



MINUTES

Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee Meeting, January 15, 2015

(revised 1/27)

Meeting called to order 4:00pm

Present -

Members: Meiring Borchers, Patrick Gsellman, Laura DeYoung, Maia Peck, Ellen Brown-Armstrong, Jenn Greiser, Jan Rybka, Ed Wilk, Frank Greenland, Bryan Stubbs, Brian Prunty, Joe McDonald, Derek Schafer, Jenita McGowan, Lucy Miller, Bob Hasenyager, Matt Montecalvo, Jo Ann Banda, Tori Mills, Kathleen Bradley, Bob Gardin

Presenters: Russ Gibson, Amy Jo Klei, OEPA

Staff: Jane Goodman, Peter Bode, Lynn Garrity

Introductions of members present.

Russ Gibson provided an introduction to the how the AOC program in Ohio has been reorganized over the past year and the development of an updated strategy for their management, the theme for which is "moving forward." OhioEPA has held meetings with the other AOC groups in Ohio to provide a similar overview of the updates and AOC Framework. One of the significant reasons for the restructuring is related to funding. There have been gaps in funding for Cuyahoga AOC projects with larger federal funding sources. This framework will assist in strengthening these opportunities for AOCs and assist in filling these gaps. An example was the new habitat restoration grant program, which allowed OEPA to receive \$250K to pass through to subwatersheds to develop on-the-shelf projects ready when GLRI grants requiring them come up.

Amy Jo Klei described her role in the central office, working with the district coordinators and on other Lake Erie work. She described the process that OEPA had gone through to identify areas for improvement in the program and in the agency as well. She provided an overview of the AOC organizational framework and the specific roles and responsibilities of each participating entity: Facilitating Organization, Advisory Committee, and OhioEPA. Opportunities for AOCs with this updated framework will include 1) consistency across AOCs within the program, 2) defined roles and responsibilities 3) a coordinated strategy for the AOC partners and members, and 4) increased and coordinated public engagement/public input.

The Framework provides minimum expectations but will need to be tailored for each local AOC and the operations needed for successful implementation. The Framework is not prescriptive but provides general guidance. Ohio EPA is not going to tell the local AOC Committees what committees to form or how they are structured. The organization should base operations on what is needed to accomplish the mission of delisting the AOC.

She described the distinction between the Advisory Committee and the Facilitating Organization, each of which have minimum expectations. The FO's roles include supporting and facilitating the work of the Advisory Committee, assisting local project implementers, working in partnership with OEPA and the

watershed community, engage the community through regular opportunities for public input, and administering grant funds.

T. Mills asked the question of how the Facilitating Organization(FO) can handle letters of support for projects. Klei responded that it will be up to the AOC committee, once it has its structure and processes in place, whether or when to authorize the FO to provide letters of support on behalf of the AOC. The FO may also provide a letter of support on behalf of its organization. Gibson said that the Facilitating Organization can only act on behalf of the Advisory Committee with the AC's approval.

R. Gibson and A. Klei stated that the AOC Committee will advise OhioEPA on management actions necessary for the delisting of the AOC. The AOC Committee will make recommendations on the management actions to OEPA.

F. Greenland asked about data collection and where we are on that in order for the AOC Committee to make those decisions. Also, some of the Statewide Targets may not align with some of the locally led targets for some of the BUIs (example, beach closings). OEPA and J.Goodman stated that is later in the Agenda for the evening, but the information is being completed by CRR to share with the AOC. OEPA states that the local AOC Committee will need to review the Statewide Targets and determine if those will fit the local AOC and, if not, present to OEPA potential targets for the BUIs within the AOC that align with local conditions but will assist in meeting the minimum standards for Delisting.

R. Gibson stated that the AOC delisting is one step to restoring the watershed. Delisting is removing the river from the worst of the worst. Watershed Restoration will be required after Delisting. Delisting will not restore the river to its fullest potential, just the minimum set forth under the AOC program.

OEPA stated next Steps for the Group include:

- Reorganize the Advisory Committee as needed.
- Get more strategic
- Adopt BUI Restoration Targets or develop and present to OEPA new local targets.
- Update BUI Status
- Identify restoration needs for the AOC.

F. Greenland wanted to make sure he'd understood the "local option." Re beach closings, some of the language in the Guidance may be unclear, e.g. whether CSOs being the "primary cause," or just the "presence of CSOs" imply that CSOs have a larger impact than they do. For example, if Euclid Beach has high e coli in dry weather, we have to look for other causes, recognize them, and include them in the discussion. Gibson responded that it is in everyone's interest to remove these BUIs, and that if we can identify other causes and fix them (e.g. animal waste) we can work on those issues in creative ways.

