

**APWA Sustainability Task Force Meeting**  
**Friday, October 31, 2008**  
**APWA Offices – Kansas City, MO**  
**Meeting Discussion Highlights**

**Introduction**

The APWA Sustainability Task Force met on Friday, October 31, 2008 at the APWA offices in Kansas City, MO. The purpose of the meeting was to follow-up on an APWA Board Action charging the Task Force to refine its recommendations (as presented in its August 2008 report to the Board) in the following four ways.

- Recommend a name for a regular APWA entity and/or program on sustainability.
- Make a recommendation as to the structure and makeup of this new group.
- In the recommendation for structure, determine if each Technical Committee should be given a seat on this new unit, whether it should be composed of practitioners involved in sustainability, a combination of the above, or some other make up entirely.
- Recommend an initial business plan for the new group.

The Task Force meeting agenda was structured around this charge. The meeting highlights presented below also are organized around the structure of this charge.

**Topic 1: Recommending a Name**

Task Force members, after considerable discussion, landed on the following name for a new APWA entity focused on sustainability: The APWA Center for Sustainability.

During discussion, Task Force members considered a wide array of names (e.g., committee, commission, etc.) but ultimately decided it is important to specifically distinguish this new entity from existing APWA entities such as committees and commissions. Discussion further indicated a need to use the name to create a sense of permanence, as well as an indication of creating an on-going program presence.

**Topic 2: Recommending a Structure and Make Up for the New Group**

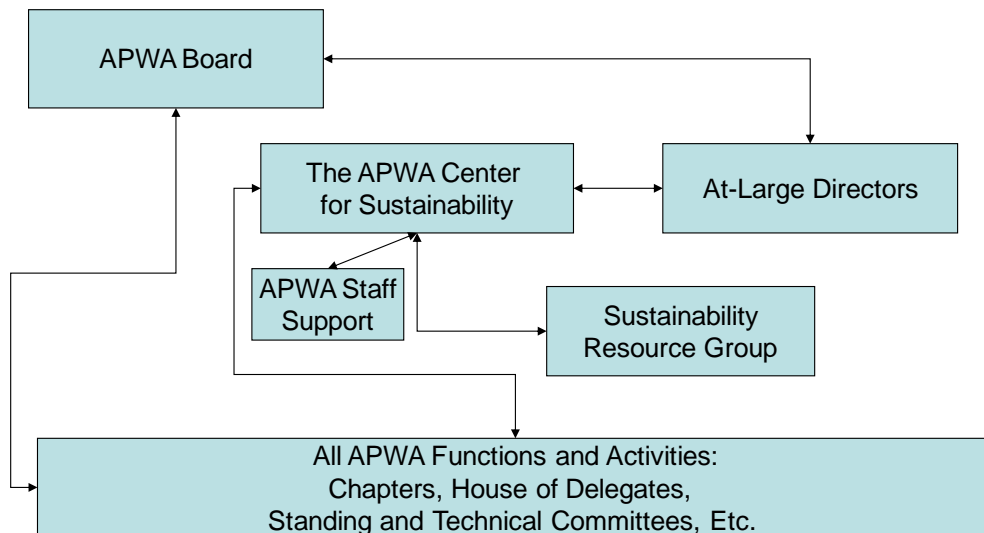
Task Force member discussion focused on establishing the Center with the ability to ensure sustainability becomes an organizing principle for all facets of public works management in general and APWA in particular. With this in mind, Task Force members believed the Center should be established through a direct connection with the APWA At-Large Directors (see attached program diagram). The At-Large Directors would continue their current role of liaison to the Technical Committees, while taking on a new collective focus of sustainability. In this capacity, the At-Large Directors would look to set and drive the agenda for the Center, while the Center would look to inform the

Directors of sustainability-related needs and opportunities. Discussion indicated involvement of the At-Large Directors is desirable to establish a strong link with the Technical Committees, thus enabling the Center and the Technical Committees to stay closely coordinated.

The Center’s membership would consist of roughly 12 members, viewed as sustainability “practice leaders” within APWA. Task Force members envision a competitive recruitment process throughout the APWA membership with a focus on obtaining a combination of both sustainability practitioner skills, as well as thorough knowledge of existing APWA technical areas (e.g., transportation, solid waste, water resources, engineering and technology, leadership and management, emergency management, fleet, facilities and grounds, and utility and public right-of-way). Task Force members believed this membership approach could ensure an appropriate mix of expertise and legitimacy and credibility with the existing technical committees, while not asking existing Technical Committee members to perform “double duty.” The initial membership appointment period would be for 18 months. The Center would look to engage throughout the APWA organization (e.g., Standing Committees, Program Committees, Technical Committees, Chapters, House of Delegates, Emerging Leaders etc.) to draw on and integrate existing expertise, while also implementing the APWA sustainability agenda, including providing support and advice to APWA entities on sustainability opportunities and needs.

