Maine Water Utilities Association's Public Awareness Committee Minutes

Mission: The *Public Awareness Committee* shall communicate to the general public on issues important to the drinking water profession and assist the membership in enhancing public awareness in their local communities.

November 20th, 2003, 9:30 AM
Woodard and Curran Engineers, South Portland, Maine

Committee Members: Joy Adamson; Mary Jane Dillingham; Kim Marchegiani; Jeffrey McNelly, Jeff Preble, Gary Stevens, Madeline Storer, Brian Tarbuck, Greg Cataldo, Michelle Clements

Committee Members Present: Joy Adamson; Mary Jane Dillingham; Kim Marchegiani; Jeffrey McNelly, Gary Stevens, Madeline Storer, Brian Tarbuck, Greg Cataldo

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 AM by Gary Stevens.

- There were no corrections to or comments concerning the previous minutes.

- News clippings; Jeff's article concerning bond referendum made it into Bangor daily news; Kim brought some interesting articles in to review

- Brian - talked about Augusta Water District's situation with the City of Augusta

- Jeff McNelly discussed the current status of the website. He stressed that they were trying to keep it current, but this takes resources. He felt they were already stretched thin with changes in the tradeshow. Still don't have a satellite internet hookup, and the network needs to be installed. MWUA is otherwise ready to go. They just need someone to come by and hook it all up.

- 2004 Children's Water Festivals – This year we want a room and a booth. Gary and MJ will take the lead on this activity. Southern Maine's Children's Water Festival is scheduled for May 21st at USM in Gorham. The Northern Maine Children's Water Festival is October 12, 2004 at the University of Maine at Orono. Can do a presentation or a booth or both. Joy has some activities that can be done on a classroom setting basis.

  - The group discussed hiring the Small Change Theater to do a performance at SMCWF, but the cost is about $1,600 for a production. Have to chew on that one a bit more.

- There was the usual discussion about handouts / giveaways for both the Association and school / local presentations. Greg suggested that we give out Dripial Pursuit as giveaways at the association. Other suggestions included pens, pencils, flashlight pens, water bottles; carabiner clips Gary's posters ($2 each or so) floating golf balls w/ MWUA logo. Madeline agreed to put together a list of these types of products in Excel so that we could catalog and record rough prices for drinking water related bling-bling.

  - Maine Water Conference is in April 21st. Abstracts were due December 1st. Does the MWUA want to send an abstract in? Submit abstracts via e-mail as an attachment to umgmc@maine.edu. Submission Deadlines Oral abstracts: December 22, 2003, 5pm. Poster abstracts: March 1, 2004 5pm. Topics include:

    - Riverfronts: a Legacy of Pollution, a Trend Toward Renewal
    - Doubt About Drought
    - Lake Management Tools and Strategies
    - Maine's Salmon Rivers
    - Sludge, Groundwater and Toxics
    - Roundtable: What's in the Legislature?

- **This generated discussion concerning existing "threats" facing water utilities. These include:**
  - Municipal takeover of water districts;
  - Water rights and demand for source water from competing interests (salmon, beaches, etc.)
  - Sustainability of resources in the face of demands for lower rates. How can utilities preserve resources in the face of demands to "cash in" on assets? Paper companies liquidating lands for a quick buck. Could water districts be next? Sustainability is important. Need to explain why this is better than cashing in on assets now.
- **The following topics were discussed as potential future items for the MWUA to present at environmental conferences:**
  - How is watershed protection different in a water utility environment than a lakes association's mission?
  - We should connect a topic concerning "chasing the receding zero" and how that impacts watershed protection.
  - How is water after the intake different from water after the plant. How does raw water affect plant performance?
  - How many people are served by utilities; cost? Might be interesting to some to present a comparison of utilities statewide, average cost etc.
  - Railroad pesticide issue.
  - Should we have an all day seminar w/ some eco-groups like Nature Conservancy to tell them what we do?
  - Maybe a real estate primer; don't own it, but we have conservation easements; first refusal if District sells land; MWC has poster session / booths?
- At the end of the discussion, it was concluded that we should contact Paul Hunt at the Portland Water District and see what he thought attendees might be interested in. Otherwise, we'd be "selling" something that no one cared to buy. Here's what Paul had to say:

  You could fill a big hole in the session. One or two of my employees are going to talk about source protection from the "we have a budget and staff, here's how we do it" perspective. For anyone else, that is not too helpful. How about a presentation about "we do not have anyone devoted specifically to source protection but we recognize that if your source gets contaminated, you're in trouble. So here's what AWD or other utilities with limited resources have done that made a difference." A case study or two or 6 or seven examples of things that have been tried and made a difference.

