

Interregional Planning Council Meeting Minutes

August 12, 2020, 1:30 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.

held via Zoom Videoconference

Council decisions bolded and italicized in document

Participation: Number of Interregional Planning Council Members present 14 of 16:

A	Steve Walthour	E	Scott Reinert-absent	I	Kelley Holcomb	M	Tomas Rodriguez
B	Russell Schreiber	F	Allison Strube	J	Ray Buck - absent	N	Carl Crull
C	Kevin Ward	G	Gail Peek	K	David Wheelock	O	Melanie Barnes
D	Jim Thompson	H	Mark Evans	L	Suzanne Scott	P	Patrick Brzozowski

Facilitator: Suzanne Schwartz

Senators/Representatives/Other VIPs in Attendance: None noted

TWDB Board Members and Staff: Director Kathleen Jackson, Matt Nelson, Temple McKinnon, Sarah Backhouse, Ron Ellis, Elizabeth McCoy, Kevin Smith, Bryan McMath

MEETING GENERAL

Chair Suzanne Scott (Region L) called the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda. Temple McKinnon (TWDB) determined that a quorum was present. TWDB Director Kathleen Jackson provided opening remarks and thanked members for their work on the Council.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Public Comment** – No public comments were offered.

2. **Consideration of Meeting Minutes from July 29, 2020 Meeting**

The Council considered the minutes of the July 29, 2020 meeting and reviewed a proposed edit from Gail Peek (Region G). Jim Thompson (Region D) made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Carl Crull (Region N) seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

3. **Consider Committee Reports and Recommendations**

Ms. Scott introduced the agenda item. Committee reports will present initial recommendations for Council consideration and provide opportunity to answer any questions for clarification needed by Council members. The goal of the discussion was to get a sense of support for committee recommendations and provide guidance back to the committees based on Council deliberations. Ms. Scott also noted that a compiled document of the 2021 Initially Prepared Plans policy recommendations is now available on the Council's webpage.

a. **Planning Water Resources for the State as a Whole Committee**

Approved September 15, 2020

Committee Chair Mark Evans (Region H) reported that the Planning Water Resources for the State as a Whole Committee has met three times and has one recommendation to present to the Council. The committee recommends that the regional water planning process should include long range and visionary planning.

Mr. Evans observed that the current regional water planning process does not sufficiently encourage identification and inclusion of multi-regional projects. The focus on drought of record, sponsorship of projects, and project cost does not facilitate the consideration of inter-regional and statewide water planning projects.

The committee recommends that the TWDB should revise the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapters 357 and 358 and include a new, specific task in the regional water planning group (RWPG) contracted scope of work to authorize:

- Long-range, visionary planning effort, beyond the current 50-year planning horizon, to identify projected statewide water needs (potential water shortages) and multi-regional projects to address these needs;
- Long-range, visionary planning to consider longer-term droughts greater than recorded drought of record (e.g., mega-droughts); and
- Evaluation of identified feasible projects without limitation of sponsorship or costs.

Mr. Evans outlined recommendations that the Legislature should support multi-regional and statewide projects developed from long-range, visionary planning by:

- Returning to providing initial sponsorship of projects without guarantees from local sponsors;
- Providing financial incentives for local sponsorship;
- Providing additional funding for the regional water planning process to accommodate tasks associated with long range, visionary planning.
- Utilizing state agencies to develop a state level vision of planning resources for the state as a whole; and
- Establishing a process for coordination amongst state agencies related to installation of infrastructure during planning and construction of large-scale projects.

Mr. Evans then highlighted the benefit that implementing multi-regional and visionary planning beyond the region-centric, 50-year horizon, and recorded drought of record would aggregate and identify larger water needs not addressed currently by RWPGs. It is anticipated that large-scale projects would require multiple sponsors and/or state sponsorships. Such projects may be considered feasible with greater state financial incentives such as subsidies or state participation or state partnership in projects.

