

OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD HELD ON MAY 01, 2007 AT THE REGIONAL DISTRICT OF OKANAGAN- SIMILKAMEEN, PENTICTON, BC.

PRESENT: Chair John Slater Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Len Novakowski Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Robert Hobson Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Graham Reid Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Lorraine Bennest Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Rick Fairbairn Regional District North Okanagan
Director Ron Perrie Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Tom Siddon Okanagan Water Stewardship Council
Director Toby Pike Water Supply Association of B.C.
~~Director Tim Manuel Okanagan Nation Alliance (absent)~~
~~Director Glen Taylor Regional District North Okanagan (absent)~~
Director Buffy Baumbrough Regional District North Okanagan

STAFF: Greg Armour Program Manager, OBWB
Dr. Anna Warwick Sears Water Stewardship Director, OBWB
Genevieve Doyle Water Stewardship Coordinator, OBWB
Inge van Oostveen Administration & Communications, OBWB

OTHERS

PRESENT: David Gregory Mayor of Summerland

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Slater called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

Moved by Director Perrie

Seconded by Director Fairbairn

"That Mr. David Gregory be welcomed to the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board as a guest."

CARRIED.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Director Hobson

Seconded by Director Fairbairn

"That the Agenda for a regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on May 01, 2007 be approved as circulated."

CARRIED.**3. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS**

Moved by Director Hobson

Seconded by Director Reid

"That Correspondence Item 7.6, a letter from the Science and Information Branch of the Ministry of Environment dated April 30, 2007, be added as a Late Item."

CARRIED.**4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board held April 03, 2007.

Moved by Director Hobson

Seconded by Director Reid

"That the minutes of a regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board held on April 03, 2007 at the Regional District of North Okanagan be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED.**5. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS****5.1 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grants – Staff Recommendations for 2007 Grant Awards**

Moved by Director Hobson

Seconded by Director Novakowksi

"That staff recommendations for 2007 Grant Awards of the Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grants be approved."

CARRIED.**Discussion of 2007 Grant Program:**

Director Reid commended staff on a job well done, adding that future funding decisions will benefit from a successful track record.

Director Hobson inquired whether the political body approving or endorsing a funded project could offer some guarantee that the data collected by the project would be put to use or implemented.

Director Hobson wondered how we can encourage community organizations or citizen-led initiatives to apply and receive funding for important projects in communities throughout the Basin.

Dr. Sears advised the Board that funding was distributed between different types of projects, and that each successful project received funding as close as possible to the requested amount to ensure project success.

Director Pike inquired whether recommendations for partial funding were derived by an established formula or determined subjectively.

Dr. Sears replied that the Regional Districts, and in particular, the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, may at times advise staff on the suitability or priority of some grant applications.

6. STAFF REPORTS

6.1 Minutes of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council Meeting held on April 12, 2007

Moved by Director Hobson

Seconded by Director Bennest

"That the minutes of a regular meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council held on April 12, 2007 be received."

CARRIED.

Discussion of the User Needs Assessment workshop:

Dr. Sears said that the Water Supply and Demand Study will require input from a wide variety of stakeholders to ensure it is relevant for users at all levels. The current needs assessment report spans more than 60 pages. Workshop participants emphasized the need for high quality data.

Director Siddon reviewed the 60-page report and commented that little new information was revealed, that a summary was missing, that the data was buried in tables, and that the user needs assessed were not comprehensive enough.

Chair Slater agreed that the outcome of the report seemed pre-determined and did not reflect suggestions made previously by this Board.

Director Siddon wondered whether Board members should write to express their individual disappointment or provide collective feedback.

Director Fairbairn commented that the report was confusing for the layperson and lacked a

precise, easy to comprehend summary.

Director Bennest expressed concern regarding the cost and directions of the WS&D study, and requested that the Board and staff re-direct the consultants accordingly.

Dr. Sears replied that the user needs assessment was only one aspect of the study, and that the core components - hydrologic and water budget modeling - are proceeding in a rigorous process.

Director Reid suggested separate discussions or workshops for a scientific user group and a practical user group.

Director Siddon reiterated the need for red/green/yellow “traffic light” modeling.

Director Pike considered the study from an applied point of view, and wondered how much of licensed allocation is currently being used. Are water licenses based on sound supply data, and how robust is our supply information? He suspects many gaps in our current supply data, and wishes to increase the confidence level.

