

MINUTES OF THE JOINT WORKSHOP

Southwest Florida Water Management District Governing Board and Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority Board of Directors

Ocala, Florida

March 24, 2008

The Governing Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority (WRWSA) Board of Directors met in a workshop session at 2:00 p.m. on March 24, 2008, at the Ocala Hilton Hotel. The following persons were present:

SWFWMD Board Members Present

Judith C. Whitehead, Chair
Todd Pressman, Secretary
Jennifer E. Closshey, Treasurer
Albert G. Joerger, Member
Ronald E. Oakley, Member
Sallie A. Parks, Member
Maritza Rovira-Forino, Member
H. Paul Senft, Jr., Member

SWFWMD Board Members Absent

Neil Combee, Vice Chair
Thomas G. Dabney, Member
Patricia M. Glass, Member
Heidi B. McCree, Member
Patsy C. Symons, Member

SWFWMD Staff Members Present

David L. Moore, Executive Director
William S. Bilenky, General Counsel
Lou Kavouras, Deputy Executive Dir.
Richard S. Owen, Deputy Exec. Dir.
Eugene A. Schiller, Deputy Exec. Dir.
Bruce C. Wirth, Deputy Executive Dir.

SWFWMD Recording Secretary

C. LuAnne Stout, Admin. Coordinator

WRWSA Board Members Present

Rose Rocco, Hernando Co. Commissioner,
WRWSA Chair
Dennis Damato, Citrus Co. Commissioner,
WRWSA Vice Chair
Richard Hoffman, Sumter Co. Commissioner,
WRWSA Treasurer
Randy Mask, Sumter Co. Commissioner
Stan McClain, Marion Co. Commissioner
Diane Rowden, Hernando Co. Commissioner
Joyce Valentino, Citrus Co. Commissioner

WRWSA Board Members Absent

Gary Bartell, Citrus Co. Commissioner
Joe Bernardini, Brooksville City Councilman
Kent Guinn, Ocala City Councilman
Christopher Kingsley, Hernando Co.
Commissioner
Daniel Owens, Ocala City Councilman
Phillip Price, Crystal River Councilman
David Russell, Hernando Co. Commissioner
Dale Swain, Bushnell City Councilman

WRWSA Staff/Consultants Present

Jack Sullivan, Executive Director
Larry Haag, Attorney
Pete Hubbell, Water Resource Associates
Diane Salz, Legislative Consultant

A list of others present who signed the attendance roster is filed in the permanent records of the District, and copies of the slide presentations are available upon request.

1. Welcome and Introductions

SWFWMD Chair Whitehead called the workshop to order. She noted that the Governing Board has been holding workshops with the water supply authorities (WSAs) to gain a better understanding of its roles in water supply. She requested Board members introduce themselves and state which Board they represent and include other affiliations.

Following introductions, Chair Whitehead provided a brief overview of SWFWMD's history with the WRWSA beginning in 1977 with its formation. She said the District's experience demonstrates that a strong regional authority that unites and coordinates the needs of the member governments enables all to achieve success.

WRWSA Chair Rocco thanked everyone for being here because this is an important beginning. As the area moves and grows and thinks about the needs of the future, it is important to have good communication between the region and the regional boards. As the WRWSA develops and knows needs are coming in supply and services to the many communities, it is an exciting venture to work together and create viable plans that will be affordable and workable for the future.

2. **WRWSA Future Water Supply Plans**

Chair Rocco introduced Mr. Hubbell who presented the WRWSA's future plans through a slide presentation. He provided an overview of WRWSA's regional master planning process, population and water use trends, constraints/opportunities to water supply development, future water supply projects, reclaimed water, and water conservation initiatives.

Chair Rocco opened the floor for discussion among the members.

Ms. Closshey said she appreciated the overview. She said it provides a better understanding of the depth that has gone into this and noted that water doesn't always follow the regulated boundaries. Mr. Hubbell noted that the county line is essentially the City of Leesburg in Lake County and that it would be a policy decision whether project boundaries would stop at the SWFWMD line or WRWSA's line.

Chair Rocco asked if anyone in the audience had a question.

Ms. Janey Baldwin, Withlacoochee River Basin Board member, asked Mr. Hubbell about Progress Energy's water usage for the two plants being taken from the barge canal. Mr. Hubbell replied that plans are in preliminary stages. Mr. Moore said there is a great deal of work to be done and water use needs are still being evaluated.

Ms. Rovira-Forino asked whether the wellfields in Citrus and Sumter counties carry both through 2025's growth. Mr. Hubbell said demand was considered and how much could safely be developed in that area and still stay within the water use permitting criteria plus the minimum flows and levels. Ms. Rovira-Forino said she wanted to make sure it is a component of all the elements, and thanked him for the clarification.

