

Interregional Planning Council Meeting Minutes

November 30, 2023, 1:00 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.

Held in person in the Stephen F. Austin Building, Austin TX and virtually via Microsoft Teams

Council decisions bolded and italicized in document

Participation: Number of Interregional Planning Council members present 10 of 16

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|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|---|---------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| A | Ben Weinheimer | E | Scott Reinert – absent | I | Kelley Holcomb | M | Jim Darling |
| B | Randy Whiteman- absent | F | Scott McWilliams | J | Jonathan Letz | N | Carl Crull- absent |
| C | Jenna Covington | G | Gail Peek | K | David Van Dresar - absent | O | Melanie Barnes |
| D | Jim Thompson | H | Mark Evans | L | Tim Andrus- absent | P | Patrick Brzozowski- absent |

Presiding Officer: Council Chair Mark Evans

Senators/Representatives/Other VIPs in Attendance: None

Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) Board Members and Staff: Temple McKinnon, Elizabeth McCoy, Lann Bookout, Brittany Condry, Heather Rose, Michele Foss, Ron Ellis, and Matt Nelson

Council alternates present in addition to participating members: Tommy Ervin (Region F) and Tomas Rodriguez (Region M)

MEETING GENERAL

Elizabeth McCoy (TWDB) called roll and determined that a quorum was present. Council Chair Mark Evans (Region H) called the meeting to order.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Welcome

Mr. Evans welcomed the Council to the meeting.

2. Public Comment

Mr. Evans asked if there were any comments from members of the public. No comments were provided.

3. Minutes from August 15, 2023 Meeting

The Council considered the minutes of the August 15, 2023 meeting. Jim Darling (Region M) made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Ben Weinheimer (Region A) seconded the motion. ***The minutes were unanimously approved.***

4. Rural outreach update by TWDB

Temple McKinnon (TWDB) was asked to give a brief overview on how the TWDB is addressing water planning resources for small communities. The TWDB's Sunset Advisory Commission report included management action recommendations that TWDB should better target and track agency financial assistance and outreach for rural and economically disadvantaged communities. It also included that the TWDB should use funds to help communities in need of financial assistance. The TWDB included an exceptional item request for funding for rural assistance initiatives in the agency's legislative appropriation request.

On the technical and financial side, there is a new program called the Water Utilities Technical Assistance Program that will provide eligible utilities with financial, managerial, and technical capabilities necessary to apply for TWDB financial assistance. Ms. McKinnon mentioned that this information is available on the TWDB website and additional information on this topic will be shared with regional water planning groups (RWPGs).

The Board requested and received \$320,000 of additional funding for RWPG rural and other outreach. RWPGs and their technical consultants will conduct outreach as part of regional water plan development. RWPG contracts have been amended to include this additional funding and enhanced language in the public outreach task that clarifies expectations for rural outreach. RWPGs are required to keep track of which entities were contacted, which were not responsive, and include a summary of outreach efforts in the regional water plan. The scope of work emphasizes outreach to rural-serving public water systems that have self-reported to Texas Commission on Environmental Quality that they have less than 180 days of water supply remaining and systems that have not previously engaged in the regional water planning process but have been identified as facing near term shortages under drought conditions in previous water plans.

To support RWPG outreach efforts, the TWDB is preparing county level summaries of planning information, which will be shared with RWPGs in early 2024. Ms. McKinnon reviewed an example county level summary document.

Mr. Evans asked the Council if they had any questions. Kelly Holcomb (Region I) asked how the TWDB will look at the water systems that meet the rural definition that came out of the last legislative session and if data would be sorted by region. Ms. McKinnon directed Mr. Holcomb to the new rural political subdivision definition. The county summary documents will flag public water systems that meet the new rural definition. Ms. McKinnon will work with Mr. Holcomb after the meeting to talk about metrics to quantify rural and vulnerable systems.

5. Discussion and potential action on Council recommendations and observations

The Council reviewed the recommendation and observation sections of the draft Interregional Planning Council Report to TWDB. The Council had no comments or questions on the recommendation sections.