Mr. Evans noted that the committee has two meetings scheduled to discuss other potential recommendations and consider additional observations to include in the committee's report.

Ms. Scott observed that the recommendation highlights constraints of the current regional water planning process in only using the drought of record to meet future water needs. The current process doesn't address climate variability or future mega-droughts, and projects in the regional water plans require a sponsor to be brought forward. Requiring a sponsor for projects limits innovation in the process. Mr. Evans agreed and added that the recommendation reflects that this could work within framework of the existing regional water planning process. The committee intentionally wanted to include something that could specifically be a funded task in the regional water planning process. The

process is regional in nature, but this recommendation is for RWPGs to do visionary planning. Ms. Scott added that this recommendation also responds to direction RWPGs have received to evaluate and consider innovative water management strategies, such as aquifer storage and recovery and desalination.

Kelley Holcomb (Region I) asked if the committee discussed state participation or other funding streams. Mr. Evans referred Mr. Holcomb to the brief benefit included in the committee report and noted that multi-regional and visionary projects could be more feasible with incentives and subsidies or state participation, but also state partnership. Mr. Holcomb asked if the committee discussed the unique reservoir site process. Mr. Evans noted he did not recall if that was specifically discussed. Mr. Crull added that the committee discussed in general terms how to get large projects evaluated in advance for proper planning to occur. Kevin Ward (Region C) noted the legislature has a process for unique reservoir sites. The committee limited discussion to things that didn't have an existing process in place.

Mr. Ward provided examples of projects that have benefited from state participation. He outlined changes in the state's position of partnering on projects and posited that the state should be a partner in development of future visionary projects; not just limit its role to providing state participation funding. Meeting facilitator, Suzanne Schwartz, asked if Mr. Ward's concerns are captured in the proposed recommendations to the legislature. Mr. Ward confirmed his concerns are captured in the recommendation.

Ms. Scott reiterated that if the state was involved, a project could be developed without initially having a customer base already agreed to pay for it. The state can override costs for future demands in 50 years. Mr. Ward noted that the Sabine project (Toledo Bend Reservoir) is an example of building to optimal development not just what is currently or projected to be needed. Ultimately, interests came in and bought the capacity. He added that this has worked in the past and could possibly work again. Mr. Evans added the recommendation facilitates the state having skin in the game and a long-range planning process. Mr. Holcomb noted he supports the recommendation but added that the TWDB can't fund projects if the legislature doesn't appropriate funds for the agency to do so.

Mr. Thompson expressed concern that language in the recommendation indicates a more centralized approach to regional water planning. He cited the legislative recommendations to utilize state agencies to develop a state level vision of planning resources for the state as a whole and to establish a process for coordination amongst state agencies related to installation of infrastructure during planning and construction of large-scale projects. Mr. Thompson noted that he doesn't disagree with long-term planning but is cautious about planning for 75 years in the future. There are a lot of unknowns.

Mr. Evans indicated he understood Mr. Thompson's point about uncertainty of planning beyond 50 years. The committee will discuss his concerns about the recommendation. Mr. Evans reiterated that the recommendation is designed to work within the existing process and would be something additional for RWPGs to plan beyond the 50-year planning period if they so choose.

Ms. Scott highlighted Mr. Thompson's point on future uncertainty and added that all of the science and modelling the RWPGs have is backwards looking. Standardized models and data are needed to allow RWPGs to think about future conditions. Climate models are not consistent. It is challenging to plan for future unknowns. She added that the TWDB has done a good job providing commonality in RWPG data, specifically population and demand projections and water availability modeling; however, funding for

data that could help RWPGs look forward may be needed. Ms. Scott noted that some water availability models haven't been updated since the 1980s and need to be updated.

Ms. Scott asked members if there was consensus for the committee to move forward with the recommendation. No objections were noted. ***The Committee was authorized to proceed with work on its recommendation based upon Council deliberations.***

b. Ways to Enhance Interregional Coordination Committee

Committee Chair Gail Peek provided a report on the Enhancing Interregional Coordination Committee. The Committee met on August 6 and focused on revising the committee's problem and goal statement to include interregional conflict.

