

East Side Water Supply Project

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ADVISORY

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Authors

Bert Stitt, Stitt Facilitations

Mark Stevens, Engaging Minds LLC

Executive Summary

The Madison Water Utility undertook the East Side Water Supply (ESWS) Planning and Project Development initiative to evaluate the east-side water supply system and to plan and develop projects for sustaining and improving the supply and quality of water drawn from the east side of the utility's main pressure zone (Zone 6-East). The overall objective of this study aimed to develop a series of capital projects, budgets and implementation schedules for the Zone 6-East pressure zone.

The Citizens Advisory Panel (CAP) formed for this project drafted three advisories covering water demand, water quality, and water conservation. They presented their advisories to Zone 6E residents at East Side Water Supply Project Learning and Listening Events conducted at East High School and the Warner Park Community Center respectively on Monday and Thursday, June 27 and 30, 2011. Members of the CAP presented final versions of their three advisories to the Madison Water Utility Board at its ESWS Project public hearing on Tuesday, July 12, 2011.

In their *Project Understanding and Detailed Scope of Work* for the ESWS project, engineering consultants, Black & Veatch, lead off their list of six critical success factors with "public participation 'makes or breaks' this project." We hope this advisory provides the Madison Water Utility with substantive material for strengthening future projects where public participation and professional services intersect and particularly where public engagement is critical to project success.

In this advisory, we sorted our observations into these Main Points:

1. Engaging the public at the very inception of projects
2. Maintaining Community-Powered Engagement
3. Building Trust Through Water Utility Engagement in Participatory Processes
4. Adapting to what Emerges
5. Strengthening Project Assessment
6. Promoting Continuity

We recommend twelve, concrete actions, and suggest that the water utility place priority on these four:

1. Establish a Standing CAP for consultation and advice on the initial development and funding of water utility projects,
2. Work with that CAP to revise the SOP for Public Participation using the revisions suggested in Attachment 1_Standard SOP w-edits as a starting point.
3. Update the Madison Water Utility Web site to make it more graceful, engaging, and reliable in its capacity to inform and interact with the public.
4. Provide Madison Water Utility staff, CAP members, consultants and members of the public with an understanding of basic community and institutional intersections and tools that will help them navigate those intersections for smoother flow of project processes.

If the Madison Water Utility does these things skillfully and successfully, all other utility engagements with the community will have a greater share of success.

Introduction

The Madison Water Utility implemented the East Side Water Supply (ESWS) Project to evaluate the east-side water supply system and to plan and develop projects for improving the supply and quality of water drawn from the east side of the utility's main pressure zone (Zone 6-East). The overall objective of this study was to develop a series of capital projects, budgets and implementation schedules defined through the work of this study.

In July 2010, Madison Water Utility (MWU) began the East Side Water Supply (ESWS) Project, a major water supply planning project that paired professional and scientific expertise with community engagement to recommend future infrastructure on Madison's East Side. The Madison Water Utility retained the services of Black & Veatch engineers to head up the consulting team for this project and they in turn brought on the public engagement consulting team of Bert Stitt and Mark Stevens.

The public participation portion of the project began in earnest on October 8, 2010, with an open invitation 'Advisors Workshop' attended by some thirty people. That session invited participants to advise the consultants and the water utility about:

- Their questions coming into that first meeting on the project
- Their understandings regarding public engagement requirements, lessons, and possibilities
- The roles & responsibilities of those involved in the project
- Their recommendations for public engagement in the project
- Suggested next steps

From this process, East side residents worked with the water utility and its ESWS consulting team to establish a Citizens Advisory Panel (CAP)—in compliance with the water utility's Standard Operation Manual, ENG-0101-080702-WU, Public Participation Process for Water Utility Facilities—to facilitate public consultation on the project and to advise the Madison Water Utility and Madison Water Utility Board.

