

## Brad Kargle, President's Message CWWW

With summer over we are back into our routines and looking forward to the CWWA/CTAWWA Fall Conference on October 24<sup>th</sup> at the Aqua Turf in Southington. This has been a well-attended event over the years and offers a great opportunity to network with colleagues, obtain training credit hours, and become more informed about the latest legislative issues facing the water industry. This year's conference will feature presentations on the changes to the Freedom of Information Act and the issues and challenges associated with the State Water Plan.

As we prepare for the Fall Conference, Connecticut is still struggling to adopt a budget for FY 2018, due in large part to a growing deficit. Budget proposals include changes in state aid to some municipalities, which may require them to reduce services and/or raise taxes.

Water utilities are also likely to be impacted by the current budget process. The Democrat and Republican versions of the budget rely on \$2.5 million in revenues coming from the water companies. It is indicated that the additional revenue is needed by the Drinking Water Division to fund staff positions or risk losing primacy over the regulation of drinking water. CWWA supports DPH's primacy role and has been working with the governor's office and DPH to find a way to obtain the revenues without further burdening the water companies.

A license and associated fee was initially proposed by the governor's office giving DPH wide latitude to set the fee, determine requirements for when a license is granted or revoked, and impose penalties for failure to remit the fee to the state. CWWA voiced concern that the licensing fee would impose costly burdens on an industry that is already heavily regulated and offered language that would instead establish an assessment. Under this approach, the proposal would cap the fee between \$3 and \$4 per customer; give water companies the flexibility to add the fee to customer bills or build into rates; eliminate the fee if DPH loses primacy; ensure the fee is applicable to all water systems; and require reporting by DPH on how the fees were being used to support primacy functions.

At this time it is not certain what form of fee structure will be implemented to obtain the revenues needed by DPH. Ms. Gara, CWWA Executive Director, members of our legislative committee, and others have been working diligently on this matter and will continue to track the latest developments and respond with the best interest of our membership in mind.

In 2015, the state Water Planning Council initiated a process to develop a state water plan with the intent of better managing Connecticut's water resources in a manner that is consistent throughout the state. Overall, the plan is intended to find balance for the use of water to meet all needs. The final draft of the State Water Plan is available for comment with written comments due by November 20, 2017. The final plan is to be submitted to the legislature by December 31, 2017. CWWA has been actively involved in this process and intends to submit comments on behalf of its membership during the comment period. To that end, a workshop was held in late September to review the draft plan, identify concerns, and develop an appropriate response. The plan can be summarized into five main points: 1.) provides a platform for consistent, informed decision making; 2.) reaffirms the state's dedication to the use of the highest standard of drinking water; 3.) affirms the need to find balance for instream and out-of-stream needs; 4.) promotes a

water conservation ethic; and 5.) advocates the collection and centralized access of scientific data.

I think where the plan really hits home is in the discussion of “balance.” That is, the balance between the out-of-stream uses like diversions for consumptive use and the instream or non-consumptive uses like recreation, ecology and aesthetics. The plan evaluated each of the state’s 44 river basins and provided a relative basis for determining at-risk basins that may not be able to satisfy all instream or out-of-stream uses now or in the future. Basins that were likely to have an abundance of water were also identified. More study would need to be completed, but these results are initially intended to provide a screening tool for the shaping of policy and strategy for the future management of basin activities. This is an evolving process and therefore, it is not fully understood how quickly or to what extent the plan will be implemented. We know that funding sources need to be identified and an administrative framework established to implement the plan. CWWA will continue to track and remain closely involved with the water planning process as it develops.

The challenges facing the water industry are greater than ever and it is only by working together that we can effectively promote and shape state policies regarding our drinking water. With continued support from our membership, CWWA is in a better position to meet these challenges. While all utilities benefit from our legislative efforts, changes have been made to the assessment methodology to ensure that CWWA’s dues structure is more equitable. To that end, the dues assessment reflects three criteria: 1.) a fixed assessment component based on the budget, 2.) a service connection assessment component based on the number of service connections a utility has, and 3.) a gallonage assessment component based on the revenue generated from the sale of water. Overall, the dues assessment accounts for CWWA advocacy efforts that applies to all membership by way of the fixed assessment, with those utilities that are larger and have more customers providing additional support.

The CWWA Legislative Committee will be meeting soon to begin planning for the “short” legislative session that starts in February 2018. If there are any legislative issues that you would like addressed, please contact our Executive Director, Betsy Gara at [gara@gmlobbying.com](mailto:gara@gmlobbying.com) or (860) 841-7350. Some of the issues that are expected to have legislative implications in the next session include drought response/triggers, lead in drinking water, registered diversions, and the state water plan.

Finally, I would like to thank CTAWWA for hosting the Membership Appreciation Picnic at the Middlesex Yacht Club in August. This is a wonderful location and a great opportunity to relax and socialize with colleagues. The Connecticut Section is dedicated to improving drinking water quality and supply through changes to technology, science and governmental policies. I look forward to working with the Section along with our members to meet the challenges ahead and find opportunity to achieve common goals.