Members discussed water loss observation in Section 4.1 that was submitted by Jim Thompson (Region D). Ms. McKinnon noted that a placeholder water loss threshold of 18 percent and information on the water loss performance indicators that TWDB uses to review financial assistance applications were

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added to this section for the Council's consideration. Mr. Thompson noted that he had intentionally left the water loss threshold percentage blank since that is not his area of expertise.

Mr. Evans asked if the Council wanted to include the suggested threshold for water loss and the information on the water loss performance indicators that TWDB uses to review financial assistance applications.

Jenna Covington (Region C) agreed with including the 18 percent threshold for water loss. For the industry standard language, she noted that the metrics seem to be mainly applicable to retail connections and not necessarily wholesale connections and suggested specifying the units as gallons per retail connection. Mr. Thompson proposed not specifying a threshold and suggested that the observation state that having high water loss is unacceptable. Mr. Evans and Gail Peek (Region G) agreed. The draft report language was revised as Mr. Thompson proposed. Dave Hall (Region E) noted a grammatical error, which was corrected.

Mr. Evans tabled discussion of Section 4.2 and asked if members were okay with the language in Section 4.3 regarding long range and visionary planning. No changes were proposed to Section 4.3.

The Council then discussed the rural water use observation in Section 4.2 that was proposed by Jonathan Letz (Region J). Mr. Evans suggested that a general observation might be appropriate. Melanie Barnes (Region O) suggested that the observation define transient populations. Ms. McKinnon clarified that the TWDB defines transient populations as non-permanent residents. Matt Nelson (TWDB) noted that the state water plan is about water use and not population. Members discussed factors for unreported water use, including transient populations, exempt wells, and other unreported wells. Members discussed including a request for a study to improve unreported water use estimates and demands. Scott McWilliams (Region F) noted that having accurate data on unreported water use would be beneficial for the planning process.

The Council discussed revising the title of Section 4.2. Members agreed with Mr. Evan's suggestion to name the section unaccounted for water use, remove the first paragraph, and take out the last sentence of the second paragraph.

Mr. Holcomb suggested changing the wording from water systems to water consumption. Mr. Letz proposed revising the reference to Region J to planning groups in general. Mr. Evans suggested that the TWDB should be the agency to conduct the outlined study. Mr. Nelson noted that TWDB encourages recommendations, including additional studies, to improve the planning process.

Mr. Evans asked the Council if any further changes should be made to Section 4.2. The Council had no further revisions.

6. Discussion and possible adoption or other action related to the report

The Council reviewed the entire draft report. Ms. Barnes suggested adding a sentence acknowledging the Council's observations to the Executive Summary. Members agreed.

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Mr. Hall asked if the Council, in Section 3.2, might suggest potential complicated topics to deep dive into, such as transient water use or unaccounted water use. Section 3.2 was revised to state that future Interregional Planning Councils consider holding work session as needed to “deep dive” into more complicated topics, such as the observations presented in the Council’s report.

Mr. Evans asked if the Council wanted to consider adopting the final draft Interregional Planning Council Report. Mr. McWilliams motioned to approve the final draft report and authorize TWDB staff to make grammatical edits, technical corrections on references, and non-substantive word revisions, as necessary. Mr. Holcomb seconded the motion. ***The motion was unanimously approved by the Council.***

7. Schedule and potential agenda items for next meeting

The Council considered potential agenda items for the next meeting. Mr. Darling suggested that the agenda include an update from the TWDB on non-potable reuse projects, including information on the number of water reuse projects the TWDB has sponsored in the last five years, the status of the projects, and any obstacles encountered. The Council will also consider adoption of its final report at the next meeting.

The Council’s next meeting date will be scheduled for February. Members will be polled for their availability to meet in early to mid-February.

8. Public Comment

Mr. Evans asked if there were any comments from members of the public. No comments were provided.

9. Adjourn

Mr. Evans adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.