The ESWS CAP began meeting on November 5, 2010. It met twice in November 2010, once in December, twice each in January and February 2011, and pretty much weekly through April, May, and June 2011. The CAP hosted an information workshop for the Zone 6E residents on January 29, 2011, and on Saturday, March 19, members of the CAP and the Madison Water Utility Board took a tour of Zone 6E Wells 7, 8, 11, 15, and 29 led by Madison Water Utility staff.

A committee of the CAP called the Participation, Communication, and Recruitment (PCR) Committee met over 20 times between mid February and mid June. Their tasks were to complete the SOP-mandated participation and communication plans and to plan for the two Learning and Listening Events held to inform and gather input from Zone 6E residents prior to the CAP's final drafting and presentation of its advisories to the water utility Board in early mid July.

The CAP drafted three advisories covering water demand, quality, and conservation. They presented the advisories to Zone 6E residents at Learning and Listening Events conducted at East High School and the Warner Park Community Center respectively on

Monday and Thursday, June 27 and 30, 2011. Members of the CAP presented final versions of their three advisories to the Madison Water Utility Board at its ESWS Project public hearing on Tuesday, July 12, 2011.

Of the six critical success factors identified by the lead contractor in their *Project Understanding and Detailed Scope of Work*, the first one stated that “public participation ‘makes or breaks’ this project.” We believe that was most definitely the case in the first phases of the ESWS Project.

Purpose of the Advisory

The objective of this advisory is to provide the Madison Water Utility and the Madison Water Utility Board with suggestions for ways that they can work with Madison residents and engineering consultants to continually refine and improve the public engagement process and help ensure that future public engagement processes routinely “make” the projects.

Main Points

1. Engaging Madison Water Users at the very inception of projects

- a. **Timely Public Consultation at the Genesis of the Project.** There was an underlying and continuing sense of disquiet among participants relative to the genesis of the project, which related to the fact that the original definition of the scope of the project, the writing of the request for proposals, and the interviewing and hiring of the consultant team were all undertaken prior to formation of the ESWS CAP without obvious consultation with east-side community members.
- b. **The Value of a Standing CAP.** Part 4, Procedure, Section 1(c) of the water utility’s SOP for public participation states that “The Public Participation Plan and project timeline shall be designed to allow for effective public involvement throughout *each phase* of the project. (Emphasis added.) However, Public Participation Plans and project timelines themselves are called for well after the water utility conceives and initiates its planning and preparation for water projects. Properly instituted, a standing CAP would extend public participation in water utility projects from their inception through to completion.
- c. **Go Slow To Go Fast.** The October 8, 2010, advisors workshop was critical to laying a positive foundation to public engagement for the entire East Side Water Supply Planning and Project Development. This workshop followed the consultants’ commitment to ‘go slow to go fast,’ to get the participants informed and engaged up front so they were prepared to contribute when the technical information was ready for their consideration.
- d. **Language.** The language in the SOP for Public Participation, the RFP, and the consultant proposal for the ESWS project contain many misguided words and phrases that can wrongly frame the public engagement scenario. A lack of attention to language can create a wellspring of public discontent. For example, the repeated use of the word ‘stakeholder’ has the unfortunate inference for residents that only persons with actual financial interests at stake, e.g.

businesses and commercial property owners, are invited to participate in the 'public' conversation. Many other examples can be found in the SOP, the RFP, and the consultant's proposals, which are often written to reflect the language of the RFP. (See Attachment 1_Standard SOP w-edits and Attachment 2_From RFP w-edits II).

