes, first asking those in favor to signify by saying “aye” and then asking any opposed to signify by saying “nay.” The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote. Mr. Kohn thanked the members and indicated that the approved minutes would be posted on the CWPAC webpage that has been established on the Department of Water Management website.

CWPAC Executive Committee – Chair & Vice-Chair Election Results

Following up on the discussion at the December 2024 meeting, Mr. Kohn announced that the CWPAC had now completed the final steps required under the By-Laws for its formation – appointment of all members of the organization's Executive Committee (EC) and election of a Chair and Vice-Chair of the EC.

Pursuant to the By-Laws, he recalled, the EC “shall help guide the work of the CWPAC and communicate recommendations and guidance approved by the CWPAC to CDWM.” He briefly reviewed its composition, which includes nine members: a permanent representative of the City, currently Mr. Kohn; the five largest partners of the system by water volume; a representative of the Northern Region partners served by the Jardine water purification facility; a representative of the Southern Region partners served by the Sawyer water purification facility; and one At-Large representative who is from a community or water system that is not among one of the other committee members.

The five largest partners by water volume and their representatives, he continued, are the DuPage Water Commission, represented by Mr. May; Oak Lawn, represented by Mr. Meyer; the Northwest Suburban Municipal Joint Action Water Agency (NSMJAWA), represented by Mr. Kanapareddy; Bedford Park, represented by Mr. Lesniak; and Joliet/Grand Prairie Water Commission, represented by Ms. Swisher.

The other three EC members, he added, are the Northern Region representative, Mr. Barber from the Broadview-Westchester Joint Water Agency; the Southern Region representative, Mr. Dowling from the Central Stickney Sanitary District; and, the At-Large representative, Ms. Kelly from the Justice-Willow Springs Water Commission.

He next reported that, as specified in the By-Laws, the EC members had recently elected from its ranks a Chair and a Vice-Chair: **Mr. Kanapareddy of NSMJAWA as Chair, and Mr. May of the DuPage Water Commission as Vice-Chair.** As with all EC members, he said, Mr. Kanapareddy and Mr. May will serve in these roles for a two-year term (2025-2026). Mr. Kohn asked everyone to join him in congratulating the newly elected Chair and Vice-Chair of the EC, to which the members responded with applause.

Mr. Kohn said that completing the composition of the EC represented a significant achievement for the CWPAC and that he looked forward to working with these members in their respective leadership roles. He reiterated that the CWPAC was established by the City of Chicago to provide CDWM with feedback and recommendations on water operations and policy and to promote true regional collaboration on those matters. He emphasized, therefore, that the organization is not meant to be “Chicago-centric,” but rather is intended to reflect the ideas and interests of all partners of the CDWM system and to help that system work better and more efficiently for all concerned, including the citizens of the region that the CWPAC members collectively serve.

Chicago Updates: Corrosion Control, 2025 Water Rate Adjustment, Cost-of-Service Rate Modeling

Mr. Kohn then turned to the next item on the agenda – various updates from the City of Chicago – beginning with CDWM’s corrosion control transition program.

He recalled that at the CWPAC’s December 12, 2023 meeting, CDWM’s Director of Water Quality, Patrick Schwer, offered a presentation reviewing CDWM’s rigorous water quality standards and a preview of the department’s planned transition from a polyphosphate to pure orthophosphate treatment process. As Mr. Schwer explained, this transition is part of ongoing water treatment using phosphate to coat the interior of transmission mains to help prevent any potential leaching of lead into the water supply.

In coordination with and approval by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), the transition from a polyphosphate blend to straight orthophosphate began in December, 2024, and has continued since then in carefully planned phases at both the Jardine Water Purification Plant (JWPP) and the Sawyer Water Purification Plant (SWPP). Advance email notice, he said, has been provided to all suburban customers served by the JWPP and the SWPP, respectively, prior to each application adjustment. The most recent step, he added, was implemented on March 4, when CDWM increased the phosphate dosage at the JWPP and the SWPP to one milligram per liter, with a target orthophosphate residual of 1.45 milligrams per liter.

According to Mr. Schwer, CDWM anticipates one more step to complete the transition to pure orthophosphate treatment, toward the final IEPA approved target of achieving by mid-2025 an orthophosphate residual in the finished water of two milligrams per liter. It appears that the transition has gone very smoothly, he said, and CDWM will continue to keep all customers informed as this process moves forward to completion. He added that if anyone has any questions about water chemistry, water quality, or aspects of the transition to orthophosphate transition, they should feel free to reach out to Mr. Schwer, whose contact information has been included in all of the emailed notices concerning this process.