The following revised problem statement was presented: *In creating regional water plans that comprise the state water plan, the expectations for the scale at which planning groups coordinate is not clear, throughout the state. Coordination requirements are not fully formalized in statute or rule, coordination roles of consultants and liaisons are not fully specified, and regions are not always coordinating early enough in the process. Regions should consider opportunities for coordination and collaboration among Regions affected by the use of the water resource or impacted by the use of the water resource. In addition, where there are areas of interregional conflict between Regions, consideration needs to be given to the roles and responsibilities of sponsors, stakeholders, consultants and liaisons. Further it is important to consider the planning process administrative timing requirements. Although there have been few interregional conflicts, Regions may not be coordinating effectively on issues related to shared water resources and the development of multi-regional projects.*

Mr. Holcomb noted that the statement appears to include recommendations or suggested improvements to the process. Ms. Scott noted that the portion of text starting at "Regions should consider" and ending at "consider the planning process administrative timing requirements" appears to get into solutions for the problem. Ms. Peek agreed that the committee will rework the language and bring a revised problem statement back to the Council for consideration.

The following revised goal statement was presented: ***Regions coordinate early and throughout the planning cycle to identify and share knowledge of areas of mutual interest, potential impacts, identification of water management strategies that impact more than one Region, and cooperate to address water supply needs of their regions and identify ways the TWDB can assist the planning groups in meeting these goals.***

The revised goal statement adds language that regions coordinate on identification of water management strategies that impact more than one region. Mr. Holcomb made a motion to approve the revised goal statement. Mr. Evans seconded the motion. No opposition was noted. ***The Council unanimously approved the revised goal statement.***

Mr. Evans asked if the committee was suggesting that a requirement is needed for RWPGs to document that there has been coordination between regions. He asked if coordination requirements are not already formalized in statute or rule, is that a requirement that RWPGs want? Ms. Scott noted that this is the problem statement that is guiding what the committee is addressing. Based on previous Council discussion, there didn't seem to be formal and consistent coordination occurring between regions. Ms. Peek agreed adding what the committee has seen is that there are institutionalized opportunities for coordination, but it is not clear if there is any coordination happening. She provided the example that an

RWPG committee, such as the Region G's Scope of Work Committee, could be a required entity by which such coordination occurs and is documented.

Melanie Barnes (Region O) reiterated that the problem statement basically states that regions aren't directed or don't consider opportunities for collaboration until later in the process, and then at that point issues may not be fully addressed. She offered that regions aren't asked to address conflict until late in the process because regions don't know there is a conflict until later in the process; and perhaps the problem statement could be rewritten to capture what isn't happening rather than what should be considered. Regions may be busy developing their plans in a bubble. Mr. Evans noted concern that when talking about recommending changes to statute and rules, recommendations should clearly articulate what is requested; providing the example of simplified planning.

Ms. Scott asked if TWDB agreed with the statement that coordination is not fully formalized. Ms. McKinnon noted that it is the committee's recommendation, but TWDB is always looking for ideas for improvement. 31 TAC Chapter 358 outlines guidance principles and speak to coordination that should occur in regional water plan development. She added that the TWDB can always help the regions improve coordination. Matt Nelson (TWDB) noted that TWDB can offer support, reminders, and suggest ways to support coordination, but balance is needed. Ms. McKinnon noted that all three committees have identified that coordination needs to be done better, and there is always room for improvement.

Ms. Scott suggested coordination needs to be done sooner and people need to understand the benefits of coordination. Mr. Nelson noted this could be done as a best practice and not necessarily a rule change.

Ms. Peek noted that regions need to be able to access information and requirements of which they are not aware and to see where coordination can fit into the process, as directed by Rep. Larson. Mr. Nelson added that perhaps regions just need to be reminded of the process. More awareness could help spur things along. Ms. McKinnon noted that after the TWDB receives the Council's report, TWDB will work with the Council on implementation.