2. Maintaining Community-Powered Engagement for the Benefit of the Water Utility and Madison Water Users

- a. **Engaged Participants.** The public participation in the early phases of the ESWS project was remarkable for the number of CAP members and their contribution to the project as measured by the number of meetings they attended, the community workshops and learning events they organized and hosted, and the three advisories they drafted and submitted to the Madison Water Utility Board.
- b. **Community-Ownership of the Process.** The CAP members initiated and self-administered a mid-course assessment of the ESWS CAP process. (See Attachment 3_2011-5-9 ESWS CAP Mid-Course Assessment) The facilitators were specifically asked not to attend the assessment meeting. The CAP shared the written report of the assessment with the facilitators, who were able to use the feedback to better respond to the needs and preferences of the CAP members through the rest of the initial phases of the project.
 - 1) This assessment served to highlight what was working and where participants saw room for improvement. It also helped to alleviate and avoid frustrations that were building during the project and facilitated better energy through the rest of the project.
 - 2) CAP members expressed some concern in their mid-course assessment about the water utility and water utility board commitment to incorporating into the ESWS planning the input and advice of the CAP. Here are a few of these responses with these sentiments:
 - "Staff and Board say they want the citizens themselves to drive much of the direction, Agenda, decisions, and the public forums. However I am not sure this is happening or if it's 'lip service.'"
 - "Still not clear if water utility & Board will make decisions/take actions based on input from CAP, or from the public hearings or will simply do whatever it is they were planning to do anyway."
 - "I'm not convinced that the water utility will change its positions, policies, or plans if the CAP comes up with 'contrarian' ideas."
- c. **Public engagement is a high-maintenance operation.** This shows up in these ways:
 - The unexpected is the expected
 - We don't have the option, in public engagement, to marginalize, ignore, or ostracize any person for any behavior
 - We cannot dismiss pressing interests of participants. The interest in conserving wastewater serves as an example. The public engagement

process must have the capacity to welcome input and concerns considered by the professionals to be extraneous or non-contributing. Attempts to shut down such input require a lot more energy than welcoming and incorporating the interest.

- The first response to any request has to be 'yes.' The second response is 'and how will we do that (or how will we make this work), together?'

d. Web Site. Participants in the October 8, 2011 Advisors Workshop cited these public participation opportunities most frequently (number in parentheses is number of participants citing the item) in their input:

- Public Workshops (14)
- Project Website; Interactive with blog (11)
- Neighborhood meetings (9)
- Sharing questions asked with everyone (8)

The CAP and Madison Water Utility did offer the January 29, 2011, workshop and two Listening and Learning Events in late June 2011. While the Madison Water Utility and ESWS Project Participation Team posted to the water utility Web site some of the material produced for and with the CAP, they did not post all of the CAP meeting minutes, the running list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and water utility answers or responses, or provide the requested capacity for an interactive Web log (blog). Upgrading and continually updating the Madison Water Utility Web site to include the latest information, questions, and comments about current and planned water utility project would be a valuable enhancement of its capacity to inform and communicate with its water-users.

e. The Advisory. The advisories provided CAP members with a context for exploring and honoring multiple points of view around a given topic while avoiding the delineation of difference that would have required CAP members to defend particular positions. The advisory approach:

- Recognized that the final decisions were being made by the Madison Water Utility Board and not the CAP
- Provided the board with a variety of opinions for their consideration
- Produced advisories that tended toward collection of thought and recommendations to the board that could not have been achieved by position papers.
- Allowed give and take that lead to 'consensus' recommendations to the Madison Water Utility that very likely could not have been reached using a 'position-paper' approach.

f. The Value of Empowered Participants. In a February 2012 e-mail exchange, following notification of the next Well-3 replacement CAP meeting, one CAP member responded expressing hope that the Well 3 Replacement CAP would spend some time revisiting the ESWS CAP recommendation to find a replacement for well 3. Three other members of the CAP responded with messages that said, essentially, 'No, we've covered that ground already, and made the

recommendations we did in the Demand Advisory because of what we learned from our work on the ESWS CAP.' The exchange—notable for the display of disciplined self-regulation by CAP members themselves—suggests that when the water utility gives CAP members and, more generally, area residents full information and understanding of local water quality, supply, and demand and the opportunity to provide advice and recommendations that is acknowledged and incorporated into water utility plans, CAP members and residents can and will speak for the recommended course of action without the water utility or project consultants needing to defend or promote the project direction.

