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March 20, 2015

Re: City of Ramsey Review Comments – Draft Water Resources Policy Plan

To whom it may concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft Water Resources Policy Plan (WRPP). The City of Ramsey offers the following comments for your consideration.

The City of Ramsey supports the Met Council's goal of achieving sustainable water systems. However, achieving sustainable water systems across the twin cities metropolitan area must be achieved in an equitable manner.

The City of Ramsey supports the regionalization of water systems, but only if such systems can be funded equitably across the communities they serve. The City would also like to stress that developing regional water supply system partnerships can be extremely difficult and time consuming, particularly when local agencies are expected to take the lead. We therefore request that the Met Council consider actively supporting and leading the discussions for the development of regional partnerships to ensure success in such endeavors.

The City of Ramsey would like to stress the financial difficulties associated with converting groundwater supply systems to surface water supply systems. Due to the high costs associated with such system conversions, local agencies are simply unable to pay for such improvements on their own and would require financial assistance to comply with such requirements.

We would also like to emphasize the need to maintain groundwater supply systems for supplemental or emergency water supply needs, such as when pollutants are released in surface waters triggering temporary facility shutdowns.

The City also vigorously supports further exploration and implementation of water conservation methods, including reusing wastewater and promoting infiltration practices to aid in groundwater recharge.

Based on our review we did not identify anything in the draft WRPP that significantly conflicts with the current goals or initiatives of the City of Ramsey. However, based on our other recent Met Council policy plan reviews we question whether the draft WRPP accurately reflects population growth forecasts for the area, and are therefore unsure about the accuracy of some of the information included in the draft WRPP.

The draft WRPP does not appear to create any new mandates for the City of Ramsey, but instead appears to perpetuate and expand upon existing policies that could ultimately direct the City's future water supply source towards surface waters instead of groundwater aquifers. Because the City of Ramsey borders the Mississippi River, the Met Council previously directed the City to explore the use of the Mississippi River as a potential water supply source before any new groundwater supply wells would be considered. In response, the City completed a study which showed that a surface water treatment facility may indeed be technically feasible, but it would likely not be economically feasible if the intent is to serve only the needs of the City of Ramsey, unless significant outside financial assistance was received. However, if multiple communities were to partner in constructing a regional surface water treatment facility to serve the needs of all the communities, it could then be economically feasible.

The City of Ramsey appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft WRPP and hopes that the Metropolitan Council will continue to work with the City to address our local concerns and needs related to water resources. Please note that our concerns with the population forecasts are not about our future land use vision, but rather how that vision relates to current infrastructure capacities, as well as future infrastructure investments and funding opportunities.

If you have any questions on these comments please feel free to call me at 763-433-9825, or email me at bwestby@cityoframsey.com.

Sincerely,

Bruce Westby, P.E.
City Engineer

C: Kurt Ulrich, City Administrator
Tim Gladhill, Community Development Director