Mr. Kohn next discussed the annual adjustment to the City’s water rate, which is governed by the Chicago Municipal Code. Pursuant to requirements in the Municipal Code, he said CDWM sent letters at the end of February notifying all suburban customers about the water rate adjustment that will be in effect as of June 1 of this year.

The current water rate, he reported, is \$35.10 per 1,000 cubic feet, or approximately \$4.70 per 1000 gallons. Under the Municipal Code, each year the rate is increased by either five percent or the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the previous calendar year as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, whichever is lower. Since the applicable CPI for calendar year 2024 was four percent, the new rate as of June 1, 2025 will be approximately \$36.51 per 1000 cubic feet, or \$4.89 per 1000 gallons.

Mr. Kohn continued, providing an update on the City's efforts to develop individual Cost-of-Service (COS) water rates for each wholesale suburban customer. He recalled that Chicago has made a commitment to transition from its current, flat-rate system to the American Water Works Association (AWWA) COS rate methodology by January 1, 2030, at which time each wholesale suburban partner of the CDWM system will have its own, custom water rate based upon criteria in the AWWA framework that reflect the particular circumstances of each customer – including factors such as which water treatment facility provides their water, the distance from their connection to the CDWM pumping station that serves them, their share of the commodities used to treat the water, the personnel directly involved in the water operation relevant to their service, etc.

At this time, Mr. Kohn introduced Mr. Tom Guth, CDWM Superintendent of Water Meters, for additional comments concerning development of the COS rate models for the City's wholesale customers. He also acknowledged CDWM Foreman of Machinists, Mr. Julio Godinez, who accompanied Mr. Guth to today's meeting.

Mr. Kohn said that he had invited Mr. Guth to discuss a particular aspect of the COS modeling work that is a critical component of the AWWA rate methodology – namely, obtaining the “peaking factors” for each community or water system, which are the maximum day and maximum peak hour water demand that occurs during a given calendar year. These values, he added, are typically measured during summer months when water demand is relatively higher. The principal challenge to obtaining these peaking factors, he said, is upgrading the meters of CDWM's suburban customers, roughly half of which do not have the capability to obtain that data. Mr. Guth, he said, would review what Chicago is doing to update wholesale customers' meters where needed in order to capture the peaking factor data.

Mr. Guth thanked Mr. Kohn for the introduction and said he appreciated the opportunity to address the members of the CWPAC. He began by mentioning that modern metering technology allows robust data collection of water demand and consumption, typically at hourly intervals or in even finer increments. As CDWM works with customers whose meters may require replacement, he said, we will be confirming if there is telemetry capability as well as dual outputs via a device called a “duplexer” or other means so that CDWM can access the needed data.

He said that CDWM appreciates that upgrading meters takes time and involves budgeting for the expense, and that the department wishes to work collaboratively with its suburban customers to assess their specific situation and to develop a plan to pursue metering replacements or upgrades where necessary. He added that as long as new meters have dual outputs with cellular capability to facilitate peaking factor data collection, each customer would of course be free to select the meters of their choice. Going forward, Mr. Guth said he envisions meeting with each of CDWM's suburban water partners to review their current metering configuration and to discuss the requirements for equipment upgrades.

He mentioned that he has heard from some customers that they were thinking about doing additional work concurrent with meter replacement, such as installing new valves or upgrading their meter vaults. Whatever scope of work is contemplated, he said, CDWM is ready to work with everyone and to offer its support. He said he and Mr. Godinez would be happy to speak separately with anyone at today's meeting, adding that he had brought a spreadsheet listing the make, models, and installation dates of all customers' current meters to help determine the equipment now in place and whether replacement meters are needed.

Mr. Kohn said CDWM recognizes that for many customers, procuring new meters is an additional, unbudgeted expense. He said Chicago is therefore exploring ways to assist its partners with meter upgrades, perhaps by funding the replacements and recovering those costs via the COS water rates that will be in place as of January 2030 – the target date for implementing the COS methodology. He said the City is working to ensure that each customer's COS water rate is as accurate as possible, so acquiring peaking factor data is critical. He reiterated the City's commitment to provide initial COS models to all wholesale customers by the Fall of 2025, adding that the metering upgrades will assist in that endeavor by providing that data in the years ahead so that the COS models can be further refined and improved in advance of the 2030 conversion to the AWWA methodology. He then asked if anyone had any questions for Mr. Guth.

Mr. May was recognized and inquired about the timeline within which the City anticipated completing the suburban meter replacements and upgrades. He observed that since peaking data is typically acquired during summer months and since the City is developing COS models for wholesale customers to be shared in late 2025, it seemed unlikely that newer meters would be installed and data acquired in time to be factored into these initial COS models. He added that even if one year of data were collected, that wouldn't necessarily indicate what peaking factors might be over a longer period of time. In this context, he asked, how will Chicago compute COS models for wholesale customers by the Fall of 2025 with limited or no peaking factor data?