Mr. Holcomb asked what role the consultants may have in this recommended coordination since they have the data from the planning process. Ms. Peek noted this may be something to consider in recommendations. Ms. Peek then presented an overview of the committee's three draft recommendations.

The committee's first recommendation is to see if there are processes in place that RWPGs or the Committee were not aware of and identify interregional project development issues and opportunities. The planning process does not currently have explicit requirements at specific points in the timeline for RWPGs to identify project development issues and regionalization opportunities. Ms. Peek explained that the committee recommends that the TWDB revise administrative contract and rule requirements to include those requirements as a line item in the contract scope of work.

Ms. Scott noted the committee report recommends the TWDB provide RWPGs a report of all recommended and alternative water management strategies for each region in the initially prepared plans (IPP) soon after the submittal of the IPPs. Mr. Crull suggested this is not early enough. Ms. Scott also expressed concern that this is late in the process. Mr. Holcomb noted the earliest the report could be provided is when RWPGs consider water management strategy evaluations, which is still late in the process. Ms. Peek added that the committee discussed reviewing water management strategy

information from past plans since many strategies are often carried over from plan to plan. Ms. McKinnon noted that the committee's third recommendation reflects the discussion Ms. Peek referenced.

Ms. Scott asked if this evaluation could be done when water needs are developed. Mr. Nelson reminded members that an interactive map was provided to the regions after needs were developed to help regions geographically assess where shared projects could be developed. He offered that TWDB could emphasize that tool more in the future. Ms. McKinnon added that TWDB plans to provide the interactive needs map again in the future. She clarified that regions can better coordinate earlier in the process, but water management strategy data developed in support of the regional water plans would need to be provided after the IPPs are submitted.

Patrick Brzozowski (Region P) added that most project sponsors who have a project in the regional water plan have considered the project for a long time, discussed potential impacts, and may have started coordination efforts. Mr. Brzozowski noted the problem is where consideration of projects falls in the planning process. He suggested this needs to happen as early as possible. Regions should consider moving up identification of potential feasible water management strategies, but there are limitations on needing to know projected demands and needs. He suggested a list of the projects from the previous regional water plan could be considered earlier in the process to get an understanding of the impacts outside the region. Ms. Peek added that regions could review the project list to see if there are opportunities for collaboration. This could also prevent or address interregional conflict earlier in the process.

Ms. Scott summarized that there are concerns about timing and addressing things earlier in the cycle, sponsors likely know issues with their projects and this should be discussed sooner, consultants should coordinate earlier, and TWDB could develop needs earlier and bring together adjacent regions when needs are identified.

Mr. Nelson noted that regions used to scope water management strategies before knowing what the projected needs were. He suggested there may be a need to evaluate projects in previous plans to consider options for combined projects in the next planning cycle.

Mr. Holcomb suggested that recommendations should include consultants since they work closely with the data and should be a player in making sure RWPGs are aware of potential conflicts. Consultants should inform the RWPGs when a water management strategy crosses regional boundaries. Ms. Peek is seeking information on how each RWPG approaches water management strategy evaluations (e.g. RWPG scope of work committees).

Ms. McKinnon pointed out that the recommendation that the required pre-planning meeting and meeting to review the region's potential feasible water management strategy identification process include discussion and consideration of issues and opportunities for interregional coordination. It is also recommended that the Technical Memorandum include discussion and consideration of issues and opportunities for interregional coordination. Ms. Scott agreed with the recommendations and suggested that liaisons be invited to the noted meetings to ensure coordination is happening. Mr. Nelson noted the liaisons are informed of these meetings.

Mr. Brzozowski asked how many consultants are involved in regional water planning. Ms. McKinnon estimated that there are roughly 14 consultants working with the regions. Mr. Brzozowski noted that

regions rely on consultants to coordinate with consultants of neighboring regions and suggested a requirement for a meeting of consultants of adjacent regions.

