

SPOKANE COUNTY WATER AVAILABILITY ADVISORY GROUP

Thursday, May 24, 2012

2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Spokane Regional Health District, Room 320/321

1101 W College Ave

Spokane, WA

MEETING SUMMARY

Attending: *(This list includes only those who signed the sign-in sheet)*

Rob Lindsay, <i>Spokane County</i>	Mike Hermanson, <i>Spokane County</i>
Rick Noll, <i>Spokane Conservation District</i>	Katherine Rowden, <i>NOAA</i>
Dick Price, <i>Stevens PUD</i>	Jeanne Barnes, <i>Spokane Assoc. of Realtors</i>
Doug Greenland, <i>City of Spokane</i>	Mike Lithgow, <i>Pend Oreille Co.</i>
Steve Skipworth, <i>Liberty Lake Sewer & Water</i>	Kitty Klitzke, <i>Futurewise</i>
Joe Foote, <i>Murray, Smith & Associates</i>	Rusty Post, <i>WDOE</i>
Ken Garceau, <i>Spokane Assoc. of Realtors</i>	Michael Cathcart, <i>Spokane Homebuilders Assoc.</i>
Steven Holderby, <i>Spokane Regional Health District</i>	Karen Skoog, <i>Stevens Co. Farm Bureau</i>
Alene Lindstrand, <i>Realtor</i>	Rachael Osborn, <i>CELP</i>
Dwight Hume, <i>Land Use Solutions and Entitlement</i>	Suzy Dix, <i>Realtor</i>
Jim Mathieu, <i>Northwest Land and Water</i>	Susan Gulick, <i>Sound Resolutions (Facilitator)</i>

1. Develop Recommendations Regarding Building Permits

- ❑ The Advisory Group discussed the option of requiring more detailed reporting and testing requirements from well pump contractors in order to assess water availability prior to issuing a building permit.

Review of Interviews with Well Pump Contractors

- ❑ Susan reviewed the information she gathered via phone interviews with well pump contractors who work in Spokane County. The interviews asked a series of questions about how the above option would affect pumpers.
- ❑ Reactions from pumpers ranged from strong opposition to openness.
- ❑ The pumper who objected stressed that the way they do it now is just fine. Their costs would go up to gather the data and he doesn't think it would tell you anything useful, because "you can't predict Mother Nature". "There is no way to tell if water will be there tomorrow; all we can tell you is whether there is water there the moment we pump."
- ❑ Another pumper felt that the new option would not affect their costs much and would be an acceptable method. However, they are currently operating on a very small margin to do these pump tests and are not making much, if any, profit so new requirements are always a concern. "Please make them as clear and simple as possible."
- ❑ Another said that the new requirement to record data at short intervals would mean they couldn't complete other tasks while conducting the test, which means their costs would increase.
- ❑ Changing the rate of flow from low to high did not seem to be a concern.
- ❑ Pumpers were concerned about the costs of losing sounders in the wells.
- ❑ All pumpers said supplying data in digital format would be an added hardship and requested that the County enter the data. They are not using handheld computers in the

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field so digital submission would add data-entry time (and therefore increase costs). In the future, if the industry begins to move toward handheld computers or other electronic systems, this could become easier.

- ❑ Advisory Group members noted that pumpers could purchase pressure transducers that would automatically gather digital information at regular intervals.
- ❑ Sonar measurements could also be used. However, the purchase of either sonars or pressure transducers would be an added cost for well pumpers.
- ❑ It was suggested that training should be offered to pumpers before the new requirements take effect.
- ❑ Susan will try to contact at least one other pumper to gather more information.

Advisory Group Discussion of Option

- ❑ Advisory Group members generally support retaining the current standard of 1 gallon per minute (gpm) demonstrated via a 4 hour pump test, with more specific testing protocols and reporting requirements for pumpers.
- ❑ It was suggested that if an applicant receives a marginal result (e.g. just under the 1 gpm threshold) they should be allowed to conduct additional testing to determine if the well can produce 1 gpm over time.
- ❑ It was noted that the County has an obligation to ensure that water is legally available, not just physically available.
- ❑ There is concern about seasonal variations in pump tests; not all pump tests can occur in late summer/early fall when aquifers are generally at their lowest. Is there an effective way to estimate seasonal variation for tests that are conducted at varying times of the year?
- ❑ It was suggested that, as a minimum, education materials should be distributed to home buyers explaining that water availability at one time of the year doesn't mean water will be available all year.
- ❑ Jim Mathieu noted that there is no way to look at seasonal variability with a 4-hour pump test. You could use data from long-term water level trends in the County to evaluate the potential seasonal variability. However, this would probably be too complicated for the average homebuyer or homebuilder to do.
- ❑ It was also noted that information on what is known (and not known) about water availability could be required to be disclosed to purchasers at the time of sale, similar to other information about the property.

2. Develop Recommendations Regarding Long-Term Sustainability/Impacts on Senior Water Users

- ❑ The Advisory Group discussed the complications of assessing potential impairment to adjacent senior water rights holders. Some felt that this should be left to civil actions between the two property owners; others noted that it is almost impossible to tell which well is impairing your water. Property owners with long-term water may find that they no longer have sufficient water after new houses are built in the vicinity, but it is very difficult to prove which house caused the problem.
- ❑ Jim noted that evaluation of potential impairment is standard procedure for municipal water rights so there are methods to evaluate this. However, this is also a complicated and costly evaluation and would be a lot to ask of individual home builders.

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- ❑ Perhaps the best way to address impairment concerns is to develop geographic zones of concern and require more analysis of water availability and potential impairment within these areas. However, others noted that it would be difficult to draw the lines for these new areas of concern. There were also concerns that the new requirements within these new zones could be too onerous and restrictive to property rights, and would be “putting the cart before the horse” because the first step should be to gather better hydrogeological data.
- ❑ The Advisory Group discussed the need for additional hydro-geo studies of water availability. There is general agreement that more information would be helpful. Some Advisory Group members would like more information before any new regulations are considered.

3. Next Steps

- ❑ Due to lack of time, the Advisory Group did not discuss the issue of evaluating water availability at the time of land division in detail.
- ❑ Susan will send out a summary of the options/potential recommendations to the Advisory Group. These potential recommendations are DRAFT—nothing has been agreed to by the group. The purpose is to get something on paper for discussion.
- ❑ Advisory Group members are encouraged to offer revisions to the draft recommendations and/or to offer new options for Advisory Group consideration.

Upcoming Meetings

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topics</i>
<i>Thursday, June 14, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. SRHD Auditorium</i>	✓ Finalize recommendations