

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency LGAC Small Communities Advisory Subcommittee

Meeting

(DRAFT) Meeting Summary

Thursday, December 1, 2011
3:30 pm- 6:00 pm (ET)

The Meeting Summary that follows reflects what was conveyed during the course of the meeting which is summarized. The Subcommittee is not responsible for any potential inaccuracies that may appear in the meeting summary as a result of information conveyed. Moreover, the Subcommittee advises that additional information sources be consulted in cases where any concern may exist about statistics or any other information contained within the Meeting Summary.

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3:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. (ET)

Draft Meeting Notes

Introduction

Chair Dixon called the meeting to order at 3:30pm.

Jack Bowles, Director of State & Local Relations, welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for coming for the SCAS meeting and the LGAC meeting.

Partnership for Sustainable Communities

Dr. Matthew Dalbey and Megan McConville gave an overview of the [Partnership for Sustainable Communities \(PSC\)](#).

- Started in 2009 as a partnership between EPA, HUD and DOT
 - Coordinate dollars going into communities
 - Make sure communities can leverage dollars
- Have been working with USDA, but they haven't formally committed to the partnership
- Examples of EPA programs that support the PSC
 - [Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities](#) – technical assistance through direct contractor support to communities to help them achieve their desired development goals, improve the quality of life for their residents, and make their communities more economically and environmentally sustainable
 - [Brownfields Program](#) – grants and technical assistance to encourage the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of property which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant
- HUD's core grants programs that support the PSC won't have funding next year
 - The HUD office that participates in the PSC will still be funded

-Dr. Dalbey noted that it would be helpful to have a letter about how the PSC efforts are aligned with and supportive of the work that you are doing in your communities. We need to ensure that federal funds work together and aren't duplicative. We also need to be flexible to the needs of local communities. It would be helpful if EPA and PSC could come to the LGAC to get advice on how to improve our programs.

-Mayor Dixon stated that the delivery of the programs is what's important. This isn't just about forming another partnership. It's about serving the public.

-Commissioner Cope stated that it is interesting that USDA isn't formally committed to the Partnership. How does this dovetail with the Rural Development Agency? If their goals aren't exactly aligned with the PSC

goals, that might explain the hesitancy; work with the Rural Development Agency. Chair Ortiz added the Army Corp of Engineers has a flood prevention program where they pay 80% and the community pays 20%. The Corp does a lot of work in rural communities. The PSC should look into working with the Army Corp.

-Mayor Murrell asked how a small town mayor would find out that this resource exists. How do you transfer this information across the country? Mayor Dixon noted USDA has an office in almost every county. Take all the federal information that needs to get out to local officials, and make it easily available through these offices. Chair Ortiz agreed and said that there needs to be interagency coordination to have the most effect. Mayor Dixon agreed and added it is important to make sure the rules and resources are available and applicable at the local level. Mayor Murrell stated that the change needed for more coordination involves a corporate cultural change at the secretary level. Mayor Dixon added the real progress is made through public-private partnerships.

- Commissioner Cope raised the question of the definition of “sustainability.” Some new “sustainable” infrastructure requires maintenance, which comes out of the local government’s budget. Need to focus on things that can also attract the economic base to sustain it over time. Mr. Tiberi noted there are 3,000 USDA facilities across the country, and there’s a benefit to build onto an existing facility. Dr. Dalbey agreed with these points, and stated that from the perspective of the PSC, economic sustainability is part of the definition of sustainability.

The SCAS agreed that the LGAC should write a letter to the Administrator on the Partnership and to bring a motion to the LGAC at the Dec. 2 meeting. Each Subcommittee and Workgroup could contribute to the letter. *Final points about the letter:*

- Defined delivery of programs
- USDA needs to commit to the partnership
- Commissioner Cope motioned to recommend working towards an MOU with USDA. Mr. Tiberi seconded. Motion was carried.
- Also look at working with Rural Development Agency and Army Corp
- During the SCAS and LGAC Workgroup report-out session of the Dec. 2 LGAC meeting, Mayor Dixon and Mayor Wong will both recommend that the LGAC write a letter to the Administrator on the Partnership for Sustainable Communities.
 - They will also recommend referring it to the LGAC Executive Steering Committee

EPA’s Regulatory Review

Lena Ferris from EPA’s Office of Policy gave a presentation on [EPA’s Retrospective Regulatory Review](#).

-Commissioner Cope recommended that, under the topic of “Regulatory certainty for farmers,” EPA should include/consider reviewing upcoming regulations for above-ground storage tanks for diesel and gas.

-Mayor Dixon noted there is a lot of information on the list of regulations that are being reviewed (see [Improving our Regulations: Final Plan for Periodic Retrospective Reviews of Existing Regulations](#)). The SCAS members will take some time to look over it and come back to EPA if they have any questions or need more information.

Rural Community Assistance Program

Mr. Robert Stewart, Executive Director of RCAP, gave a presentation of the program and what services are available.

- Mayor Dixon asked how RCAP's definition of "rural communities." Mr. Stewart replied that RCAP uses some different definitions because the federal agencies all have different definitions. Usually the communities are very small, but the maximum population is <10,000.

- Mr. Tiberi noted that communities need to start using nature more in wastewater treatment (i.e., using wetlands). Mr. Stewart agreed. There are many smaller communities that can't afford the pumps and larger infrastructure of a centralized wastewater treatment plant. RCAP encourages them to keep things decentralized and use other techniques, such as wetlands.

-Mayor Wong noted that her community has had great interactions with RCAP. Her town has a population just over 40,000, but because the infrastructure is >100 years old in some places, there are a lot of the same issues that smaller communities have.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Tom Curtis, Deputy Executive Director, American Water Works Association

Mr. Curtis informed the SCAS of the AWWA's concern about some of EPA's upcoming drinking water regulations. Mr. Curtis said that the AWWA supports having regulations when there are health benefits, but AWWA is afraid some of the compounds being regulated, such perchlorate and nitrosamines, are being pushed through because of political pressure from the Hill. Mr. Curtis asked that the SCAS give advice to EPA that standards should not be put into place when there are no health benefits.

-Commissioner Cope noted that the science is to the point that detection capability is much lower than the ability to remove the compounds from the water. Mayor Dixon stated that our main concern is human health protection in our communities.

Wrap-up and Next Steps

The Subcommittee agreed to propose the idea of a letter on the Partnership for Sustainable Communities at the Dec. 2 LGAC meeting.

Commissioner Cope and Mr. Tiberi suggested following up on Tom Curtis' presentation. These decisions should be made based on science, not politics. There's also an economic aspect to consider. EPA will arrange for a briefing for the SCAS from EPA's Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:12pm.

We hereby certify that, to the best of our knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

Submitted by:

 2/8/2012
Signature Date
Catherine M. Davis, EPA DFO

 2/8/2012
Signature Date
Mayor Robert Dixon, Chairman, SCAS

Participants

LGAC Members:

Mayor Bob Dixon
Commissioner Robert Cope
Mayor Marilyn Murrell
Chair Steven Ortiz
Executive Director Jeffrey Tiberi
Mayor Lisa Wong

EPA:

Jack Bowles, Office of Intergovernmental Relations
Matt Dalbey, Office of Sustainable Communities
Cathy Davis, Office of Intergovernmental Relations
Fran Eargle, Office of Intergovernmental Relations
Lena Ferris, Office of Policy
Charles Lee, Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance
Megan McConville, EPA Office of Sustainable Communities
Sherri White, Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

Other Attendees:

Tom Curtis, American Water Works Association
Monica Murrell, Arcadia, OK
Robert Stewart, Rural Community Assistance Partnership