Mr. Holcomb observed that RWPGs aren't provided a table that lists water management strategies from outside their region. He added that a table with water management strategies that includes the region of origin and the region of use would be valuable. Mr. Nelson asked if the intent was for the list to be used to identify potential conflicts or for collaboration. Ms. Scott suggested it would be used to improve coordination, awareness, and identification of impacts. Ms. McKinnon offered that the TWDB could provide the information requested. The committee recommends the TWDB provide RWPGs a list of recommended water management strategies and organize the data to show if the strategy is located outside the region of recommendation.

Mr. Holcomb suggested that relying on public notices to inform regions of strategies proposed to be located in their region may not be a good process. This requires everyone to be paying attention. He suggested that providing regions a table with this information could work better. Ms. McKinnon noted that planning rules require RWPGs to provide notice of any recommended water management strategies that are located in another region to the region the strategy is located in. She added that TWDB does not monitor those notices. Mr. Nelson informed the Council that these notices are likely submitted to a region's chair and political subdivision.

Ms. Scott summarized that the committee's first recommendation aims to have the interregional project development process occur at a specific time in the planning process, include comprehensive notifications that are distributed broadly, and better identify impacts on regions.

Ms. Peek introduced the committee's second recommendation to coordinate and collaborate on interregional issues and opportunities. She noted this recommendation focuses on how RWPGs can identify opportunities to collaborate early in planning process. Some comments provided for the first recommendation may also apply to this recommendation. Ms. Scott agreed and suggested it may be appropriate for the committee to consider combining the two recommendations since they are similar. Ms. Peek added the goal of this recommendation is to invite liaisons and create a user-friendly access point for RWPG members to know what's going on. Consultants should also have a role.

Ms. Peek introduced the committee's third recommendation to develop an early mechanism to identify strategies using water resources in another region or that would impact another region. Ms. Peek explained that the committee's recommendation identifies relevant portions of statute and offers adjustments that will allow RWPGs more time to address issues that could result in potential interregional conflicts. Ms. Scott noted there may be an awareness issue. It appears the process is place, but it may not be deliberate enough.

Ms. Scott asked members if there were any additional comments on the committee's recommendations. She suggested the committee consider combining the first and second recommendation to have one focus on communication and one on timing. Ms. Peek noted the committee is scheduled to meet on August 28 and September 9 and will consider the Council's feedback.

Ms. Scott asked members if there was consensus for the committee to move forward with the recommendations. No objections were noted. ***The Committee was authorized to proceed with work on its recommendations based upon Council deliberations.***

Ms. Scott noted the committee report also indicates the committee is considering additional recommendations on the role of RWPG liaisons and alternative processes to resolve interregional conflicts outside of the regional water planning process.

c. General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee

Committee Chair Steve Walthour (Region A) reported that the General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee has met five times and has seven recommendations to present to the Council.

Mr. Walthour presented the committee's first recommendation on the simplified planning process, which included recommendations for the Legislature to amend the language in Texas Water Code (TWC) Section 16.053(i) to either: discontinue the requirement to update groundwater and surface water availability values in the regional water plan if those availability numbers have not changed significantly, or strike simplified planning from the statute. The committee recommends that the TWDB evaluates alternatives to the current simplified planning process that address timing and data concerns.

Mr. Walthour added there may also be an opportunity to better align the groundwater management area and regional water planning processes. Mr. Nelson noted that the TWDB modified the groundwater water availability timing to better sync up with the regional water planning process. He acknowledged there is a time delay between when the desired future conditions are set and when the modelled available groundwater is produced, but the timing has been addressed as best it can.

Mr. Walthour presented the committee's second recommendation on enhancing membership engagement and general public engagement. He summarized that RWPGs are experiencing a variety of communication and engagement issues. There are RWPG members that are not participating or understanding the processes. A lot information is available, but members either aren't receiving it or paying attention. The following recommendations were reviewed:

The Legislature should:

1. Provide funding for better methods of disseminating of information for the regional water planning process.
2. Authorize the use of one-way conferencing or webinars.

