

Safe Water Advisory Group (SWAG) A City Council Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 13, 2023 City Hall Conference Room A and via Zoom

Attending in person: Brian Goetz, co-chair; Andrea Amico, co-chair, James Hewitt, Katrie Hillman, Kim McNamara.
Remote: Laurel Schaidler. Absent: Councilor Rich Blalock, Councilor Vince Lombardi, Rep. David Meuse, Elizabeth Barrett, Al Pratt, Chief Bill McQuillen, Al Pratt. Staff: Mason Caceres, Mariah Habershaw, Stephanie Seacord PIO, recording secretary

Full SWAG meeting recording: [Safe Water Advisory Group | City of Portsmouth](#)

Meeting presentation slides: [Reference Documents | City of Portsmouth](#)

1. **Welcome** – Co-chair Andrea Amico advised that the order of the agenda items would be changed to put the Water Division and Schools lead reports to come first.
2. **Minutes for the September 20, 2023 meeting approved.** Moved: Katrie Hillman, second Jim Hewitt.
3. **Lead Updates**
 - a. **City of Portsmouth Water Quality Specialist II Mason Caceres** provided an overview of the City's initiatives to address the EPA Lead and Copper Rule and NHDES requirements:
 - i. Water Division testing protocol, treatment to protect against pipe corrosion and City water system sampling results.
 - ii. EPA requires the City provide an inventory of all 8400 service lines and components in the system by October 16, 2024– and replace any lead or galvanized lines/components. Requires evaluation of the 1500 water service lines with unknown composition; others have no lead.
 - iii. Homeowner test sampling for lead and criteria to be deemed eligible by EPA to be in the sampling profile. Received 38 responses to outreach postcard: 17 samples returned/results obtained, 21 need follow-up [Andrea suggested asking the Citywide Neighborhood Committee to share the information.] City has 100 kits and doesn't want to tie up the resources. Samples must be sent to the lab within 14 days or the sample expires. Kim recommended making the information available in other languages – publishing the text on the website allows for translation in multiple languages. Also asked if renters can do the lead testing? Yes – one per building – if they qualify under EPA protocols.
 - iv. Full presentation: [Portsmouth Water System's Lead and Copper Rule Overview \(cityofportsmouth.com\)](#)
 - b. **SAU 52 School District Superintendent Zach McLaughlin and Director of Buildings and Grounds Ken Lynchey** provided the report he made to the Portsmouth School Board (Dec 12, 2023) on the lead sampling results shared with Portsmouth principals and parents/guardians of students at those schools (as required by NHDES). Mitigation is underway while reevaluation of the results and retesting per protocols are proceeding. SAU 52 strives to achieve zero tolerance for lead in school drinking water. Full presentation: [School Based Lead Testing \(cityofportsmouth.com\)](#) There are questions about the validity of the sample because of the 2 months the water 'sat' (more than the recommended) and why it took the lab from Aug to Nov to report its findings. The School Board asked for a plan including the impact of operations (and available Federal and State funding) so that it can make a decision on the path forward. Superintendent to keep SWAG informed.
4. **Water Supply Update – Brian Goetz**

Full presentation: [Portsmouth Water – 2021 Year in Review \(cityofportsmouth.com\)](https://www.cityofportsmouth.com)

- Surface water supply in good shape due to rain.
- Little Bay waterline bidders unable to achieve the Nov 15 – Mar 15 schedule except at significant cost due to the short seasonal timeframe. City is pursuing contingency plan in three phases:
 1. Replace the valves on the two waterlines.
 2. Seek bids in Spring 2024 for adding a third line in the Fall
 3. Assess possibility of positioning the interconnect with Dover along Route 4
- Islington, Middle and Union Street pipe replacement projects complete. Also a valve replacement in Market Street that was completed by DPW crew.
- Dover emergency interconnect to receive \$3.5 million in Federal grant through Sen. Shaheen. This is half the cost. The balance is split between Dover and Portsmouth.
- Southern portion of water system Master Plan Study – updating 2006 study with hydraulic model of southern part of city and whether development has affected water supplies. Received \$50k NHDES grant towards \$150k cost. Hydraulic model update will include the whole water system.
- PFAS – EPA regulation still under review. City discussing with Air Force covering the potential cost for PFAS treatment on Portsmouth well once there's a regulatory standard to meet. Estimating cost for Greenland and Collins well treatment. Air Force accepts our reports.
- 5. **Seacoast Private Well Workshop Update** – Greenland session on November 15, 2023. 180 in attendance, mostly Greenland residents. 160 water samples collected in followup. Next session in Dover January 30, 2024.
- 6. **End of year report to City Council**

Andrea drafted report of achievements compared to 2021 SWAG objectives. Requested comments from SWAG members by December 20, 2023 so the report can be submitted by December 31 when SWAG sunsets. Recommending that SWAG Blue Ribbon Committee be reappointed in 2024. Andrea will suggest quarterly meeting dates for 2024. Katrie extended her thanks to staff and Andrea for their work.

7. Public Comment

Justin Richardson commented on the school lead testing and encourage SWAG independently to push for mitigation and retesting because there is no safe level of lead ingestion.

Adjourned at 8:30 pm