

Safe Water Advisory Group (SWAG) Meeting Minutes
Tues 2/5/2021 | 6:30-8:00pm via Zoom

Attendees: Cliff Lazenby, Deaglan McEachern, Brian Goetz, Russell Osgood, Andrea Amico, Lindsey Carmichael, Katrie Hillman, Rich DiPentima, Dr. Laurel Schaidler, Rep. David Meuse, District 21 Senator Rebecca Perkins

Guest Presenter: Al Pratt

- Andrea welcomed meeting participants
- The minutes from the 12/15/20 meeting were accepted and approved
- The group will create and track action items list in Excel. Lindsey is responsible for this.

SWAG Overview Document Feedback:

- Katrie asked for clarification about the group's focus – is it just PFAS or water quality overall? Andrea indicated the focus will be on water quality overall with a heavy emphasis on PFAS.
- Andrea and Lindsey will turn around another version of the SWAG overview document in the coming weeks

Discussion of SWAG Goals

- Have an overview of the water system and what is tested for in our water.
- Understand contaminants of concern the city is facing.
- Overview of pending legislation and potential future legislation that will support the community.
- Review state PFAS guidelines and science/reasoning used behind it.
- Host a clean drinking water forum to provide education and Q&A session for city residents.
- Report back to the City Council by the end of 2021 (or sooner as needed).

- David Meuse made the point that he thinks public education should be a main goal of the group
- Andrea discussed the need to meet once or twice more during this first year in order to accomplish the things we have set out to accomplish. One idea is to plan on meeting every other month then transition to quarterly. No one opposed this idea.

Brian Goetz & Al Pratt presentation: Portsmouth Water System Overview

The presentation covered the following topics:

- Portsmouth water system history
- Water source overview
- Pease filtration system overview
- Customer type overview
- Water planning & capital project planning
- Water quality monitoring & reservoir monitoring
- Compliance monitoring
- Microbiological monitoring
- Contaminants of concern

Questions and Discussion following presentation:

- David Meuse asked about the presence of PFBA, as it has been linked to suppressing immune response in humans with regard to COVID.
- David Meuse asked about the process for monitoring unregulated contaminants. Brian responded that the EPA has a process of investigating which chemicals should be further investigated. He said that there is a lot of work that goes into setting a legal limit for any contaminant. The EPA comes up with a list of potential compounds then requires water systems to sample for them. They get that data and it helps them decide how to proceed. Sampling technology has continued to evolve driving detection limits lower and lower.
- ACTION ITEM: What are all the PFAS that have been detected? Lindsey will add this to the Excel spreadsheet.
- Andrea asked about who regulates disinfectants? Al Pratt noted that the EPA sets the amount (upper limit) that can be in water systems.
- Andrea asked about Trihalomethanes (THMs) – what are the health effects associated with THMs? How was the presence of them in the New Castle water been communicated to the New Castle community? Al Pratt answered that bladder cancer has been correlated with exposure to THMs. When there was a violation notice was given to all customers through the mail (there is a public notice requirement) and through the Town of New Castle.
- Deaglan asked if the Portsmouth water supply would be dictated based on distance from the reservoir? Brian answered that it's about water age. THMs react, the longer the water is in the pipe the higher the disinfection bi-products will be.
- Andrea asked if any other municipalities use the Bellamy as a water source? Brian answered no.
- Andrea asked if Brian had a sense for how many people in our community have private wells? She mentioned knowing of a person on Banfield road with a private well who independently tested her water and found low levels of PFAS. How can we identify these people? Brian said that the state would have the data based on their well drilling data (for wells from 1980 or newer).

- Andrea asked about the presence of lead found in schools several years ago. She remembered the issue was around fixtures. Has this been remedied? Brian answered that according to discussions with school officials any lead found has been addressed and removed. The state now requires a comprehensive sampling of schools and day care centers.
- Andrea asked how the city is preparing for another emerging contaminant? Brian answered that it's a combination of things. There is ongoing work to enhance water quality and sampling education, as well as work to prevent issues around cyanobacteria. Al is working with UNH, working with faculty, doing outreach, acquiring properties around the Bellamy reservoir to prevent contaminants from flowing into the reservoir. Al mentioned that we are in better shape because of the diversity of our water supplies, moving forward we want to expand that even further with new sources of supply.
- Rich made the point that it makes sense to apply a public health framework to this issue – you want to do surveillance and gather data from around the region.
- Katrie mentioned that droughts can exacerbate water quality issues and asked about the impact they will have going forward? Al answered that droughts actually make our water quality better in the reservoir – less algal growth, more aeration because of growth, etc.
- Laurel mentioned that there is a movement to think about PFAS as a class. She asked if there are examples from other places, or any other methods that are looking at total amount of PFAS in water? Brian talked about the work that the City has done, in collaboration with Testing Pease and Dr. Chris Higgins, and assessed total PFAS in the drinking water at Pease. Brandon Kernon recommended from day one to sample for more than just a few PFAS compounds, and the city followed his advice.

Public Comment: None.

Link to YouTube recording of the meeting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElIkJ635sUk&list=PLNWsoVwtYMQtbrxFp6ew178h7ojcRrygu&index=2>

Link to presentation made by Brian Goetz and Al Pratt:

<https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/sites/default/files/2021-02/Portsmouth%20Water%20Overview%20SWAG%20Feb%202021-compressed.pdf>