Ms. Closshey inquired into the 2025 regional demand, and asked whether conservation was a factor. Mr. Hubbell explained how the numbers were generated, and said conservation was a factor but may not be as aggressive as it could be in these conceptual projects. Ms. Closshey said that conservation plays a critical role and the District's expectations will increase in seeking improvement relative to per capita numbers.

Mr. Joe Stapf, Hernando County Utilities Director, said the cost of a transmission main for a water treatment plant was mentioned but not for a desalination plant. Mr. Hubbell said the WRWSA is looking at customers from the Gulf of Mexico to The Villages, and that cost will be a major consideration.

Mr. Damato said Progress Energy is probably doing a transmission line study. He asked if there could be a correlation with electric and water lines being in the same right-of-way. Mr. Hubbell said that Progress Energy was invited to be on the technical review committee and feedback is expected.

Mr. Oakley said there was mention of high water flow being pulled from the Withlacoochee River and Lake Panasoffkee. He noted those areas have been dry for some time and asked what will be done when there is no extra water. Mr. Hubbell said there is a conceptual project involving conjunctive use for times when surface water is not available and then a wellfield is used to pump ground water. He noted that the WRWSA is also considering offstream storage which will need to be built to hold a volume to carry over those hurdles. Mr. Hubbell said conjunctive use should be intertwined in everything planned for the future.

Ms. Rovira-Forino inquired about project schedules and prioritization. Mr. Hubbell said that, based on the number and location of customers, minimum flows and levels, sources, and amount of source to be tapped, staff will prioritize as short, mid and long term projects. He noted the cost of water will be a major factor in priorities.

3. **SWFWMD Efforts to Encourage Water Supply Regionalism**

Chair Whitehead introduced Mr. Wirth who explained the concepts and reasons behind the District's belief that a regional approach to managing water resources is effective and efficient. Using a slide presentation, Mr. Wirth reviewed the District's history of working with WSAs and outlined some of the benefits including the fact that regional impacts require regional solutions, there is strength in partnerships, member governments speak with one voice, long-range planning is utilized, and multiple and diverse sources are developed.

Chair Whitehead opened the floor for discussion.

Chair Rocco said these actions tie into good growth management and smart growth incentives. She said regional planning is the only way to go and it is being done with transportation, water, land, and growth. By getting the right information to the right individuals in the member counties, the WRWSA can be successful with this and look forward to counties and a state that will sustain itself with positive growth attitudes.

Chair Whitehead said she encourages all the counties and municipalities to contact the SWFWMD for information needed to make informed decisions. She invited Board members to see how one of the other WSAs work and how water is moved around, such as the desalination plant which is a drought-proof supply of water. She said staff is available to help with site tours.

Ms. Rowden said one of the concerns obviously is moving forward in today's economy. She said citizens see this as creating another level of government, but this is being responsible with government. She said the SWFWMD and WRWSA need to take the lead and be responsible.

Chair Rocco said it is a cooperative effort and that is what needs to be projected at the commission meetings. She suggested requesting District staff present this information to the commissions. She said a number of people feel that it is a redundant organization, and do not understand the purpose of the SWFWMD and WRWSA Boards. She said the WRWSA Board needs to communicate its focus, and to let people know the benefits and that there is no duplication.

Mr. Moore discussed competition for ground water, growing demands and environmental constraints such as minimum flows and levels. The decision is whether to develop alternative supplies which, unlike ground water, are not omnipresent. A group of counties or cities working together, planning and learning will keep members ahead of the curve. At the end of the day a diverse set of supplies—ground water with surface water, and seawater—must be in place to meet demand. The WRWSA is well out ahead of the curve because there is a plan for diverse sources.

Ms. Rovira-Forino stated that District staff is available to assist municipalities with the process.

4. **WRWSA Future Plans for Expansion and Transition**

Chair Rocco introduced Mr. Sullivan who presented WRWSA's future plans with the aid of a slide presentation. He said the WRWSA's request for the transition is due to population growth, water availability, complexity of bringing new water supply projects from planning to construction, and administrative support. He said the transition will bring WRWSA's capabilities quickly forward to cope with changing conditions and water supply needs. Mr. Sullivan reviewed the proposals for the transition which included staffing, funding and program expansion.

Chair Rocco opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Pressman said Mr. Sullivan has been a part of the WRWSA since its infancy and has put forth an outstanding plan. He said he was impressed with the great direction detailed before the Board and Mr. Sullivan's leadership of the WRWSA. He asked where the payback on the Charles A. Black Wellfield monies flow. Mr. Sullivan said the arrangement was that the WRWSA received funding from the SWFWMD to actually construct the wellfield. Citrus County has been serving county needs from the wellfield, and the County amortized that payback to the WRWSA at 30 years with no interest.