The TWDB should:

1. Provide policy recommendations developed by the Interregional Planning Council to all RWPGs to inform their planning process.
2. Provide a distilled policy recommendations report from all adopted regional water plans, sorted by topic, to the RWPGs and the Council.
3. Provide an update to the above report, at an appropriate time in the planning cycle, of the implementation status of recommendations to the RWPGs and the Council.
4. Consider engaging a media consultant to develop better methods of coordination among the RWPGs.
5. Develop standardized, easy to adopt practices and protocols that apply to all regions.

The RWPGs should:

1. Provide more focus on new member orientations.
2. Utilize educational programs and subject matter speakers in each RWPG.
3. Develop better methods to encourage public participation via surveys, targeted email blasts, and website updates for all RWPGs.

Future Interregional Planning Councils should:

1. Hold work sessions to “deep dive” into more complicated topics.
2. Require RWPG Chairs to meet on an annual basis at minimum.

Mr. Walthour explained that the proposed recommendations will enable RWPG membership and the public to be more engaged and increase their understanding of the process. He added that RWPGs could do a better job of informing members of water infrastructure projects and water conservation projects that were funded by the TWDB as a result of RWPG efforts.

Mr. Walthour presented the committee’s third recommendation on communication between TWDB, RWPGs, and Members. Mr. Walthour noted that RWPGs are often unaware of educational material, program resources, and assistance made available by the TWDB. TWDB correspondence is not always distributed to the full membership or is simply not viewed because of email overload. The following recommendations were reviewed:

The TWDB should:

1. Require RWPGs to receive orientation services provided by the TWDB at the beginning of each cycle,
2. Require RWPG Chairs and Administrative Agents to follow recommendations in the Best Management Practices Guide document, and
3. Invest in inter-agency, intra-agency, or professional media consultants to assist TWDB in effectively delivering digital messages to RWPG members.

The RWPGs should:

1. Follow recommendations regarding communication with RWPG members as outlined in the Best Management Practices Guide.
2. RWPG members should read the Best Management Practices Guide and New Member Guide.

The committee also recommends that future Interregional Planning Councils should review existing technology and recommend appropriate changes.

Mr. Walthour proposed that implementing this recommendation will enable RWPG membership to make informed decisions by increasing members’ understanding of the process and resources available. He added that TWDB has a lot of resources available and has provided this information to the regions. It appears regions aren’t paying attention or information isn’t begin shared with general membership. He noted that until recently he wasn’t aware that a RWPG New Member Guide or Best Practices Guide was available. Mr. Walthour noted that if regions followed the best practices in these guides, many of the problems that regions face would go away. He added that TWDB staff are providing needed information, but regions aren’t paying attention. He offered that TWDB should consider if there is someone in the agency or outside the agency that can help deliver the message better and work with staff to help develop a process to improve communication. Ms. McKinnon noted that TWDB is meeting with internal Communications staff on this issue and will report back to the committee on what is possible.

Ms. Scott agreed that TWDB has a lot of information available. The issue is finding and using the information. She added that anything to enhance that process would be an improvement. Ms. Scott noted that RWPG members volunteer their time to participate in the regional water planning process

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while holding other jobs. It can be a challenge for members to provide enough attention to regional water planning and this needs to be improved. She acknowledged that she wasn't aware of the guide's Mr. Walthour had mentioned and agreed that new members should read these documents as part of an orientation to the process.

Mr. Nelson acknowledged that this is an ongoing issue. TWDB has received feedback from regions that the agency should not send things directly to RWPG members, but this approach can be reviewed again. Ms. Scott agreed that communication is a constant challenge that many entities experience.

Mr. Walthour presented the committee's fourth recommendation for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to serve as an ex-officio member of the RWPGs. Mr. Walthour noted that 5 of the 16 RWPGs currently have a TCEQ representative serving as a non-voting member. RWPGs often have questions regarding public drinking water systems, surface water rights and availability, and permitting requirements that could best be answered or followed up on by representatives from the TCEQ. TCEQ is not required by statute to have representation on RWPGs.