Mr. Kohn replied that Mr. May posed an excellent question. He said it was his understanding that the City team working on the COS initiative will be able to produce an initial rate model for everyone even if peaking factor data is unavailable this year. In that case, he said, although these early COS models may not be as accurate as those to follow that are improved by incorporating peaking factors, they still will provide a good estimate of what each customer's COS rate range will look like. He reminded members that most of the information needed for the initial COS modeling – such as audited 2024 financial data for the City of Chicago's water system – is already known. The peaking factor data, he said, is of course another important component of the COS preparation effort, and once that data is incorporated it will result in improved and more accurate models going forward in advance of the 2030 implementation of the AWWA rate structure. Ultimately, he added, this is going to be a work in progress; the first COS rate projections will be based upon 2024 financial and other available data, and as we move forward each subsequent year, there will be updates and further refinements of the COS models for each customer.

Mr. May thanked Mr. Kohn for his response. If it is indeed the case that peaking factor data may not be available this year, he asked, can the City reaffirm its commitment to providing by this Fall COS models for the wholesale customers? Mr. Kohn said he has been informed that Chicago absolutely intends to meet that commitment, and he would be happy to consult with City leadership and to reaffirm this for the CWPAC members.

Mr. Kanapareddy inquired about the level of detail that the City anticipates including in the COS models, noting that there is a significant amount of data and components that comprise the cost models for each customer. Mr. Kohn replied that he was confident the COS models provided would include sufficient detail for each wholesale partner to evaluate, adding that there will be ample opportunity to review the initial COS rate models, to ask questions of the City's team, and to request additional information about how the models were developed.

Old Business

None.

New Business

At this time, Mr. Kohn asked if any members of the CWPAC wished to bring up new business.

Mr. Ward was recognized and said he wanted to discuss the possibility of CWPAC members who hold Operators Licenses obtaining continuing education hour credits for participating in the organization's meetings. He said that even if such credit were just one hour per meeting, that would be helpful. He mentioned he had reached out to the IEPA Operator Certification office about this subject, and they indicated that, potentially, attendance at CWPAC meetings could be counted as non-technical hours, depending upon the meetings' agenda and content.

Mr. Kohn thanked Mr. Ward for this suggestion and for his initial outreach to IEPA. He added that since many CWPAC members hold professional licenses that require ongoing educational credits, this was an excellent idea to add value to the organization's quarterly meetings. He said that he would be happy to look into this and asked Mr. Ward to please share with him contact information for the staff he had reached out to at IEPA so that he could follow up. Mr. Ward said he would do so, and thanked Mr. Kohn for exploring the feasibility of CWPAC members securing such credits and what steps would be required.

At this time, several CWPAC members raised other operational and reporting issues, including required submittals to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) of an annual water audit form known as the LMO-2. Members commented on the LMO-2's complexity and the difficulties encountered in completing the form, which details the amount of water used by a community or water system holding a Lake Michigan allocation permit during each "water year" (October to September) and is used by IDNR to track compliance with allocation permits and to produce reports. Lengthy discussion ensued, during which other matters were mentioned, including a perceived lack of coordination between IEPA and U.S. EPA concerning compliance and reporting on water matters, such as reporting on inventories of lead service lines and lead and copper samples.

Ms. Swisher mentioned that the City of Joliet had met with IDNR officials, including Stephen Altman of the Division of Water Resource Management and current IDNR Office of Water Resources Director Natalie Phelps Finnie (who succeeded now-retired Director Loren Wobig). She said they discussed issues pertaining to LMO-2 reporting procedures, and the agency's leadership expressed interest in working with Lake Michigan allocation permit holders to change the form to make it easier to complete and submit.

At the conclusion of the discussion, members agreed that it might be helpful for the CWPAC to establish a task force to explore ways to amend and enhance the LMO-2 reporting process and provide feedback to IDNR. Members also supported the idea of inviting representatives of the IEPA, U.S. EPA, and IDNR to address the CWPAC membership at future meetings.

Mr. Kohn thanked the members for the helpful conversation about these issues and ideas. He then asked if anyone had any additional comments or other matters they wished to discuss. Hearing none, Mr. Kohn said the location of the next 2025 meeting will be shared with the membership as soon as it is confirmed, and he concluded by again thanking the Village of Bridgeview and Mr. Green for hosting today's meeting.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the CWPAC, Mr. Kohn asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Said motion was offered, seconded, and approved by unanimous voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 11:13 a.m.**