



MEETING SUMMARY

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE | MEETING 3
CAYUGA COUNTY WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY | REGIONAL MASTER PLAN
March 7, 2018

OVERVIEW

The Cayuga County Water and Sewer Authority (CCWSA) held the third Citizen Advisory Committee meeting on March 7 from 3:30 to 5:00 PM at 7413 County House Road, in Auburn, New York. This document contains a summary of the meeting.

PRESENTATION

Greg Mosure, with Barton & Loguidice, outlined the objectives of the meeting, which were to gather the committee's feedback on an alternate water source for the County as well as share information about how to finance an alternate source. After reviewing the rationale for having an alternate source, Greg presented a list of potential sources as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Potential sources include ground water, Cayuga Lake, Lake Ontario, and outside purveyors, including the Onondaga County Water Authority and Bolton Point Water System. Slides and copies of the group exercise discussed below are available in Appendix B.

GROUP EXERCISE AND DISCUSSION

Christopher Dunne (Highland Planning) facilitated a group exercise and discussion with the entire group. Committee members were given a handout with a list of criteria that could potentially be used to evaluate options for an alternate water source. The criteria are listed below:

- Capital cost
- User base
- Operating cost
- Power accessibility
- Source reliability
- Water quality
- Treatment requirements
- Environmental impact
- Constructability
- Potential to serve new areas

The exercise was designed to facilitate a discussion among the group about the relative importance of each criterion. Committee members were first asked to fill out a “March Madness-style” bracket that matched up different criteria. After filling out the brackets, the following questions were discussed.

If you completed your bracket, what was your top priority?

- Water quality;
- Cost; specifically, capital costs and cost to users;
- Operating costs; we need to be able to pay for any option;
- Source reliability; we need to be able to access water when we need it;
- Serve new areas; serve high density areas but alternate source should provide the option to be able to build out to lower density areas;
- Business needs: businesses will not develop in an area if there is no water; planned spa in Aurora for example.

What priorities did you “eliminate” in the first round (lowest priorities)? Were there any you “eliminated” early because of a tough matchup but that you actually rank highly?

- One member ranked “power accessibility” low on the list and asked if this kind of access was ever really an issue.
 - Greg responded that surprisingly it sometimes is an issue for water sources, particularly in rural areas. An option may be rendered infeasible if it requires pumping and sufficient electrical power is not available to drive the pump motor.

Were there priorities that were difficult to compare to each other? Were there priorities that you had a hard time choosing between?

- There was some overlap between the different criteria.

Are there other criteria that you want considered that were not listed here?

- Zoning and related issues should be considered;
- Potential to help generate economic growth;
- Timing is very important; a ten-year time frame would be too long;
- Durability of the source: how long will it last?
- Ability to do a phased approach: two – three years, ten years, etc.
- Opportunities to use new and innovative filtration techniques should be considered;
- The ability of an alternate water source to allow for revenue generation through the sale of water to other user groups (e.g. dairy farmers);
- Shovel-readiness to take advantage of federal dollars becoming available for infrastructure projects;

Other questions and comments from committee members included:

- Are there any existing plans already on a shelf somewhere?
 - Greg discussed the plan for Syracuse and Onondaga County developed through the 1950s and 1960s that resulted in the formation of the Metropolitan Water Board, but said he was unsure if Auburn had a plan already. It is the intent of this study to be “the plan” for Cayuga County.
- Where are the wells and has there been a study on this?
 - Greg stated that the study is currently underway. Identifying mapped ground water sources will be a part of this study.
- Could Cayuga County use an Onondaga County-based alternate source just for emergencies but have towns nearby hook-in to help pay for it?
 - Greg said that might work if there was significant additional development in the western part of Onondaga County.

Committee members also discussed the possibility of using Skaneateles Lake as an alternate source of water for the County. It was pointed out however that the City of Syracuse would likely oppose any use of the Lake by Cayuga County, since when levels get too low, the City has to purchase water from OCWA at significantly higher prices. If Skaneateles was an option, legal negotiations would have to take place.

It was pointed out that Cayuga Lake is a good water source because of the Lake’s depth. One member suggested that Auburn construct a second intake in Owasco Lake rather than having a whole new plant built on an alternate source. There was concern however that a situation could arise where the source itself is unusable leaving the County without a viable source.

AURORA TREATMENT PLANT ISSUE AND DEBT-FINANCING OPTIONS

Committee members asked for more information about the Aurora treatment plant. Greg explained that the challenges the Village of Aurora is facing are also an opportunity to potentially achieve multiple objectives. The Village needs a source of water, intake and a filtration system for algal blooms. The immediate needs of the Village have to be met but this is also an opportunity to build redundancy into the system at the same time, though additional costs will have to be weighed.

Jeff Smith of Municipal Solutions relayed recent experience in Northern Chautauqua County involving the City of Dunkirk, Town of Portland, Village of Brocton, Town of Pomfret, Town of Dunkirk, and Town of Sheridan. These municipalities faced similar circumstances that Cayuga County currently faces including aging infrastructure requiring major re-investment, dwindling population, and limited customer base. These municipalities agreed to form and participate in a County Water District. Strategy for funding the project included each participating municipality developing their own project, coordinated with other municipalities, seeking individual funding through the Environmental Facilities Corporation, then constructing their

respective improvements. Each municipality owns its respective water infrastructure, but debt service is paid by municipalities to the County Water District, who then makes repayments to the Environmental Facilities Corporation.

WRAP-UP

Greg and Christopher thanked the members of the committee and asked that they share the Master Plan brochure with other members of the committee to help spread the word about the project. Greg explained that the next meeting would be an opportunity for the committee to review the report on recommendations.

APPENDIX A: MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Brian Brown, Wells College
Ed Ausborn, Honoco Inc. Homeowners Association
Eileen O'Connor, Cayuga County Department of Health
Gordon Elwell, Nucor Steel, Auburn
Grant Wall, Cayuga Milk Ingredients
Jim Beckwith, Owasco Watershed and Lake Association
John McCadden, Cayuga Milk Ingredients
Ray Lockwood, Cayuga County Farm Bureau
Seth Jensen, City of Auburn
Sue Edinger, Inns of Aurora
Tom Minicucci, Health Central Medical Chair, Cayuga County Chamber of Commerce
Tracy Verrier, Cayuga Economic Development Agency
Jeanine Wilson, Executive Director CCWSA
Doug Selby, Advisor CCWSA

Consultant Team:

Greg Mosure, Barton & Loguidice
Jeff Smith, Municipal Solutions
Jen Topa, Highland Planning
Christopher Dunne, Highland Planning

APPENDIX B: PRESENTATION SLIDES AND GROUP EXERCISE

(see project website)