Ms. Rovira-Forino said she appreciated learning about the WRWSA's history and applauds all the work done in the region. She asked about the increase of 5¢ from the member governments and whether they are in agreement. Mr. Sullivan said he has not received feedback from all the members on this issue, but due to property tax and other considerations there will be concern about increasing anything even though the amount of money is very small. He said he met with the Hernando County Commission and met with a considerable amount of resistance from some of the commissioners because of the per capita increase. Workshop participants discussed budget constraints, timing, cost-benefit and process.

Mr. Pressman complimented Mr. Sullivan's outstanding leadership and said he would like to see a fleshing out of goals that will be required at the three-year mark and the five-year mark so that it is clear when funds will be needed. He said conservation must be a central element that can start today rather than planning for five years, and the WRWSA needs to be on the front line of active conservation measures. He also said the SWFWMD Board is the leadership group, and the ones to get behind this plan today and send a message to the Basin Boards that it must be supported.

5. **Open Discussion**

Ms. Rovira-Forino asked for clarification regarding WRWSA's agreement for the Charles A. Black wellfield and facility. Mr. Sullivan said the agreement is being reviewed and discussions are in the preliminary stages. She asked about the SWFWMD/WRWSA partnership begun in 2005 that committed \$750,000 through 2008 and how much has been spent. Mr. Sullivan said the WRWSA completed the first phase which is the regional water supply master plan for \$300,000. He said the WRWSA has moved forward into phases two and seven with the \$450,000 and about 40 percent has been completed.

Chair Rocco asked if Marion County is factored into the WRWSA budget numbers. Mr. Sullivan said he is reviewing the numbers regarding the per capita and the projected amount is \$439,000 in five years at 25¢ per capita. Chair Rocco said the counties are concerned about increases in their budgets. She hoped the WRWSA could put off increasing the per capita the first year. She said it has to be acceptable and people have to understand exactly where the money will come from—a good explanation is needed.

Mr. Oakley said he agrees and supports regional water planning and the transition for the WRWSA. He asked if this funding fits into the SWFWMD's authority. Mr. Moore said that the SWFWMD has provided seed money in the past to support a WSA. He said staff is evaluating the proposals and various numbers in the planning process, unless the Governing Board says not to. He said the evaluation information will be presented to the Basin Boards at their upcoming meetings. Mr. Moore said staff is looking for general direction and will bring it back for consideration.

Mr. Senft said he needs more education before he can support a per capita increase of 25 percent in a year when budgets are being reduced. Mr. Sullivan said the 25 percent is a large number in terms of the increase; however, the overall amount of money this year was \$85,000 from local assessments. He said that, if raised to 25¢ per capita with Marion County included, it would still only be \$120,000. He noted that it is spread out over a large area to provide money for one agency to be able to perform services for all of those local governments.

Ms. Valentino also thanked everyone for being here. She said the WRWSA Board recognizes that it cannot do it alone and supports regionalism, but the WRWSA needs help to be proactive. She suggested that for the first year due to the climate out there, citizens need education as much as possible to understand the move to regionalism and not wait until it is a critical situation. She said she believes in conservation and reuse, and has been stressing that to the public trying to make them understand that desalination and reservoirs are expensive. She said the public needs to be educated so they understand the penny to penny increase to 25¢.

Chair Rocco said she concurred with Ms. Valentino's comments. She noted the WRWSA Board has been holding discussions and everyone is of the same opinion that a regional plan is the only way to go. She said educating the public is a primary factor, but there are a lot of people who have misinformation.

Ms. Rowden said the presentation on regionalism pointed out the number one cause is the impact of growth. She said it seems that growth is not doing enough to pay for itself. She noted that it is never going to pay for itself, but then there is not enough emphasis put on having growth pay for what the SWFWMD and WRWSA are talking about today.

Chair Whitehead said it is a complex question, but one of the ways you'll be able to pay for anything in your community will be with assistance from the SWFWMD and other entities helping you—not only growth but for your infrastructure. She noted that the Hernando County water utilities staff are environmentally conscious and emphasize water conservation. She said she'd like to see that extended to the other counties.

Mr. Damato said he looks at per capita from a different angle. First, per capita should be viewed on a benefits received basis. He said it is our job to educate other county commissioners who are not members of the authority and our constituents. He said we must tell them that the WSAs are gatekeepers now with a priority on water supply projects. Mr. Damato said the per capita amount should be viewed as an obligation and not arbitrary since it deals with one of the most important issues—water, sustenance of life. This is a bargain for the taxpaying public and must be sold to them as such—the amount is a nickel. He said this type of policy is collective, reasonable and provides a balanced approach. It can also be inserted into budgets and laddered into effect as needed to implement the plans to reach targeted goals.

Ms. Parks said she has been a member of the Tampa Bay Water Board and the Pinellas County Commission so she is sympathetic with the elected officials who are sitting here. She said there are people to the south saying that the northern part of the District has plenty of water and nothing needs to be done. The SWFWMD Governing Board took a strong position saying 'not true' and we will work together. Tampa Bay Water would not have succeeded had it not been for the SWFWMD being there with money but, more importantly, being there with the right people facilitating it to happen—former Governing Board Chair Roy Harrell and others—that we're as committed as we are to you. Ms. Parks said we are saying directly to you by just by our presence here that we're committed to making it work, we're in it together, and we are your partners.

Mr. Hoffman said the counties who participate in the WSA and the regional planning council have been doing so willingly over the past years. He said he does not anticipate any problem with this. He said, for this first year, it is probably not a good idea to talk about increasing anything. But looking forward over the next five years, fellow commissioners should view this as an investment in a resource that needs to be guarded jealously. Mr. Hoffman said he thinks we will have support for this from the Sumter County Commission.

Chair Rocco said her feeling is much the same. When she discussed this with the Hernando County Commission, there was a little dissention among the ranks. The thought was to have research done about how to budget this and that is why staff representatives from Hernando County are here. She said that, once everyone thinks about it logically and with common sense, she thought the consensus will be to move forward.

Chair Whitehead asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak.

Ms. Janey Baldwin noted she is a member of the Withlacoochee River Basin Board and also a member of the local emergency planning committee. She noted that she attended the last Hernando County Commission meeting. She said the majority of the commission did not vote but the consensus was not to go forward with the plan at the present time. She said she agrees with them because it is premature for Hernando County, and the County Commission is working diligently to cut the budget where possible. Ms. Baldwin said she has heard two words she agrees with—education and conservation. She also said the Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority name is too long.

Chair Rocco verified that the Hernando County Commission was not in agreement as far as going forward, but the Commission requested the County Administrator do research and come back with a staff recommendation. She noted that no decision was made and asked Mr. Hamilton to clarify the Commission's position.

Mr. David Hamilton, Hernando County Administrator, said staff is preparing a report for the Commission's discussion. He said the premise is largely based on the universal appeal and understanding that everybody believes that regional planning of water resources is in everybody's best interest. Mr. Hamilton said the issue at hand that is most pressing to the Commission is the issue of per capita funding. Although compared to the County's multi-million dollar budget, the amount of money may not seem as large as some issues that will be debated since the County is asking its entire organization to rein in, cut back and throttle back. He said he and Mr. Stapf are here today to listen and learn.

Mr. Joerger asked how the WRWSA will become sustainable. Mr. Sullivan said there are currently three sources of income in addition to the \$40,000: local governments per capita rate (approximately \$150,000), Citrus County (\$60,000) and Charles A. Black facility (\$163,587).

Ms. Rovira-Forino said the Board members here today have tried to cover every angle of every possibility and there is a lot of good will. She said the Governing Board is here to look for a resolution and commonality of effort because it is water for the citizens of the state of Florida. She said she wanted to ratify the Board's position as the WRWSA's partner to move forward with communication from all angles. She thanked everyone for holding the joint meeting.

Ms. Closshey noted that a number of years ago the SWFWMD did a thorough review of its financial engine considering needs and different issues. At that point in time, there was a commitment of fair and equitable support of the northern SWFWMD's needs because the Board did not want it to become a crisis. Ms. Closshey said the key is to have in place the capacity and system so a crisis is avoided as well as higher costs. She said she has looked forward to this meeting for a long time. It is a combination of several years of work and commitment on the part of the Governing Board to see that the northern part of the SWFWMD is provided for in the best possible fashion. She thanked the WRWSA Board for what it is doing now and in the future.

Mr. Damato said since he started the discussion on per capita versus the benefits issue, he wanted to note that belonging to the WRWSA is a good value for taxpayers. He said this is a unique opportunity to get ahead of growth and stay ahead. Concerning the lull in growth, that is the best time to put the proper plans into place. He said his final comment is that it will only cost more later.

Ms. Valentino said she wants to stress that, although there may be a lull in growth, we need to plan now for the future because the growth will increase, especially in Citrus County, and asked when there will be a decision regarding WRWSA's transition. Mr. Moore said the critical budget meetings are in April, but the budget is not finalized until September. He said the WRWSA Board should have a high degree of certainty in a matter of a few months.

Ms. Closshey said she wanted to clarify that, when she referred to per capita earlier in the meeting, it was per capita use of water. She said she just wanted to make sure that was clear and not to have muddied the water.

Chair Rocco said, for a long time, the WRWSA has been accused of being reactive instead of being proactive, in a lot of areas. This is an opportunity to be proactive and get something done at a time when it would be cost effective, and hopes the WRWSA receives the support it needs.

Adjournment

There being no one else asking to speak, Chair Whitehead adjourned the workshop at 4:26 p.m.