The committee recommends that the Legislature should amend TWC Sec. 16.053(c) to add TCEQ as an ex-officio member of each RWPG. If TWC Sec. 16.053(c) isn't amended, the TWDB should coordinate with TCEQ and amend TAC 357.11(e) to require RWPGs add a staff member from TCEQ as a non-voting member. TWDB should also review and make a recommendation to the Legislature regarding additional non-voting members that affect statewide regional water planning stakeholders. In the event that TWC 16.053(c) or TAC 357.11(e) are not amended, RWPGs should consider adding TCEQ as an ex-officio member.

Mr. Walthour noted that implementing this recommendation would consistently provide RWPGs a subject matter expert and resource for water issues addressed by the TCEQ. This recommendation could increase coordination between the TWDB and the TCEQ on planning and regulatory requirements.

Mr. Walthour presented the committee's fifth recommendation on reimbursement of labor costs for regional water planning administrative agents. He noted that the role of the RWPG's administrative agency includes a significant amount of administrative work. Administrative agencies spend exorbitant amounts of time performing this role in which reimbursement of labor costs are prohibited by the TWDB.

The committee recommends that the Legislature should provide additional funding for the regional water planning process to accommodate labor costs for administering RWPGs so that grant resources are not taken from required planning tasks. In addition, TWDB should consider allowing for the reimbursement of labor costs for the RWPG's designated administrative agency and revise TAC Chapter 355 and regional water planning grant contract expense budget limitations to accommodate these expenses. It is also recommended that RWPGs include requests for funding in Chapter 8 recommendations of the regional water plans.

Mr. Walthour noted that implementing this recommendation would encourage political subdivisions to take on the role of the administrative agency for regional water planning. The agencies would no longer be penalized for accepting the responsibility of administering the regional water planning process.

Ms. Scott asked if TWDB agreed with this recommendation. Mr. Nelson noted that reimbursement of administrative labor costs is not currently allowed in regional water planning. TWDB has recently

allowed limited reimbursement of administrative labor costs in the regional flood planning program rules, and allowing such reimbursement is being considered for the next round of regional water planning contracts. He noted that the legislature has not allocated any additional funds to cover administrative costs. Funds for reimbursement would be taken out of the existing RWPG budget.

Mr. Thompson agreed with the recommendation. Region D is a rural area without large water agencies that can support the RWPG. The current Region D political subdivision won't be supporting the RWPG in the next planning cycle. Mr. Thompson noted there is limited interest in administering the RWPG because of the financial burden. Ms. Scott noted that Region L has RWPG members help fund administrative labor costs. Mr. Walthour added that Region A has a similar process. He suggested that savings from pursuit of simplified planning could be used to fund administrative costs. He added that without administration the process doesn't happen.

Ms. Scott observed that all of the recommendations the Council is considering are creating more investment in the planning process. She suggested that existing funds will not be sufficient to support such a complex process with increasing roles and responsibilities. As the planning process becomes more sophisticated, additional resources are needed to support it.

Mr. Walthour presented the committee's sixth recommendation on Open Meetings Act modification of video-conference restrictions. He noted that due to the pandemic the Governor has temporarily suspended some of the Open Meetings Act requirements, which has allowed RWPGs to conduct virtual meetings. During this period any person regardless of where they are in the world has been afforded the opportunity to participate in public meetings and provide public comment if they wish making the open meetings process more transparent.

The committee recommends that the Legislature should amend the Open Meetings Act to allow state and local governments to use electronic media such as video conferencing as an alternative to requiring the public and governmental officials to be physically present to make public comment or consider actions during an open meeting. In addition, the TWDB should evaluate the fiscal impacts associated with technology required for virtual meetings.

