

30 May 2013

History of the Pest Management Advisory Subcommittee

The City of Madison Pesticide Use Policy requires City agencies that apply pesticides to City property to follow certain guidelines and report plans for pest control and the use of pesticides. This policy identifies the Madison Public Health Commission (now the Board of Health for Madison and Dane County) and Public Health Madison and Dane County (PHMDC) as the oversight board and agency responsible for reviewing agency reports and evaluating compliance with the policy. In 2004, the Public Health Commission recommended the formation of a subcommittee of pesticide experts that could assist staff with the evaluation of plans and pesticide use reports. The subcommittee was expected to provide a higher level of expertise than could be provided by either the Public Health Commission members or the Public Health Department staff. Based on this recommendation, the policy was updated and MGO 7.01 was revised to include the Pest Management Advisory Subcommittee.

Since its formation, the subcommittee has met every year to review materials compiled by PHMDC staff and consider how well each agency has complied with the City's policy. After each meeting, PHMDC staff would incorporate the subcommittee's comments into a final report and submit the report to the Board of Health as directed in MGO 7.01(1)(a.). The report would also be sent to each agency applying pesticides for incorporation into future activities. If concerns were identified by the subcommittee or staff, these concerns were reported to the agencies department head and the Mayor's Office.

Current Situation

The Pest Management Advisory Subcommittee has been a great help to the Board of Health and PHMDC staff. With the subcommittee's help, most City of Madison agencies have become more adept at applying integrated pest management (IPM) principles and have sought out pesticide professionals that support these principles.

However, PHMDC staff and subcommittee members have been frustrated at times when City agencies have not made changes or improvements identified in the annual reports. The current policy places the responsibility for change on the board, committee, or commission that has oversight over the agency in question (Paragraph 5d.). If this body does not support change in the agencies practice based on recommendations of the subcommittee, neither PHMDC nor the subcommittee have authority to pursue further action to ensure compliance.

Earlier this year, the Mayor's office notified PHMDC that the Subcommittee had a vacancy that needs to be filled. Over the past 3 – 5 years, PHMDC has had difficulty maintaining a full subcommittee and currently does not have any recommendations for an individual to fill the current vacancy. Based on the difficulty of maintaining a full committee and the improvements made by most City agencies, the recommendation was made that the subcommittee should be dissolved.

If the Subcommittee is dissolved, PHMDC staff will continue to fulfill its role in compiling and reviewing pest management activities in the City. PHMDC staff will continue to consult with willing individuals that served on the subcommittee and accept input in a less formal manner. At least one subcommittee member is supportive of the action to disband the subcommittee and has agreed to provide input in the future.