3. Holding Public Trust Through Sincere Engagement in Participatory Processes

a. Water Utility Involvement. Members of the Madison Water Utility Senior Staff attended meetings of the CAP. Their attendance served to:

- Affirm and assure CAP members of the water utility's commitment to the project
- Provide immediate and authoritative confirmations, corrections, and answers to keep the conversations and deliberations moving forward

b. Intersections. Intersections occur at the meeting of varying points of view. Navigating an intersection successfully requires caution, courtesy, patience, and skill. The intersections in the ESWS Project included varying interests among:

- Engineering and facilitation protocols
- Water utility staff and project consultants
- Engineering team (water utility and project consultants) and CAP members
- Participation team (water utility and project consultants) and CAP members
- Water utility staff and Madison water users

We have the options of approaching cognitive intersections as two-, three-, or four- way stops. We can also approach intersections as 'roundabouts.' Traffic roundabouts allow a continuous flow through the intersection that still requires a bit more consideration and thoughtfulness of movement. Statistics consistently show reductions in the number and severity of accidents. Similarly conversation 'rounds' and other facilitative techniques reduce the amount and severity of non-productive, confrontational interactions in communication.

c. Restoration of Trust. Following a period of disruptive public processes in the recent history of Water utility projects, which resulted in the creation of the water utilities SOP for public participation, water utility staff expressed the desire that this project serve as a vehicle for process to facilitate the restoration of trust.

Trust did build through the process as water utility staff and project consultants demonstrated thoughtful, prompt and authentic responses to CAP members' requests, suggestions, and proposals. CAP members demonstrated their trust at the end of the project and their satisfaction with the results of their work through their presence at the public hearing and subsequent board meeting, their presentation of the advisories to the Madison Water Utility Board, and their affirmations of support for the results.

4. Adapting to what Emerges

- a. **Emergence.** We used an adaptive style of facilitation that allowed in-the-moment responses to emergent circumstances, spontaneous requests and shifts in direction by participants.
- The ‘advisory’ is one example of emergence, which evolved in this project as a facilitative response to the potential divisiveness of ‘position’ papers and to CAP members’ desire for constructive and meaningful comment to the board.
 - Intersections are another example of emergence. We provided in-process coaching for navigating various intersections to CAP members, the engineering team, and the participation team. We also provided additional training to Madison Water Utility staff to demonstrate for them how a basic awareness of intersections can help to successfully navigate interactions among staff personnel and with Madison water users.
- b. **The Engineer–Public Participation Intersection.** Briefly stated; we observed a non-threatening and yet significant dilemma within the rather precise measurements of involvement by which engineers and many other professional people engage in consulting projects, and the uncertainties of anticipating, planning, measuring, and closing public processes.

5. Strengthening Project Assessment

Project Assessment. The Madison Water Utility conducted a survey of ESWS CAP members to get feedback from CAP members about its process for public participation in the ESWS project. To the best of our knowledge, response to the survey has not yet exceeded 25%. The water utility can do a better job of encouraging responses. There are protocols for conducting mail and Internet surveys that have provided demonstrable improvements in response rates. The water utility could increase the response rates for its surveys by implementing some of these practices. (See Attachment 4_Survey Implementation Protocol.)

6. Maintaining Continuity

Continuity of Public Engagement Consulting. The public-engagement consultation for this project ended with the presentation of three ESWS CAP advisories to the board and the creation of well-specific CAPs. While this shift is a mark of accomplishment in the all-important intention to restore trust in the Utility, there is value in maintaining regular and predictable interactions among all the players—i.e., water utility staff, engineering consultants, public-participation consultants, and Cap members—as projects play out.

Recommendations

1. **Establish a standing CAP** that will participate in and advise water utility staff from the inception of future projects that are likely to require (include?) public engagement.
2. **Revise the SOP for Public Participation** to incorporate the suggestions in Attachment 1_Standard SOP w-edits.
3. **Go slow to go fast.** Continue to develop and improve the opening advisory/consulting session with water utility public participation veterans at the beginning of all future Madison Water Utility projects to lay a positive orientation and foundation for the work of the CAP for that project.
4. **Upgrade and Maintain a Project Page on the Water Utility Web Site.** This would include establishing and maintaining the capacity to post the latest information about water utility projects, the work of their respective CAPs, commentaries (blogs), and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) with the associated water utility answers.
5. **Encourage CAP Members To Share Leadership in the Process.** Encouraging leadership means supporting members in developing the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute. It means honoring, respecting, and incorporating the advice of CAP members. It means continuing to consult with the participants when it becomes necessary to find a way forward while addressing the divergent interests and considerations of CAP members and the Madison Water Utility. It remains important to find a way forward, always.
6. **Encourage CAPs to Conduct Periodic Assessments.** When CAPs conduct periodic assessments during their projects, it helps to alleviate and avoid frustrations, which can build during the project, and facilitate better energy throughout.
7. **Get Involved in the Work of the CAPs.** When Madison Water Utility staff attend CAP meetings, they show their commitment to the process. They can stay abreast of the conversations and of CAP member perspectives, interests, concerns, and aspirations. They can respond to requests for information, perspectives, advice, and recommendations at the moment when it can be most useful to the CAP. Involvement, understanding, and real-time responses to the requests of the CAP members can help build relationships of trust that are critical to working with the community and to providing excellent products and services.
8. **Be Attentive to the Various Intersections in the Process.** Provide Madison Water Utility staff, CAP members, and consultants with the knowledge of intersections and tools to navigate the various intersections skillfully and respectfully, and to maintain the flow of information and action necessary to keep the project progressing efficiently and effectively (as we want traffic to flow seamlessly).
9. **Adapt Quickly and Gracefully to Emergence.** Understand and use the relative strengths and weaknesses of adaptive and fixed, pre-determined styles and processes of facilitation to support best choices. Be prepared to adapt quickly and gracefully as conditions change and new expectations, needs, and desires emerge.

10. **Support Public Participation Training and Practice.** Seek skillful ways to train all players in facilitative techniques and their practice to reach the goals of the increasing levels of public impact defined in Attachment 5_IAP2 Spectrum of Participation. Specifically look for a balance of discipline and allowance among the public engagement, scientific, and government cultures. Seek to enable the best fit among the precise contexts of science and government and the fluid and emergent context of public engagement.
11. **Use More Effective Protocols for Encouraging Responses to Assessment Surveys.** There are a number of resources for conducting effective surveys. Attachment 4_Survey Implementation Protocol draws its guidance from the following sources:
 - Salant, Priscilla and Don A. Dillman. 1994. How to Conduct Your Own Survey
 - Dillman, Don A. 2008. Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method
12. **Schedule Some 'Event' to Bring Clear and Celebratory Closure to Each Phases of the Project**—if for no other reason than to honor each other's contribution the large and consequential undertakings. Such 'follow through' serves to sustain trust in the Madison Water Utility while offering members of the public the assurance that Madison Water Utility staff welcome the input of Madison water users and want to stay connected.

Priority

We suggest starting with the first two recommendations.

1. Establish a Standing CAP for consultation and advice on the initial development and funding of water utility projects
2. Task the Standing CAP with revising the SOP for Public Participation using the revisions suggested in Attachment 1_Standard SOP w-edits as a starting point

As those initiatives get underway, we suggest that the Madison Water Utility pursue parallel efforts to:

3. Update the Madison Water Utility Web site to more gracefully support the functions and capacities described in Recommendation 4
4. Provide Madison Water Utility staff, CAP members, and consultants with an understanding of intersections and tools that will help them navigate the various intersections skillfully and respectfully and maintain the flow of information and action necessary to keep projects progressing efficiently and effectively.

If the Madison Water Utility does these things skillfully and successfully, all other utility engagements with the community will have a greater share of success.