Director Hobson agreed, stating that although all models by their very nature include some level of uncertainty, more accurate information and modeling is vital for decision-makers.

Dr. Sears explained that information collected at the workshops will be reviewed by the working group and steering committee. The collection of demand data and the development of the hydrological model and water budget model are already underway.

Director Fairbairn encouraged the steering committee to focus the consultants’ direction for the next step.

Director Siddon placed high priority on addressing allocation questions.

Director Reid emphasized the need for scientists to calculate error factors and suggested that from a user standpoint, error should be expressed as a range or probability. Decision makers in the valley require accurate data with as little error as possible, given the dollars spent.

Director Siddon commented that the error factor increases as time progresses, and that the model would still provide a rough idea.

Chair Slater stated that if the model is accurate at this point in time, we should be able to plug in more data to improve the model for future use.

Mr. Armour added that confidence levels will increase as more accurate information is added. Weaker components of the study can be identified and efforts will be made to decrease uncertainty. The level of error is within limits and should still allow the Board and others to make better decisions. Mr. Armour agreed with Director Pike that many unknowns remain.

Director Pike suggested that outcomes of the study may assist the Board in developing policy resolutions.

6.2 Presentation to First Nation Chiefs' Executive Council

Mr. Armour and Dr. Sears reported on their presentation to the First Nation Chief's Executive Council in Revelstoke on April 26, 2007. Common interests in water management and stewardship were identified. Chief Fabian Alexis was appointed to the Water Stewardship Council. Discussion of the Water Supply and Demand study ensued. Chief Alexis identified a potential Ministry of Health funding opportunity through the First Nations environmental toxins fund with an application deadline of November 2007. Staff recommends pursuing further collaboration and partnerships with Okanagan Nation for mutual benefit.

Chair Slater suggested that UBCO could take a lead role on this project.

Director Hobson expressed interest in inviting greater collaboration and participation with Okanagan Nation and advised that a member of the band (non-voting) will now attend Kelowna council meetings.

6.3 Water Supply Association Discussion Paper and Interior Health Authority Proposal for Presentation at June Meeting

Staff advised that the Board draft specific questions to be addressed by the Interior Health Authority (IHA) at the June meeting.

Director Reid identified source water protection as a primary concern.

Director Siddon encouraged the Board to continue finding collaborative solutions, and to embrace this opportunity for leadership by the IHA.

Director Pike observed that the IHA is becoming more responsive and that some conditions of the 4-3-2-1-0 protocol have been relaxed. The Water Supply Association (WSA) has drafted a Discussion Paper to gather input.

Director Bennest suggested that the Board review its role in these discussions and that the Minister should direct IHA to meet with water purveyors for resolution.

Director Hobson suggested prioritizing and acquiring funding for high risk projects, and assessing actual, short-term risks to develop practical solutions. Water treated to drinking water standards is not necessary for all users, and developing an end-user solution only (i.e. a filtration plant) does not address watershed activities and other factors affecting water quality.

Director Fairbairn suggested staff work closely with the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council to develop the questions to be addressed by the IHA.

Dr. Sears will provide a draft for circulation to directors.

Director Pike suggested that IHA requires the highest standards to assure public protection, and cautioned that policy development should be valley-wide, encompassing source water protection, funding of capital projects, infrastructure standards and measurable outcomes, while recognizing that the vast majority of water-borne diseases can be attributed to operator error.

6.4 Ministry of Environment Grant for Water Supply and Demand Study – OBWB Press Release

Mr. Armour confirmed that the Board has received \$250,000 in funding for the Water Supply and Demand Study from the Provincial Government, matched by \$100,000 from the Board. Additionally, Groundwater Assessment of the Okanagan Basin will receive \$5,000 in funding.

6.5 Planning Institute of BC Conference – OBWB Presentation

Dr. Sears was invited to make a presentation to 25 planners attending the Planning Institute of BC Conference in Kelowna on April 25, 2007. Response to this outreach effort was very positive, many questions were asked, and agricultural usage was identified as a main topic of interest.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

7.1 Minister of Environment, Barry Penner – Copy of Letter to NORD concerning Sewage Discharge into Sugar Lake

Director Fairbairn advised that concerns from residents have not been addressed and that the matter remains in the hands of solicitors.

