

**Haskill Basin Watershed Council
Draft Meeting Minutes
October 4, 2018
Riverside Plaza Conference Room**

Attendees: Valerie Kurth, Glenda Gehri, John Phelps, Michael Reichenberg, Craig Workman, Neil DeZort, Bill Mulholland, Chester Powell, Hailey Graf.

Everyone introduced themselves with their name and affiliation.

John Phelps called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

- 1) Draft meeting minutes from the February 21, 2018 meeting were reviewed, and no changes were made. Glenda moved to approve the meeting minutes for the February 21st meeting of HBWC. Chet seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

2) Reservoir Dam Management Plan

Craig Workman and Neil DeZort welcomed questions from the group about the City of Whitefish reservoir management. John cited the City of Whitefish Climate Action Plan (CAP) because it includes many components related to Haskill Creek and the concerns of HBWC. He asked about the expanded water storage capacity on the south side of Whitefish at the water treatment plant. Craig explained that there are capacity issues with the current storage system, especially in the summer during high outtake and low instream flows. They may struggle to fill a new tower with their current water sources, but they are exploring groundwater options, which could reduce demand on Haskill Creek. The groundwater source would be outside of city limits because groundwater in the city is high in iron.

Glenda asked if the Stillwater River was an option. Craig said he wasn't sure, and Neil added that they would have to pump it to the plant for treatment, but groundwater just needs to be chlorinated. Craig said that the groundwater idea would take several years to implement, but it may benefit HBWC by increasing flows in Haskill Creek. John asked about installing a well in above the water treatment plant. Neil said it was not a very feasible idea because the pressing need for water and increased pressure is at the southern portion of the system. He wondered if Big Mountain was exploring groundwater options. Chet said they were not, but they are always seeking more surface water for snow making.

Craig noted that the City's utility plan is outdated, and an updated plan would help use water more efficiently. Glenda asked about First Creek. Craig said it has not been a priority so far, but some City Councilors are interested in exploring it. However, there are potential sewer issues at Big Mountain. John added that all three creeks were tested in the initial HBWC watershed assessment. Second and Third were pristine, but First was not. He asked if there had been any recent testing of the creeks. Neil said there has not been testing, and he explained that the tests are expensive and it is difficult to time them during spring runoff. First Creek would only be used in emergencies.

John asked if reducing evaporation from the reservoir would help. Craig said it might, but they have not studied it. The periods of high evaporation are generally the same as those when water is withdrawn from the lake to supplement the supply. The reservoir does not have a high surface area and water cycles through it quickly. Glenda asked about the current condition of the reservoir and if it had any leaks. Neil said there are not leaks. Chet asked about the intake area. Neil said the intake and pipes have been worked on recently (last 5 years), so he thought they were probably in good condition. John explained that others outside of HBWC, Ron Buentemeier and Mike Koopal, have been concerned about seepage from the reservoir for many years. Neil said he has never observed it, but there is some spill when they pump water from the lake, which could be what they have seen.

John asked about the water quality from the lake and the intake depth. Craig said the intake is in Monks Bay, and it would probably be better at depth. Neil said the current intake is about 30 ft deep, so it is relatively shallow. Craig said a deeper intake is high priority and may be done in 1-2 years. Neil said that total organic carbon is twice as high in water from the lake than from Haskill. In general, the higher turbidity, algae, and TOC in the lake water requires them to use more filters and chemicals to treat the water.

John noted that the CAP cites about 40% of water lost through leaks in the system. Craig said they have made progress on this issue through water main improvements. The total system-wide leak rate is now about 10%. Most of the remaining leaks are probably from illegal or unmetered consumption. John asked about leaks at the intake. Neil said it is not metered, but they meter everything going out of the plant and some people just tap into the line before the meter. Hailey asked about the water uses and strategies to reduce consumption. Craig said they could figure it out by looking at spikes in the annual usage. He said that this is not a Whitefish-specific issue – everyone struggles with water conservation.

John asked about the overflow at the reservoir. Neil explained that when more water is taken in than used, then it spills. John said that the previous water manager justified spillage because it kept the water cleaner. Neil responded that most of the spillage happens in the spring when the flows are high. In the summer months, the City uses all of the water and there is less spillage. Usage fluctuates throughout the day, so they would need an automatic control valve on the water intake to better regulate the spillage.. Glenda asked about adjusting spring and fall intake to have less spillover. Neil said that it wouldn't really make a difference in April because of runoff and flooding, but they could try it in the fall. Craig added that the spillage to Viking Creek and the wetland area complicates this, too. John asked about lowering the water level in the reservoir so it could absorb fluctuations without spilling. Neil was not sure how it would be managed in this way. John suggested that we can't control the intake, but maybe we could control at the bottom. Craig said that the pressure in the pipe could blow the pipe, plus there are overflow structures along the pipe that would absorb the water. John asked about schedules and priorities outlined in the CAP. Craig said there is not a schedule, but a committee is forming to discuss this soon. John asked about a point in the CAP about installing variable frequency drive technology to reduce energy costs and reservoir overflow. Neil explained that this point is more about conserving energy than water. Glenda asked about installing a settling pond in the case of emergencies, such as wildfire. Neil said it would be expensive and require a huge area, so costs would not outweigh benefits. John asked about the possibility of having to use Haskill water in the event of a large fire in the basin. Craig said yes, they would, and there would have to be hard conversations with the public about water usage because they would have to rely completely on the lake.

3) Whitefish Municipal Watershed Project USFS

Michael R. reported that firefighter safety and initial attack are the priorities for this project. Three units have been cut and piled so far. One, 1-acre fuel break was cut and burned this past fall. Prescribed burning is planned for higher elevation areas. They have been approved, but the weather was too wet this fall to burn. They will hopefully happen next fall. Stoltze is working on the stewardship contract, which includes timber and other activities. They are building temporary roads right now and have plans to log next year.

4) Forest Plan Revision

Bill reported that Flathead National Forest Supervisor Chip Weber will brief staff in the Washington, DC office soon, and the plan is scheduled to be signed in mid-December.

5) Replacement of Culverts on Haskill Basin County Road

John explained that we need participation (easement) and support from the Fagans to make this project work. On-the-ground work is needed on their property upstream of the culvert. When they were approached last fall, they seemed willing at least to discuss it. Last spring, they called John to discuss the project. They told him they would only agree to the project if paving the road was included. There really

is not an alternative route for neighbors to use during construction, and doing the work half-by-half would cost at least \$100K more..

- 6) Public Comment
 - No public comment

Next meeting: November 27, 2018

- 7) Meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM.