

SSTS Advisory Committee Notes

December 13th, 2018

Attendee's: Jim Larson, Cindy Tiemann, Sara Heger, Aaron Jensen, Craig Gilbertson, Eric VanDyken, Jeff Iverson, Chris LeClair, Wayne Johnson, Troy Johnson, Brandon Montgomery, Lisa McCormick, Jessica Fosberg, Travis Johnson, and Scott Robinson

10:00 – 10:10 AM Introductions, agenda review, retirement, and vacancies on committees, Sara Heger & Aaron Jensen

Aaron Jensen went over the vacancies on the committee. We have current openings in the Citizen, County Metro, Elected Official-2, Municipal Building Inspector, Professional NC, NW, and SW, Small Business Assoc., and Assoc. of Home Inspectors. Craig Gilbertson is retiring, so that will open up the MEHA position. In addition, Jeff Iverson is retiring and Travis Johnson will backfill his position as SSTS supplier. Aaron Jensen also introduced a new member of the committee. Scott Robinson has filled the Professional NE position. Aaron has also reached out to Pam Flitter the AMC president about filling the County Metro vacancy left by Chris LeClair. There has been no word back from her.

Other topics: Chris LeClair would like to talk about the ½ mile rule in relation to resorts. Sara would like to provide a U of M forms update.

10:10 – 11:00 AM MPCA short update items

1. 2019 Talking Tour meeting schedule – Aaron Jensen

Aaron Jensen provided an overview of the schedule for the LGU talking tour meetings. A handout will be developed and emailed later this month. He passed out the talking tour schedule to the group. There will be 13 meetings held again in January of 2019.

2019 Talking Tour Schedule -- Rain, Snow, or Shine				
City	Date	Time	Location	Address
St. Cloud	1/2/19	1pm to 4pm	Stearns County Service Center, Room 121B	3301 Co Rd 138, Waite Park 56387
Brainerd	1/3/19	9am to noon	Crow Wing County Land Service Building, Meeting Room 2	322 Laurel Street, Brainerd 56401
Marshall	1/2/19	1pm to 4pm	Lyon County Public Works Building, downstairs room	504 Fairgrounds rd, Marshall 56258
Benson	1/3/19	9am to noon	Swift County Courthouse -- Jury Room	301 14th St N, Benson 56215
Grand Rapids	1/8/19	1pm to 4pm	Itasca County Courthouse, Room J135	123 NE 4th St., Grand Rapids 55744
Duluth	1/9/19	1pm to 4pm	MPCA offices - Duluth, Small Conference Room	525 Lake Avenue South, Suite 400; Duluth 55802
Pine City	1/10/19	9am to noon	Pine County Courthouse -- County Board Room	635 Northridge Dr NW, Pine City 55063
Detroit Lakes	1/8/19	1pm to 4pm	MPCA offices - Detroit Lakes, Main floor room	714 Lake Avenue, Detroit Lakes 56501
Thief River Falls	1/9/19	1pm to 4pm	Pennington SWCD Office	201 Sherwood Ave S., Thief River Falls, 56701
Bagley	1/10/19	9am to noon	Clearwater County Courthouse	213 Main Ave N, Bagley 56621
Mankato	1/15/19	1pm to 4pm	Government Center Building, Valley room, 3rd Floor	410 5th Street South, Mankato 56001
Rochester	1/16/19	1pm to 4pm	MPCA Offices - Rochester, Large Conference Room	18 Wood Lake Drive SE, Rochester 55904
St. Paul	1/23/19	1pm to 4pm	MPCA Offices - St. Paul, 2nd Floor, room 200/201	520 Lafayette Rd N, St. Paul 55155

2. LGU Assessments update – Aaron Jensen

Committee Website: <http://septic.umn.edu/ssts-professionals/ssts-advisory-committee/>

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Aaron Jensen went over the LGU assessments and how many we have done to this point. Talked about the goals of the assessment. Issues that we are finding at LGU's. Aaron also went over the changes that have been made to the form to make it a better document for LGU's and for agency. Below is the description of the changes:

LGU Assessment Questionnaire Changes

1. Communicating our purpose – more direct language has been added to the introductory paragraph to better emphasize the purpose and scope of LGU assessments. Overall, the MPCA recognizes the shared goal of more effective SSTS programs statewide, and LGU assessments are a means to help the MPCA assist local partners in achieving that goal.
2. More comprehensive instructions – the instructions provided in the LGU assessment questionnaire are now more geared toward facilitating the in-person meeting conducted by SSTS C&E staff. It specifies steps that need to be taken prior to the meeting, and better defines the content and structure of the questionnaire and how it can be utilized.
3. Providing the “why” – an effort has been made to better enable LGUs to understand how each mandatory item in Minn. R. 7082 helps them achieve success. As has been mentioned, the LGU Assessment Questionnaire highlights all the “must” and “shalls” from Minn. R. 7082. We have added a detailed justification to each question to better communicate their importance.
4. More transparency in agency evaluation methods and follow-up – Each item indicates how SSTS staff will evaluate the questions to allow LGUs to know what will be looked at to verify rule compliance for each item. This should help LGUs prepare and provide for a quicker assessment. Additionally, the form indicates a timeframe that may be utilized to follow up on an item if it is not being met by the LGU. Understanding all the items are requirements, this will help LGUs understand what to prioritize in order to begin running an effective program.
5. More logical order and removed redundancy – after initial rollout, the MPCA addressed feedback from both LGUs and SSTS C&E staff to put questions in an order better suited for conducting an in-person meeting. Like questions have been placed together for a more efficient meeting. Additionally, some questions have been removed to streamline the meeting and avoid going over the same item more than once.

Cindy Tiemann was looking for some feedback on what theme's we seen at the LGU assessments. Aaron Jensen went over some common issues found at the meetings. Brandon Montgomery mentioned that we do follow up with the county board, city council, or township board with the results. Scott Robinson mentioned that in his area the communication from the LGU's is sometimes hard to get. Travis Johnson mentioned how important it is to do soil verifications prior to the permit being issued. Troy Johnson stated the reason some LGU's don't do it prior to permit issuance is probably because they don't have the staff available to handle the multiple trips.

3. Unsewered program update – Lisa McCormick

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Lisa McCormick provided an update on the unsewered program. The unsewered list went from over 1200 to just over 1000. The agency is developing an innovative team to help to expedite the resolution of unsewered areas. We will be looking have LGU members on the this team and to develop a proposal to provide the governor. There was some clarification on what the size of these areas are. More than 5 homes within a ½ mile. There was discussion on the current list and how we clarify the data. We really only have good data on about 40% of the list. Wayne Johnson talked about one watershed and one plan and working with BWSR to identify, assess, and fund these as well. There was a discussion about the point system for grants for these areas. Scott Robinson asked if there is anything currently in place to help with the workforce issues. Lisa McCormick said that this isn't something that is in the unsewered charter.

4. Proposed rule change update – Brandon Montgomery

- MOWA and State Permit Discussion
- Tank Pumping at Inspection

Brandon Montgomery provided an update on the current rule. It is currently waiting for signatures from the commissioner and governor. It could be delayed, since both the governor and commissioner will be new starting in January. The next step is to do public notice of the rule. There is a chance that it might not happen before the construction season. We will need to decide when the rule will be implemented if it doesn't get finalized before the construction season. Best case scenario is we get the current commissioner and governor to sign the rule change now. Also if we have enough comments during the official comment period we would need to have a hearing which could delay the adoption.

5. SSTS Data – Brandon Montgomery

Brandon Montgomery went over some data that the MPCA has recently examined from the annual report and the certified individuals. A number of maps were handed out that shows locations of certified individuals with in the state and also some data on soil disputes that we received through a survey. The data shows that most LGU's are comfortable handling the disputes at the local level. Sara Heger talked about workforce issues and filling in as people retire. There was discussion by Travis Johnson and Wayne Johnson on some of the difficulties of buying and selling businesses and how to value them. Wayne Johnson shared some data he heard at a MACPZA conference in regards to the number of housing units built and the workforce. There was much discussion on the new generation of workforce and the pros and cons. There needs to be a labor force to backfill these areas. Maybe a tech college program would be a good idea. Brandon Montgomery also mentioned that these maps are used for developing education locations across the state. Wayne Johnson asked if we are on a better path to make sure that people are learning what they need too. Sara Heger talked about some experience with education. Cindy Tiemann said that the mini pumper was a good class that she recently attended, there was good participation and good interaction with the agency. She suggested mini maintainer instead of mini pumper. Wayne Johnson suggested that maybe there should be another training class or portion of a class, maybe a year after these new

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folks have been working to help clarify things for them. Brandon Montgomery talked about the struggle people have to find enough time to get to a class and the costs associated. Scott Robinson mentioned changing some of the CEU curriculums to make it new things or current things happening in SSTS. There was discussion that the CEU's are structured to deliver new and current information. Sara Heger talked about some of the things MOWA tries to do on more of a national level in regards to training, but it seems that the same audience attends each year and there isn't much demand from nonmembers in the state. Jeff Iverson mentioned that many of the surrounding states have a training center. The discussion wrapped up talking about soil disputes.

6. Staff Update – Aaron Jensen

Aaron Jensen provided an update on MPCA staff. Gene Soderbeck will be retiring in February of 2019. His position will be filled after he retires. Kristi Kalk and Sadie Wunder have taken different positions with the agency. Their openings are in the process of being filled. Nick Haig was named as the supervisor of the Certification and Training unit. He took over for Charlie Thompson who recently retired. Matt Rotz, who is already a part of the certification and training team, filled Nick's vacancy. One other change is that the policy and planning unit and the compliance and enforcement unit is now under one supervisor instead of two. Brandon Montgomery also mentioned that Cody Robinson will likely be deployed next year as well.

11:00 – 12:00 Member topics

Sara Heger mentioned she seen Cathy Tran from DLI and that there might be a plumbing code changes in the future. Nothing immediate, but it could happen in the next few years.

Travis Johnson talked about some county job positions that he has seen open and has seen that most of those positions require a four-year degree and maybe we should look to change that to open it up to more people that are well qualified to do that job. Wayne Johnson thinks that many HR departments don't understand that a four year degree is not necessary to get the right person. Eric Van Dyken has seen that many counties lead with that, but they do have if they have so many years of experience they can qualify.

Chris LeClair talked about how the ½ mile rule is affecting resorts in his area. Brandon Montgomery explained that new rule will make some changes to the state permitted sites. He also explained the way our current rules work and what other states have for permit thresh hold. Wayne Johnson went over some of the issues they are having in their area. The resort owners feel like they are being singled out. The resort and campground association has a new lobbyist now. Dan McElroy is gone. Chris LeClair just wanted to share that this conversation is being held again. Travis Johnson said that he attended a lot of those resort shows and he agreed with Wayne Johnson that they will end up dividing many resorts up into lot in block due to the cost of SSTS upgrades.

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Sara Heger said if anyone has any U of M worksheet suggested changes now is the time to submit those to them by the end of the year.

Craig Gilbertson gave an update on the classes that were completed for homeowners. The MDH and the U of M put these on. The classes were well received by everybody in attendance. He thinks we need to do a better job of educating the homeowners on the back end. These classes do a little of that, but we need to do more as an industry. There was much discussion about spreading the word for those classes and just general education.

Chris LeClair mentioned that they still need to have a MOWA meeting and he will let us know when that happens.

12:00 Next meeting – March 6? St. Cloud?

2019 Meeting dates March 6(?), June 14, September 12, and December 12

Meeting adjourned at 12:25pm.