Director Hobson stated that municipal sewage regulations have been discussed at many meetings, including the Union of BC Municipalities, and that it remains unclear what the effect of any outcome-based regulations will be. He also observed that the overall effect on whole stream management is no longer being monitored by the Ministry and is now left up to developers.

7.2 Paul Bailey, Executive Director, Health Protection, Ministry of Health – Response to Okanagan Basin Water Board Letter to Minister George Abbott

Mr. Armour informed the Board that a letter was sent to Minister Abbott to inquire how the Board can foster a better working relationship with the Interior Health Authority. Mr. Bailey's response was received.

7.3 Rick Fairbairn, Director, Electoral Area D, NORD – OBWB Service Review

Mr. Armour advised that the City of Vernon has dropped the Okanagan Basin Water Board from its regional district service review and has referred the matter directly to the province. Councillor Barry Beardsell of Vernon has requested financial information including amounts paid and requisitioned through the Sewage Facilities Assistance fund from 1975 through to 2006, and any revenues derived from the Aquatic Weed Control program.

Director Baumbrough clarified that Councillor Beardsell wished to review the costs and benefits to each jurisdiction, and that he intends to pursue financial support from Province should the Water Board's mandate be significantly expanded. Further clarification will be obtained at the next City of Vernon council meeting.

7.4 Morning Star Paper – NORD Service Review of OBWB

The article was received by the Board.

7.5 Okanagan Partnership – Request for Sponsorship for ‘Our Okanagan and Okanagan Sustainability Week’ (Quest Workshops)

Moved by Director Hobson

Seconded by Director Reid

"That the Okanagan Basin Water Board declines a request from the Okanagan Partnership for sponsorship of ‘Our Okanagan and Okanagan Sustainability Week’ (Quest Workshops)"
CARRIED.

Dr. Sears informed the Board that the Okanagan Partnership is promoting the Quest model throughout the Okanagan, and that she will make herself available to participate in Quest workshops in Penticton, Kelowna and Vernon to answer any questions. Dr. Sears strongly supports participating in the workshops, but does not recommend sponsorship until the suitability of the Quest model for local planning purposes has been demonstrated.

Director Reid commented that elected officials already recognize these important issues and are working towards collaborative solutions, and recommended declining the request for sponsorship.

Director Novakowski recognized the importance of OkanaganQuest and recommended that the Board support its activities, but advised a wait-and-see attitude prior to further participation.

Director Bennest expressed concerns about the use of the model as a statement of fact rather than as a theoretical model.

Director Hobson echoed Director Bennest's concerns about the use of a theoretical model and suggested that the model is incomplete without an ecological layer containing sensitive habitat data and on the ground information.

Dr. Sears stated that there is interest in the scientific community to further develop and integrate other models to extend and enrich the Quest model.

Director Siddon suggested the model will be useful in engaging the public in a sustainability debate, with long-range implications for the next set of elected politicians.

Director Reid expressed concern that the model does not include enough detail for each community to draw accurate, small-scale conclusions. For example, Peachland's GPS data and the master water plan are not incorporated. A model that uses insufficient data may affect the political process inadvertently and does not recognize how communities are working to address the issues locally.

Dr. Sears suggested that participation at workshops is vital to ensuring these comments are brought forward. Dates for upcoming workshops are published in local papers.

7.6 Letter from Fern Schultz, Director of the Science and Information Branch of the Ministry of Environment dated April 30, 2007

Mr. Armour explained that the letter confirms that the Chair and Vice-Chair of this Board and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Water Stewardship Council have agreed to participate in a workshop.

Director Siddon commented that other questions arising from Ms. Schultz's presentation were not addressed by this letter, and that links to websites should not be considered sufficient.

Director Siddon encouraged staff to forward dates for workshops to the Board to encourage participation.

Mr. Armour added that the Ministry will provide a white paper prior to the workshop.

LUNCH

The Meeting broke for Lunch at 11:58am and reconvened at 12:30pm.

8. IN-CAMERA

Motion to Allow Guest to Attend the In-Camera Meeting

Moved by Director Perrie

Seconded by Director Fairbairn

"That Mr. David Gregory, Mayor of Summerland, be welcomed to the in-camera meeting as a guest."

CARRIED.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board adjourned to In-Camera session at 12:33pm.

9. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board is scheduled for June 05, 2007 at the Regional District of Central Okanagan.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The in-camera and regular meetings adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Certified Correct:

Chair

Program Manager