T. Mills identified that some of the more urban watersheds may simply be unable to meeting restoration targets.

Klei said they would help identify some targets for specific BUIs where Clean Water Act standards may simply be too high a goal, and adapt BUI targets to apply to local conditions.

M. Peck asked about funding restrictions within urban watersheds that may be challenged for meeting restoration targets. Fore example, if the habitat BUI in the Little Cuyahoga is just out of reach, how would that affect funding? OEPA stated that the Local AOC Committee will decide how to prioritize

project areas and sub-watershed priorities for funding and will be based upon restoration targets that align with local conditions.

Gibson reiterated that the AC is going to help OEPA decide the answer to these questions. He mentioned that the whole funding picture can include SWIF funds, and assured Ms. Peck that Little Cuyahoga would be eligible for funding.

B. Gardin also identified the opportunity for retrofits and the potential in urban watersheds for habitat restoration, and pointed out how much money goes to stream restoration for habitat versus not as much to urban habitat projects. Klei noted that other AOCs have developed some primary and secondary short lists of projects, and they would try to get those done here as well.

Gibson stated that the Local AOC Committee will develop a Management Action List and may have primary and secondary projects based upon their 'return on investment' towards delisting of BUIs. "You recommend to us what should be measured." He looks at the HUC level, but the group will tell them what the community's priorities are, and CRR is here to help get and provide the information they need.

His bottom line was "Do the best you can, make sure the public has access to the information, and when you have a meeting, whether there's a public member or not, make sure the public has an opportunity to give input." Looking around the table, he said, he sees a wide variety of people that really do represent the community in a way that's engaged, participative, and is doing meaningful things. If at some point you stop feeling like you're doing meaningful things, he said, you need to restart.

E. Wilk and R.Gibson provided an overview of the expectations of the AOC Advisory Committee and the current organization of the Cuyahoga AOC. There is no specific recipe on how to operate, as long as the Committee will conduct the work related to AOC delisting, maintain community involvement, and institute management actions. The goals, objectives and the Committee's own work plan are up to the AOC Committee. A Governance Committee meeting is scheduled for February 11 to begin this work. *In the future, subcommittees or work groups will be established, including one to develop the Committee's work plan.* There may also be temporary project teams as needed. The Committee's own work plan is separate from the work plan and deliverables set forth in the subgrant between the Facilitating Organization and OEPA, except insofar as the secretariat services and other committee support deliverables are concerned.

One key component of the Committee's work is compiling the management action list of shovel-ready projects relevant to BUI Delisting.

Mr. Gibson and Ms. Klei left the meeting at this point to return to Columbus and let the Committee get on with its work.

J. Goodman stated that since the current members of the Governance Committee – Meiring B., Frank G., Jenn G., Bryan S., and Kathleen B – were all present, they could, if they wished, move ahead with the preliminary work of choosing a Chair and, as was suggested, a Vice Chair. Discussion among the AOC Committee members ensued on the process to elect a Chairperson and the development of the Committee structure, bylaws, role of chair, etc.

The Committee made the decision by voice vote simply to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for the AOC committee at this meeting.

J. Goodman (acting as a member of the Committee as set forth in the Framework) nominated J.Greiser for Chair. The motion was seconded by E. Brown-Armstrong. All present members voted yes for J.Greiser to serve as Chair of the AOC Committee.

Vice-Chair nominations were presented. D.Schafer made a motion to elect Meiring Borchers as Vice Chair. Bryan Stubbs seconded the motion. All present members voted yes to have Meiring Borchers as Vice Chair of the AOC Committee.

J. Greiser took over the role of meeting Chair. The Governance Committee meeting for February 11 will still take place to discuss structure, bylaws, etc.

J.Goodman provided an overview of the new AOC website and the data collection and status information for each sub-watershed on the website. The remainder of the subwatershed data will be posted on the website in the coming weeks.

E. Wilk stated that data gaps will be filled in partnership with OEPA by Fall, 2015. P.Bode has established sampling methodology. J. Goodman will send this out to the AOC Committee.

J. Greiser brought up the notice on the upcoming public meetings and the involvement of the AOC Committee. *The Governance committee will meet at 3pm on February 11, prior to the full Advisory Committee meeting to discuss the public meetings. All members of the Advisory Committee are encouraged to attend at least one of the public meetings.*

The meeting was adjourned at 6:07pm.