

# **MINNESOTA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday, December 22, 2011  
MPCA Room Board Room, 520 Lafayette Road, St. Paul**

**EQB Members Present:** Jonathan Bloomberg, Spencer Cronk, Kristin Weeks Duncanson, Ed Ehlinger, Dave Frederickson, Julie Goehring, Tom Landwehr, Mark Phillips, Brian Napstad, Mike Rothman, John Saxhaug, Tom Sorel, and Erik Tomlinson

**EQB Members Absent:** Paul Aasen

**Staff Present:** EQB Staff: Princessa VanBuren Hansen, Mary Osborn, Bob Patton, and John Wells

The meeting was called to order at 9:04 a.m. by Chair Frederickson.

## **I. Adoption of Consent Agenda and Minutes**

The motion to adopt the consent agenda and minutes was made by Brian Napstad, seconded by Mike Rothman, and carried.

## **II. Introductions**

Members of the Board and others present introduced themselves.

## **III. Chair's Report**

Chairman Frederickson explained that the emphasis of today's meeting will be to talk about the work plans that the tech reps have developed over the past few weeks to meet the requirements that the Governor put forth in Executive Order 11-32.

## **IV. Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Patton explained the handouts given to the Board members:

- EQB Board Meeting Schedule for 2012
- A copy of today's presentation on the draft work activities, which will be presented by Princessa VanBuren Hansen and Randall Doneen
- EQB draft staffing and support proposals, which is subject to change as we go through the work plans

Mr. Patton went on to highlight other activities that EQB staff is currently involved in:

- The Legislature funded the EQB to oversee a project to look at groundwater sustainability in the I-94 growth corridor outside the metro area, up to St. Cloud. The EQB is engaging with the USGS as part of the contract. Additional partners are MGS, DNR, Agriculture, Health, and local governments. This is a Clean Water Legacy-funded project.
- An integrated watershed study is ongoing in the Minnesota River Basin, in partnership with the Corps of Engineers. It is to result in a model-based "decision support system" to aid water quality improvement efforts in the basin.
- The Environmental Initiative stakeholder project on the interface of land and water planning and implementation projects in Minnesota resulted in recognition that water-related planning schedules for governmental units in the state don't match up well, resulting in inefficiencies and missed opportunities. A study has been conducted, and a report will be coming out next month.

## **V. Draft Project Work Plans for Implementing Executive Order 11-32**

Princessa VanBuren Hansen and Randall Doneen presented overviews of the three draft work plans generated to address the requirements put forth in Executive Order 11-32:

1. Environmental Review Improvement
2. Improved Environmental Governance and Coordination
3. Environment and Energy Report Card and Environmental Congress

Staff requested that the Board keep these questions in mind while reviewing the separate work plans:

1. Do the plans capture the intent of the Executive Order?
2. Do they represent the vision of the EQB and the EQB subcommittee?
3. There have been two previous subcommittees in recent years. Are we being true to that effort?
4. Are the tasks that are detailed in the work plan the ones that EQB wants staff to take in order to achieve the defined outcomes?
5. Are the proposed activities practical and reasonable given the time lines?
6. Is what we proposed for EQB involvement and leadership adequate?
7. Is the level of public involvement adequate for each plan?
8. What are your recommendations on staffing commitment levels?

The three project teams working on the three work plans will report back to the EQB, and at the end of the product, it will be given to the Governor's Office. It is proposed that one communications team support/overarch all three projects. Staff requested that Board members fill in Tables 1 and 2 of the Draft Staffing and Support Proposals, laying out what resources (staff) they are able to contribute to each team, as well as suggestions of people with whom the project core staff teams should engage, relative to each individual project.

