

Water and wastewater system planning needs

As fall and winter approach (where did 2005 go to anyway?) and the demands on water and wastewater systems slow, opportunities for operators, boards of directors, and municipal leaders to engage in planning sessions increase. Annual strategic assessments of the system's operations, relations with customers and employees, and future opportunities/challenges are of paramount importance. Surprises in the operation of water systems seldom bring good news. Planning provides the means to minimize service disruptions, crisis-based decision-making and capital expenses.

At a minimum, a rural water district's or municipality's leadership should review the adequacy of:

- a) water supplies for the next five years
- b) employee training and compensation programs
- c) customer service commitments and practices

*E. Ronnebaum
General Manager*

- d) relations with other policy-makers and regulators (e.g., Kansas Water Office, Kansas Department of Health & Environment), and
- e) system infrastructure maintenance, expansion, and restoration operations.

With increasingly expensive requirements for treatment plant operations imposed by US EPA, the Kansas Water Office and

Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment are encouraging water and wastewater systems to look to regional solutions to their water supply needs. Regional cooperation may or may not be appropriate for each system. However, any responsible planning program should include an analysis

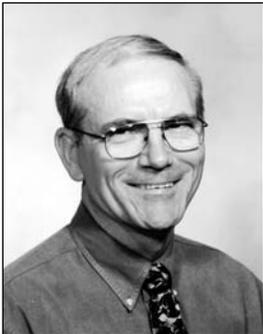
available through KDHE, KRWA and others. What new technologies are becoming available and reliable to make the system's operations more cost-effective (radio-read meters and scada systems have been very beneficial, what is next)?

I have always been somewhat intrigued at how much effort goes

I have always been somewhat intrigued at how much effort goes into bidding out various components on a project. However, there's a larger cost that often is never reviewed. That is, the cost of money.

of alternative suppliers/customers for water services, life expectancy/operating costs of treatment plants and pipeline systems, and technical support

into bidding out various components on a project. However, there's a larger cost that often is never reviewed. That is, the cost of money. The cost of money is a much larger impact on a utility than



The above photo shows the KAN STEP Committee in Bern as they discuss how to incorporate a new community building into existing city infrastructure. This committee was comprised of members from both the city government and citizen/volunteers in Bern and the surrounding rural area.

what that \$48,000 pump station might cost. It has to be considered. There are Revolving Loan Funds available through KDHE (now to be assisted by KRWFA and KRWA) for both water and wastewater systems, federal loans and grants through Rural Development, commercial loans, lease/purchase options and bonding assistance through individual underwriters or through the Kansas Rural Water Finance Authority. The life cycle costs of each financing option should be carefully



evaluated and any potential constraints on operational decisions noted prior to applying for specific funds or assistance.

Agree to agree ...

The fall and winter are also good times to review board/council and staff interaction patterns. Do all board/council members actively participate in debates regarding the system's operations and future needs? If not, how can such participation be encouraged? Do all board/council members have enough knowledge of the operations, finances, and other considerations to feel comfortable participating? Are there opportunities for patrons/customers to provide information about system operations, potential needs, and other customer service issues? Even if no one comes to meetings except board/council members and staff, the public should feel welcome and be assured that their comments are important. Are

system employees encouraged to offer suggestions on how the system can be more effectively operated? Employees are a system's greatest resource and should be consulted regularly.

Board/council members' understanding of the operations, budget making, personnel policies and other key components is as important as employees understanding personnel policies

Board/council members' understanding of the operations, budget making, personnel policies and other key components is as important as employees understanding personnel policies and operational safety requirements.

Does a staff-training program exist to ensure that all employees are knowledgeable about the latest regulatory and operational requirements? Are non-harassment and discrimination policies understood and practiced? Is there sufficient cross-training to protect operations in the event a key person is incapacitated? Is there training for new board/council members as well as new operating employees?

and operational safety requirements.

KRWA staff can assist member systems in assessing their operational and board/council planning needs. Remember, planning can help reduce operating costs and problems with employees, customers, and regulatory agencies. Planning may not prevent a crisis, but it can make sure the crisis is managed efficiently and cost-effectively.



**WIREWOUND PRESTRESSED
CONCRETE WATER TANKS
& WASTEWATER TREATMENT TANKS**

NATGUN CORPORATION
Dave Ornduff, Regional Manager
Telephone 913-681-6006 • Fax: 913-681-6016
Email: dornduff@natgun.com

New partnership to facilitate financing

KRWA's sister organization, the Kansas Rural Water Finance Authority (KRWFA), recently renewed a 5-year contract with KDHE to provide financial advisory services to the Kansas Public Water Supply Loan Fund which is administered by KDHE. The Finance Authority has also renewed a contract with Ranson Financial Consultants to provide the more detailed financial reviews required for the applicants to the KDHE loan program. In addition, KDHE requested that more direct assistance be available to applicants and potential applicants. To efficiently provide that service, the Finance Authority has contracted with KRWA to ensure that help can be delivered to systems.

What's this mean to the average water system? First, if your city or RWD has already been listed as a potential recipient of a new Public Water Supply Loan through KDHE, then a staff person from

KRWA will attend your next board or council meeting or special work session to discuss the loan application process and provide whatever assistance is necessary so that your project can advance. If your community or RWD has

KRWFA and KRWA both welcome the opportunities to be of service to cities and RWDs statewide. You can read more about this program in this issue. Meanwhile if you have questions and particularly if you want to have

KRWA's sister organization, the Kansas Rural Water Finance Authority (KRWFA), recently renewed a 5-year contract with KDHE to provide financial advisory services to the Kansas Public Water Supply Loan Fund which is administered by KDHE.

needs for improvements – but you just don't know where to turn, you can also call on KRWA to have someone attend a board/council meeting to discuss your project and the funding options. It has been KRWA's experience that smaller communities and RWDs look for outside leadership to facilitate their discussions and evaluation of needs. Their next question is how to go about funding them.

a friendly staff member from KRWA to meet with representatives of your utility, then please call KRWA at 785/336-3760 or e-mail us at krwa@nvcs.com. There's no charge for this service – and we won't tell you what to do. But by the end of the discussion, I guarantee that you and your associates will have a better understanding of the project and funding options.



WATER WORKS BRASS AND PIPELINE PRODUCTS

FORD

THE FORD METER BOX COMPANY, INC.
P.O. Box 443, Wabash, Indiana 46992-0443
260-563-3171 • FAX: 800-826-3487
<http://www.fordmeterbox.com>

UNIFLANGE

The advertisement features several technical drawings of water works components: a threaded brass fitting with 'FORD' branding, a complex multi-ported brass assembly, a large circular flange with multiple bolt holes, and a smaller circular flange with a central opening. The Ford logo is a black trapezoid with 'FORD' in white. The Uniflange logo is a globe with 'UNIFLANGE' written across it.