Moab Water Conservation and Drought Management Advisory Board

Notes from the January 8 meeting vision and role definition session

Carly Castle, Asst City Manager, presented the ordinance defining the Board’s role to the group. She discussed how advisory boards differ from City Council and Planning Commission in that they do not have legislative or quasi judicial powers but rather are PURSUASIVE in nature.

Carly presented her interpretation of what the ordinance tasks the board with, which is a fairly narrowly defined role of water conservation advice rather than supply side analysis and overall water resource management. The board, in its entirety, does not agree with this completely and sees a need to focus on the supply side analysis to some degree as none of us see that we can really effectively conserve if we do not have a clear understanding of our supply.

Carly also explained how the board advisory status works. While it is in the ordinance to have us make recommendations the council and staff, it is clearer and moves things through processes of the city to have collaboration between the board and staff before recommendations are passed onto council. Mike Duncan agreed and expanded on this further.

Mike Duncan mentioned that he felt that the ordinance needs to be revised including changing the name of the board to a more clear and understandable “Water Advisory Board” and to also propose some changes to the roles defined in said ordinance. It became apparent that many of the board members had had discussions with Council members and the Mayor and have a much broader interpretation of the role of this body.

Kara Dohrenwend, current board chair, discussed the inherent high level of ambiguity we all need to accept in order to wrap our heads around the supply/demand concept. Further, at the inception of this body the USGS report shedding more light on the supply side of the situation was only in its inception at our inception, so while it makes sense to have put in a lot of time to understanding and analyzing that document we need to also put time into conservation strategies.

It was agreed by the board that some ordinance amendments should be requested for consideration by council to clarify how this relatively young body works now that we have 2 ½ years behind us. We also agreed to use the Water Conservation Plan revision process (with assistance from City Staff (Carly)) to clarify our roles and the recommendations we are making to the city by first reviewing the entire document and beginning a google doc to make suggested changes, and by better defining action items. Which are for the board, for city staff, for collaborative efforts with other entities.

For the last 40 minutes of the meeting the group focused on the tasks ahead in 2020 and also talked about why they are on this board/what they really want to see come out of our work (what makes the time spent in meetings and preparing for meetings worthwhile). The list of topics that came up as missing from other discussions is:
• Defining and understanding a realistic water budget (this includes dialog with City Engineering to reduce the ambiguity about supply, and also determine what level in the range of supply estimates are we suggesting the City use for planning purposes).
  o This includes providing the city council, working with city staff, to translate empirical data regarding water management into workable and politically acceptable policies.
• Understanding and being a part of discussions regarding water pricing
• Requesting revision of the ordinance outlining our purpose to include water QUANTITY as well as CONSERVATION and QUALITY PROTECTION and proposing a simpler, broader name “Water Advisory Board” (Carly advised that this will create some issues with members participating in other boards and bodies in the community including the Moab Area Watershed Partnership – it does not preclude participation but we need to make sure we are in compliance with Open Meeting laws)
• Determine education and outreach needs and create a plan that members or the board may advise on but not execute.
• Determine issues that require collaboration to accomplish – with city staff, with council, with planning commission but also with other entities in the community including but not limited to GWSSA, the County, DWQ, DWRi, and other entities working on water quality and quantity issues.
• Continue to work on understanding the supply side – USGS report and Ken Kolm work
• Work on water conservation ordinance recommendations
  o For conservation measures this may include education components (carrots rather than sticks)
  o Actions for drought emergencies (both natural and caused by equipment failure)
  o

Some of the more tasks that we identified needing to be accomplished include:
• Work on collaboration and communication flow between the board and city staff
  o perhaps a flow chart to help new members understand this in future
  o take initiative to send information requests to city staff understanding that some requests will take time to fill (asking city staff to let us know when they need more time)
• Participating in crafting and implementing a groundwater management plan
• Participating in crafting and implementing ground water monitoring
• Participating in implementing surface water monitoring
• Discuss term limits and come up with a suggestion to either have them or not (we have chair term limit of 2 years, do we want overall member term limits of say 2 or 3 terms?)
• Revise the plan by 2021, perhaps using that revision process as our public outreach work for 2020
  o Review and consider revisions to our mission statement
  o Work through the plan – updating the state required data and determining what is missing in the plan and what sections need revisions
  o Redefine the action section of the plan to more clearly outline responsible parties/people or agencies who will enact these actions