

General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee of the Interregional Planning Council Meeting Minutes

August 20, 2020, 1:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.

held via GoToWebinar Videoconference

Committee decisions bolded and italicized in document

Participation: Committee Members present 4 of 5: Steve Walthour (Region A), Russell Schreiber (Region B), Allison Strube (Region F), and Kelley Holcomb (Region I). Tomas Rodriguez (Region M) was absent.

Senators/Representatives/Other VIPs in Attendance: None

Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) Board Members and Staff: Sarah Backhouse, Elizabeth McCoy, and Claire Boyer.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order and Welcome

Committee Chair Steve Walthour (Region A) called the meeting to order and determined that a quorum was present.

2. Public Comment – No public comments were offered.

3. Consider Minutes from the August 6, 2020 Committee Meeting

The committee considered the minutes of the August 6, 2020 meeting. Russell Schreiber (Region B) made a motion to approve the minutes. Allison Strube (Region F) seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Discussion and Action, as appropriate – General Best Practices for Future Planning

Mr. Walthour briefly reviewed the seven general best practice topics the committee selected for recommendations. Topics included: simplified planning, regional water planning group (RWPG) membership engagement, communication between TWDB, RWPGs, and members, TCEQ as an ex-officio member, reimbursement of labor costs for RWPG administrative agents, Open Meeting Act modification for video-conferencing, and improving the regional water planning process.

5. Consideration and Action, as appropriate – Committee reports and recommendations to the Interregional Planning Council regarding General Best Practices for Future Planning

Members considered the committee's draft section of the Interregional Planning Council report and reviewed feedback from the Council on the committee's recommendations. Sarah Backhouse (TWDB) outlined that the committee's draft section of the Council report includes feedback from committee members in comments and track changes.

Members reviewed the report section on existing practices. Ms. Backhouse asked Mr. Walthour if the language under improving the regional water planning process existing practices that referenced obtaining feedback from RWPG members at end of planning cycle was referring to the TWDB stakeholder survey. Mr. Walthour noted this language was referring to something else, but a survey of RWPG members could potentially be used. Ms. Backhouse mentioned that an RWPG stakeholder survey

was conducted at the end of the 4th planning cycle. Mr. Walthour suggested language be added to recommend TWDB continue to perform regular RWPG stakeholder surveys. Members agreed with the proposed addition.

The committee then reviewed the recommendations section of the report. Ms. Backhouse outlined that recommendations are organized by topics and each section includes an introduction paragraph that outlines the benefits of the recommendation. Specific recommendations are then organized by whom the recommendation is directed to: TWDB, Legislature, RWPGs, or Future Interregional Planning Councils. Ms. Backhouse noted all committees will use this format.

Mr. Walthour presented a new recommendation for RWPGs on the topic of enhancing engagement. Mr. Walthour proposed that RWPGs should provide feedback to members regarding water infrastructure projects and water conservation projects that were funded by the TWDB as a result of the planning process. Mr. Walthour noted that engagement is a problem and suggested that providing this feedback to members may help improve engagement.

Kelley Holcomb (Region I) noted that if this information can easily be provided it could be beneficial information to provide RWPGs. Mr. Holcomb asked if it would be possible to tie a list of TWDB funded projects back to the regional project prioritization lists. Ms. Backhouse noted that TWDB could provide RWPGs information on which projects in the regional water plans have received TWDB funding. Mr. Holcomb suggested that when projects are presented to the TWDB Board for funding, presentations could note which regional water plan includes the project.

Ms. Backhouse added that TWDB staff currently present information on projects that receive funding from the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT) at RWPG meetings. Staff do not currently provide information on projects funded through other TWDB financial assistance programs, but this information could be provided. Mr. Walthour proposed this recommendation should be directed to the TWDB not RWPGs. Members agreed. The recommendation was moved and revised to state: provide feedback to RWPGs regarding water infrastructure projects and water conservation projects that were funded by the TWDB as a result of the planning group's efforts.

The committee reviewed recommendations on communication between TWDB, RWPGs, and Members. Members considered information provided via email by Ms. Backhouse on internal options for improving TWDB communication with RWPGs that can be accomplished with existing resources. This included ideas for improvement on email communication practices, increasing communications with RWPGs, social media, and educational content.

Mr. Walthour noted funding could be an issue for implementing improvements. Ms. Backhouse confirmed that the proposed recommendations could likely be done internally. Mr. Walthour proposed the third recommendation to TWDB in Section 4.3 be expanded to note improvements to email communication practices, opportunities to increase communications with RWPGs, use of social media, and other methods of providing educational materials to RWPGs and their members. Members agreed with the proposed addition.

No revisions were made to recommendations on TCEQ as ex-officio member or reimbursement of labor costs for regional water planning administrative agents.

Mr. Walthour proposed revisions to the language in the legislative recommendation on modification of the Texas Open Meetings Act video-conferencing restrictions. The recommendation was revised to allow virtual attendance of a RWPG member that cannot physically attend a meeting because of health related or other issues approved by the Legislature. Ms. Strube indicated the revision addressed her concerns on allowances for RWPG members and travel distances. Members agreed with the revision.

No revisions were made to recommendations on improving the regional water planning process.

Ms. Strube made a motion to approve the committee's report section and final recommendations as amended. Mr. Schreiber seconded the motion. ***The committee unanimously approved the committee's report and recommendations as amended.***

Mr. Holcomb asked Ms. Backhouse about the member information included in Appendix A of the report. Ms. Backhouse confirmed this information was compiled from Interregional Planning Council member nomination materials. Members can submit revisions to Appendix A to TWDB staff.

6. Discussion of Next Steps

The next committee meeting was scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on August 27, 2020. Mr. Walthour asked members to consider canceling the August 27 and September 10 meeting dates. Members agreed to cancel the proposed meetings. The next committee meeting is tentative scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on September 17, 2020, for the committee to consider any feedback from the Council on the committee's final recommendations and report.

Mr. Kelley asked for confirmation that the document the committee just approved includes the final recommendations that are to be submitted to the Council for consideration. Mr. Walthour confirm the motion for approval indicated approval was for the committee's final recommendations.

7. Discussion and Action, as appropriate – Action Plan for Committee Work and Status of Assignments

The committee considered work to be completed prior to the next meeting. Ms. Backhouse confirmed that TWDB staff will incorporate the committee's revisions into the final committee report. Mr. Walthour asked Ms. Backhouse to send the final document to the full committee for final review. If additional changes are needed after the final review, a meeting will be scheduled for the committee to address proposed revisions.

8. Discussion of Agenda for Future Meetings

The agenda for the September 17, 2020 meeting will include consider approval of minutes, status of assignments, consider committee reports and recommendations, and discuss next steps.

9. Public Comment – No public comments were offered.

10. Adjourn – Mr. Walthour adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:15 p.m.