

**Advisory Council on
Water Supply Systems and Wastewater Treatment Facilities
August 19, 2026
Minutes**

Council members present:

Lori Blair
Jennifer Koenig
Luke Heikkila
Russel Lupkes
Jim Sadler
Ray Wurm
Carol Blommel-Johnson
Steve Grossman
Nick Haig
Bob Smude

Others Present:

Tracy Finch – MPCA
Noel Hansen - MDH
Jeff Bemboom - MRWA
Abbie Browen – City of Plymouth
Virginia Barber – St. Paul College
Isaac Raser - MCES

Council members unable to attend:

Kelly Irving

Chairman Haig called meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Introductions

Steve Grossman was introduced as the new Member of the Public Representing Academia. Steve works for the City of Eagan and is very involved in the WUTT program at St. Paul College.

Carol Blommel-Johnson informed the Council of her retirement. Possible replacement Isaac Raser from MCES was in attendance.

Motion to approve minutes from May 19, 2026 meeting.

1st Carol Blommel-Johnson

2nd Ray Wurm

Motion approved.

MDH Policy Review

MDH needs specific language approved in policy for EPA reporting. Language in Statute/Rule is not exactly as EPA needs it, but it meets the intent of what they want. They request MDH to have a policy stating we will meet the exact language they are looking for. MDH wrote up policies to make this request for the council's review and approval (attached).

Motion to approve policy language:

1st Luke Heikkila
2nd Lori Blair
Motion approved.

Training Coalition Discussion

The Training Coalition history and charge were explained to Council members. N. Haig expressed thoughts of better collaboration between the Council and this group. Possible options for collaboration were discussed.

Motion to invite Training Coalition members to a Council meeting for an annual update:

1st Jim Sadler
2nd Bob Smude

St. Cloud WETT Program Update

Water/Wastewater instructor Gregg Kroppe is on sabbatical for the '26 – '27 school year so water/wastewater programs will not be offered. There is concern from industry representatives that the program will have difficulty recruiting students for the next school year. Also, it was noted that enrollment has declined in recent years. There was general discussion about how industry/associations/agencies could help to increase enrollment at SCCTC and other programs. No decisions or motions were made.

MRWA Apprenticeship Program

Jeff Bemboom from MRWA gave a presentation about their water/wastewater apprenticeship program.

National Rural Water started the program with the Department of Labor and established the standards of the program. MRWA started the program in May 2021 and has graduated 4 people. They currently have 14 in the program with 6 cities interested in becoming part of the program. The program includes on-the-job training, mentors, course work, and one-on-one with MRWA staff.

MRWA would like any help with the Mn Department of Labor and Industry to get their program listed more prominently on their website.

The Council is very supportive of the efforts and will continue to provide support as needed. Agency staff will review hours and curriculum more closely and provide equivalency information for certification exams.

St. Paul College WUTT Program

Steve Grossman and Abbie Browen gave a presentation about a proposed accredited water/wastewater program set to begin fall of 2027 at St. Paul College.

The plan is to have 10 courses over 2 semesters. The courses will cover foundational knowledge, safety and health, operational competencies, and then two 3-week internships, one working in water, one working in wastewater.

The next steps are getting feedback from the Advisory Council, present to the St. Paul College Accreditation Committee, and then program review and acceptance from MN State education system.

The Council is very supportive of the efforts and will continue to provide support as needed. Agency staff will review hours and curriculum more closely and provide equivalency information for certification exams.

November Meeting

N. Haig initially thought the Council could have the November meeting at the MPCA Training in Brooklyn Park as there is a presentation on water workforce. After further discussion it was decided that Council members would be invited to the presentation but that the council meeting would be held at a later date. An email will be sent to survey council members on dates that may work.

Action Items

Agencies will review the apprentice program and St. Paul College program to determine related hours of experience for exam.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:04 p.m.

1st Carrol Blommel-Johnson

2nd Jim Sadler

Motion approved.

Next meeting: TBD