  Here's my theory: Water utilities can be a solution to the biggest problem lake associations and their ilk have - no O and M dollars. And Lake associations and other watershed types can be the answer to the biggest problem for small water utilities - no source protection staff. What would be easier to get approved by your trustees - a source protection position ($50 K with benefits) or $6,000 for a source protection project? Obviously the $6K is easier to get approved. But if you got the money from your trustees, who would implement the source protection strategy/plan? The answer - team up with a lake association! They have people, volunteers and retirees who are willing to work long hours for no pay. They care more about the lake than you do. But they have no money to work with. They collect $500 in a bottle drive and that's big money.

  So my long winded answer to your question is to present some source protection projects / initiatives / strategies that MWUA members have employed that work. Then, if you think it has merit, bang the drum for partnering with lake associations.

- **Drinking Water Week**
  - DWW presented the usual questions. What can we do for activities? Timing is national, therefore it is not the same week as the water festival. Ideas included:
    - Maybe a week long series of articles? Ask press to see if they can do a blurb each day.
    - Any other press stuff. NPR? Local radio station at water treatment plant?
  - Articles / flyers, drinking water week. Joy will work on a timeline; need to improve our communications. MJ suggests that we have some work sessions.
  - Solution: Joy and Madeline will champion the DWW cause. Maybe have an MWUA presentation during that week?

- **Awards...**
  - One nomination so far for awards. Notice went out in the newsletter twice. Just not getting any nominations. MJ suggested that the MWUA board should come up with some ideas for recipients in May of each year. MWUA will try to compile a list of prior recipients. There is no such list now.

- **Discussion of MWUA survey results**
  - MJ suggests that we need to get much more involved and do a traveling roadshow (Common Ground Fair, other association meetings, etc.). Need to develop a message that we will consistently repeat; communication plan; need to get out more.
  - Need to identify list of 2004 events that we can participate in (Hall of Flags etc.). Jeff suggests that the PAC is the coordinating entity for people to take around and distribute information to the public; make handouts etc.

- **Planning for 2004**
  - This is also a good time to rework mission statement.
  - Where is the PAC heading? We have written some articles, but we should figure out where to refocus our efforts. Send articles and information to smaller papers? Can we offer presentations and stuff to other groups?
  - Come up with a list of speakers. Greg suggests that physical presentations and some written articles help. The presentations are even more important. MMA has opportunities for discussing our stuff. They have a lot of training sessions and maybe we can work our way into this.
  - Joy suggests that we work w/ non-point source people; NEMO. Joy suggests list of events, list of stuff we should bring, and set up a plan to do this.
  - Water for People; Christine Uddon? Will come and do a presentation for us if we'd like. Maybe January meeting? Prep. For MWUA trade show?
  - children's water festivals will be coordinated by Gary and Brian
  - Maine Water Conference
  - Sportsmens show (last weekend in March)
  - Congress of Lakes Associations meeting?
  - Articles

- **Other business…**
  - Congress of Lakes Association is talking about forming a curriculum to make a "lake masters" program.
  - MJ said she had some positive experiences in interviews between Eric Meringue (WCNN radio) and herself. The new contact at WCNN is Scott Garrett at 784-5868.

Next meeting: December 17, 2003, 9:30 am, Woodard and Curran.

Significant Drinking Water Events Timeline

Date	Event	Outreach Opportunities
February 10 – 11	MWUA February Trade Show	Booth & Presentation
*March 29**	Maine Sportsman Show	Booth
April 16	Maine Water Conference	Booth & Presentation
May 2 – 8	Drinking Water Week	Press Coverage & Presentation
*May 14**	Hall of Flags Day for PWSs	Press Coverage & Booth
May 23	Southern Maine Children's Water Festival	Booth & Presentation
*June 20**	Summer Milfoil Summit	Presentation
*August 14**	MWUA Annual Clambake	Mingling?
*October 8 – 9**	Maine Municipal Association Conference	Booth & Presentation
October 12	Northern Maine Children's Water Festival	Booth & Presentation
*November 19**	Geographic Information System (GIS) Day	Presentation
*December 2 – 3**	MRWA Conference & Exhibition	Booth & Presentation
March	Maine Environmental Education Association	www.meeassociation.org

* 2003 date.

- Meeting adjourned at 13:00