NEW JERSEY CLEAN WATER COUNCIL
June 8, 2010
Meeting Highlights

Location:
NJ Department of Environmental Protection, 401 East State Street – 6th floor, Trenton, NJ.

Attendees:

Others: Commissioner Martin, Assistant Commissioner Wittenberg, Michelle Putnam, Jorge Reyes, Christine Schell, Helen Heinrich and Gerry Skrajewski.

The meeting was convened to order by Jessica Sanchez at 10:15 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MAY’S 2010 MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:
May’s Minutes were distributed. Jim Cosgrove noted a correction to the Minutes. Lou Neely made the motion to approve the minutes, and Jim Cosgrove seconded the motion. The Minutes were approved as amended.

DEP UPDATES:
Stan Cach reported that no new appointments have been made since the last CWC Meeting.

Also, Stan updated the CWC on the 2008 Clean Watersheds Needs Survey. Stan said that through a lot of DEP staff effort, New Jersey was able to document New Jersey’s needs that they now rank No. 1 in the United States (over $36 billion in wastewater needs) in USEPA’s Report to Congress. Stan thanked the CWC for the effort they made in encouraging municipalities to fill out the forms and submit them to the DEP to document their communities’ needs. The CWC acknowledged the efforts of Stan and staff in accomplishing this goal.

OLD BUSINESS:
Discussion was held about how to best present the information to the Commissioner regarding the 2008 Public Hearing on Water Infrastructure Financing and the 2009 Public Hearing on Climate Change. It was recommended that Pam Goodwin take the lead with the conversation regarding Climate Change and Dan Van Abs be the lead on the discussion on Water Infrastructure Financing.

Commissioner Bob Martin joined the meeting at 11:30 am. He walked around the room and introduced himself to all the Clean Water Council Members. Jessica welcomed the Commissioner to the Meeting and explained to him the diverse group that makes up the CWC Council.
Pam summarized the testimony and CWC recommendations from the 2009 Public Hearing which addressed *Water Policy & Climate Change*. She discussed the responses received to the two questions posed by the Council: 1) What are the high priority risks to clean water posed by the increasing variability of climate and weather events?; and 2) What changes to water management policies are needed to increase flexibility and adaptive management, and how will NJ meet the cost? Pam also summarized the Council’s 2009 Public Hearing Executive Summary on Water Policy & Climate Change. The Commissioner thanked the Council for its good work on this important topic and requested any data that was submitted with testimony. He said he is working with the Science Advisory Board on some of these issues. The Commissioner said NJDEP decisions concerning climate change will be made only when all the facts and data are on the table. He also said that he intends to recommend to his staff that they use the information the Council has provided to the Department regarding Water Policy & Climate Change and include it in reports that they are currently working on.

Dan updated the Commissioner on the CWC’s work since the 2008 Public Hearing whose topic was *New Jersey’s Water Infrastructure – Sustainable Funding*. Dan said it really broke down to two fundamental issues: 1) establishing best practices for asset management and how to drive people in the right direction; and 2) the financial management part of it. Dan informed the Commissioner that the Council has already met with BPU and DCA because they would also be involved with the financial aspects of the Programs. The Council has put together a White Paper with the hope that it will serve as a guidance document that someone would reference to say “yes, this is where NJ needs to go”. We realize that it may take a few years just to put the basic program in place. Also, we have hopes that by then, the recession would be past us. Additional case studies may be needed to that illustrate where utilities have spent more money on asset management that actually allowed them to reduce their rates long-term. The Council wants to get this out to the public prior to the CWC’s Public Hearing on October 12th so the public can really think about it and come to the Hearing with thoughtful responses.

The Commissioner said that he believes that good asset management in the long run is the right answer and asked if privatization has been considered as an option. Dan said that there are many private-sector water supply utilities, but very few of any significant size in the wastewater field. Good public managers, if they have good Boards, can do all of this work and do it well. The Commissioner noted that the bottom line is that profitability drives things like asset management. Dan said that we want to get to the point where the form of ownership does not impact the quality. The Commissioner said that the asset management piece of the Report is golden. Dan said the utilities have to have standards and benchmarks; decision makers have to be held accountable. A comment was made that we should reward “going green” and the implementation of positive programs. Another comment was made that standards need to be set that will be applicable to every type of utility.

Jessica asked the Commissioner if the Council should continue in this direction with the Water Infrastructure Financing While Paper. Commissioner Martin said that he was happy with the conversation today. He is going to take the Climate Change information and will get it rolling into the current work the Department is doing. He wants the Council to keep building on today’s conversation and help think through further on how to make the White Paper work and give him specific recommendations. Also, he wants us to see if there are
other ways we can challenge ourselves and change others - How do you change the paradigm long-term? Consider privatizing; a public private partnership, etc. How do we deal with issues of money with authorities? Commissioner Martin would appreciate feedback on these issues. He encouraged the Council to continue on the path they’re on and be innovative. John Plonski, Assistant Commissioner of Water Resource Management will be the contact on the CWC for the Commissioner. Assistant Commissioner Plonski will be invited to the next CWC Meeting on July 13th.

_Housekeeping: i.e., expired terms; letters of (re)appointments; updated membership list_
Stan will be contacting Assistant Commissioner Plonski and his office to have those CWC terms that have expired appointments re-appointed.

**NEW BUSINESS:**
The 2010 CWC Public Hearing will be held on October 12th.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**
None.

**ADJOURNMENT:**
The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 a.m. with a motion from Tony McCracken. It was seconded by Ray Zabihach.

** The next meeting of the Clean Water Council will be held on Tuesday, July 13th, 2010, beginning at 10:00 a.m., at the NJEIT, 3131 Princeton Pike, Bldg 6, Suite 201, Lawrenceville NJ. **