### **Input/Suggestions from Board Members**

#### **Environmental Review Improvement Work Plan**

- We should look at the fundamentals of environmental review and, if needed, make fundamental structural changes. If the Board agrees, it should be reflected in the work plans.
- How does the environmental review process fit within the broader context of project delivery?
- Get public input on what's working, what's not.
- Look at practical application of how environmental review legislation played out. Have external parties evaluate our systems as they exist today. Public input may be appropriate earlier in the process than what is laid out in the draft work plan.
- Good data exists from multiple stakeholder groups and is relatively current. The intent was to pull that together before moving forward. Having something to present to get feedback on is a good idea.
- Look at what other states are doing, but give Minnesota credit for what we do well. Our state is a leader in the environmental process in many ways.
- Think of this as a path for the next 40 years, not as a way to improve it for the next two or three years. Be bold.
- Evaluate the use of technology to streamline the process.
- Investigate combining overlapping work that is done for environmental review and for permitting.
- Define low-risk projects that may no longer need to go through the environmental review process, only a permitting process. This issue was mentioned in the Legislative Auditor's Report and is one that will be evaluated.
- Can project management techniques be brought into the environmental review/permitting process to speed it up; do things linearly.
- Make sure that the technical expertise for each project is on the review panel, which may require interagency coordination.
- Regarding stakeholder input processes, Environmental Initiative is a group well-situated to handle this.

#### **Environmental Governance and Coordination Work Plan**

- This is an opportunity to challenge basic premises, and what it is we want to accomplish in terms of how state government approaches these complicated issues.
- Need a plan to reach out to the Legislature in the early stages. The EQB should take the initiative. (The plan will be modified so that this is included in the efforts of the communications team.)

- If we are true to being bold about how we are going to change environmental permitting, that may influence how we think about governance, so this will likely be part of all three projects.
- Consideration must be given as to what federal agencies might have some oversight on the plans we are making. There should be recognition of the fact that although we may want to take certain steps within the state, there may be federal involvement that prohibits us taking them.

### **Environment and Energy Report Card and Environmental Congress**

- Commissioner Rothman suggested that the wording "...and goals relating to improved delivery of environmental and **energy** services" be re-worded to "...and goals relating to government services that improve the environment."
- Once the metrics are sketched out, it is suggested that there be EQB review and approval before moving forward.
- Under "Methodology" add the language, "The EQB will approve the metrics that will be included in the report card."
- The report card should not be the only basis for the Environmental Congress.
- The report card is where the use of technology will be a big issue, and that needs to be addressed.
- The report card should not be agency report cards, but one that tells citizens the state of our waters, air, and land, progress made, what has improved and what has not. From that data, we can look at what internal programs are working and which ones are not.
- It is important to make information easily accessible to Greater Minnesota, and possibly to have "mini" sessions throughout the state once the big Environmental Congress is over; also, use the groups that already exist and that people are familiar with (i.e., Mississippi Headwaters or Red River Basin Commission) to make them feel more a part of "what's going on in the city."
- Come back to the EQB with a proposal about what the Congress will look like as soon as possible. In general, keeping the Board posted about developments along the way is important.
- Wildlife should be included as an indicator of environmental quality. (Language will be added to the work plan – "included, but not limited to, air, land, and water.")
- As we talk about environmental measures and how they affect air, water, land, and wildlife, those might be different than how they affect people. That may be a measure for the report card, as well as a measure of sustainability.
- How is the environmental review process working? That topic may be for the Congress, not the report card.
- Metrics must have acceptable, defined outcomes and timelines.
- The Advisory Group should be involved earlier in the process.
- It was suggested and agreed on that the Report Card and the Environmental Congress should be separate projects/work plans.
- Metrics are residing in all agencies that could contribute to this discussion, and should be fleshed out.

Ms. Hansen proposed that the next steps would be for staff to edit the work plans based on input from the Board and their responses to the Draft Staffing and Support Proposals, then return to the January meeting for adoption.

A discussion ensued about the changes in the EQB since the legislative session. Jess Richards spoke of the importance of defining the EQB's role, leadership, and core staffing (and where they are housed). The current Executive Director of the EQB (Bob Patton) is responsible for overseeing the teams now being developed to address the Governor's Executive Order.

Chairman Frederickson adjourned the meeting at 11:32.