Mr. Walthour noted that implementing this recommendation would allow state and local government to use electronic media such as video conferencing as an alternative to holding in person only meetings. This would create a more efficient process by allowing greater governmental transparency during consideration of items on an agenda and provide the public an avenue for increased meeting participation.

Mr. Evans suggested the recommendation be revised to be more specific to the regional water planning process and not address broadly having allowances for state and local governments. Ms. Scott agreed.

Mr. Ward noted he was reluctant to support this recommendation. It can be difficult to conduct business in virtual meetings and be effective in all aspects. He added that he would not support virtual meetings in lieu of in person meetings. He might be able to support allowing virtual meetings for certain committee meetings or allowing in person meetings with an option to join virtually. Ms. Scott noted that Region L used to be allowed to have people call in to committee in workgroup meetings. This allowed for a lot of participation.

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Mr. Thompson noted that Region D has several members that do not have access to computers, which makes participation in virtual meetings a burden. He suggested that the public in his region gets more out of in person meetings. In person meetings allows people to have more discussions and get to know each other.

Mr. Holcomb added that it wasn't the committee's intent to have virtual meetings in lieu of in person meetings. He agreed that meeting in person has more benefits than virtual meetings. Mr. Walthour agreed with the Council's comments. The committee will take this discussion into consideration when finalizing the recommendation.

Ms. Scott summarized that the discussion noted a preference for in person meetings, some RWPG members may not have access to participate in virtual meetings, there could be hybrid virtual and in person meetings for committee and large groups. Mr. Walthour indicated the committee could work with this information.

Mr. Walthour presented the committee's seventh recommendation on improving the regional water planning process. He observed regional water planning process does not adequately allow for all RWPG members to provide substantial input on how to make the process better because it is at the end of the cycle at a time when the RWPG is working on its final report. Chairs' conference calls don't provide an opportunity to brainstorm new ideas. Additionally, over 300 RWPG members do not have direct input to improve the process. Only engaging a small subset of the RWPG leads to non-engagement by the rest of the membership.

The committee recommends that the TWDB incorporate a set of management practices to improve efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste in the regional water planning process. This includes reducing or eliminating non-value-added activities and engaging the RWPG membership to map out all critical steps in planning. TWDB should evaluate the RWPG voting and non-voting membership costs of time and funding. The committee also recommends that future Interregional Planning Councils should review materials and meeting notes from TWDB's lessons learned technical meetings with RWPG consultants.

Mr. Walthour noted that implementing this recommendation would improve efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste in the planning process as well as improve productivity of the RWPG membership.

Ms. Scott asked members if there were any concerns for supporting the committee's seven recommendations with modifications based on today's discussion. No concerns were noted. ***The Committee was authorized to proceed with work on its recommendations based upon Council deliberations.***

Ms. Scott asked if the committee had considered a recommendation for a report on Chapter 8 policy recommendations in the regional water plans and implementation status updates on Chapter 8 recommendations. It was noted that such a recommendation is considered in TWDB recommendations on enhancing membership engagement and general public engagement.

Ms. Scott asked if there was anything else for the committee to consider on best practices. No additional considerations were noted.

4. Consider Council Report Development

Ms. Scott provided an update on development of the Council's report. TWDB staff are putting together background information on the creation of the Council for the report. Committee support staff will assist with putting together and formatting final recommendations to insert into the Council report. The Council report outline is being finalized and will be sent to the committees soon.

5. Discussion of Next Steps

Ms. Scott reviewed the Council meeting schedule and asked if any background materials or other information was needed for the committee and Council work. The Council is currently scheduled to meet on September 15 to review remaining committee recommendations and September 30 to finalize the Council report. A tentative Council meeting has been scheduled for October 7 in case an additional meeting is needed to finalize the Council report. All meetings will begin at 1:30 pm. The Council report is due to the TWDB on October 16, 2020.

6. Discussion of Agenda for Future Meetings

The next Council meeting is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on September 15, 2020. No additional discussion.

7. Public Comment – No public comments were offered.

8. Adjourn – Ms. Scott adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:45 p.m.