In addition to the Center, Task Force members envision the establishment of a less formal “Sustainability Resource Group.” This group would represent a network of sustainability and other technical area experts with an interest in contributing to the APWA sustainability agenda. Discussion indicated that the initial formation of the Group would draw on those applying for membership to the Center.

### APWA Center for Sustainability: Organizational Diagram



Finally, Task Force member discussions indicated the Center will require staffing. Certain members expressed an interest in establishing a Director for Sustainability. Discussion did indicate that coordination among Technical Committee staff and the Center staff will be another critical link to ensure full integration of sustainability concepts into the work of the Technical Committees and other entities of APWA.

### **Topic 3: Technical Committee Membership on the New Entity**

As described under Topic 2, Task Force members believe creating a strong link to the APWA Technical Committees is critical to the success of the Center. Moreover, the Center membership will need to encompass technical expertise covering the Technical Committee areas to perform their function effectively. At the same time, Task Force members steered away from having each Technical Committee directly represented in the Center. This approach reflected a concern for the difficulty any one individual might experience while trying to support the efforts of two APWA entities and would provide the Center with direct sustainability expertise from practitioners.

### **Topic 4: Initial Business Plan for the Center**

Task Force discussions related to preparing an initial business plan for the Center focused on establishing an initial statement of mission, a set of initial strategic priorities, and an outline of an initial work plan.

#### Center Mission

Preamble: The APWA Center for Sustainability is hereby created to address sustainability challenges of public works organizations across the United States and Canada and will conduct and intensify capacity for essential research, innovation, and technology transfer leading to economically sound, socially desirable, and environmentally healthy projects, programs, and services managed by the public works profession. The APWA Center for Sustainability creates a foundation for sustainability action in discussion, evaluation, education, coordination, programs, and endorsement of ideas and recommendations on the issues surrounding sustainability. The Center is created with the full support of the APWA Board of Directors.

Mission Statement: The APWA Center for Sustainability integrates sustainability in all aspects of APWA as an organization and public works management and services. The Center shall engage, lead, and facilitate APWA in identifying and advancing sustainability initiatives and support and intensify members' capacity to integrate current and future social, economic, and environmental outcomes into local public works management.

## Center Strategic Priorities

Core strategic priorities:

- Enable APWA to become a driving force for public works sustainability.
- Create an integrated vision for future, sustainable public works.
- Build an APWA structure that motivates and enables public works practitioners to act more sustainably.
- Develop the next generation of public works leaders with strong sustainability credentials and commitment.

Supporting strategic priorities:

- **Policy Development:** Prepare APWA sustainability policy statement for Board adoption. Use this policy as a basis to integrate sustainability into the APWA mission and Strategic Plan. Prepare a white paper (or similar rationale) to articulate the need for and benefits of a change to more sustainable public works projects, programs, and services. Use the adopted policy as the basis for communication to APWA members and externally to key constituencies.
- **Program Development:** Identify and mobilize internal and external (e.g., Foundation) resources. Inventory existing sustainability initiatives across the organization and identify how to expand these efforts. Research and integrate diverse views into APWA sustainability thinking (e.g., Universities, Futurists) and explore and integrate the nature of future social, economic, and environmental challenges and opportunities (e.g., ask what the wastewater treatment facility of 2025 or 2030 would/could look like). Explore partnership opportunities, including other public works-oriented organizations (e.g., Water Environment Federation) and research institutions. Identify opportunities for single steps to hit multiple goals.
- **Education and Outreach:** Develop buy in for the change to thinking and acting with a greater focus on sustainability (prepare and make the case for change). Ensure effective communication to all levels of membership (director-level policy oriented to staff-level public works service implementers). Acknowledge innovators and implement high visibility, high impact events and programs.

## Initial Center Work Plan

- **First 60 Days:** Create sustainability “message” to form basis for APWA policy and Center membership recruitment announcement. Establish Center membership through a “competitive” process. Develop start up budget and initiate exploration of external funding sources (e.g., Foundation funding). Organize At-Large Directors to support Center launch and initial program development activities.
- **Next 90 Days:** Plan and structure outreach to entire APWA organization. Conduct information collection on existing sustainability activities and research sustainability opportunities. Begin education of membership.
- **Next 120 Days:** Process information received through information collection. Prepare interim report on current activities, opportunities, suggested actions, future possibilities, and possible partnerships. Incorporate sustainability for public works into strategic planning development.

- Next 90 Days: Prepare full Center program plan for Board review and approval. Address the full range of APWA functions (e.g., training, certification, communication, education, advocacy, research, etc.) and organizational structure (e.g., Technical Committees, Chapters, Standing Committees, etc.) in the framework of sustainability.
- Interim Deliverables: APWA sustainability policy statement; initial internal and external communications material; interim budget; explicit link to APWA strategic plan development activities; and status report(s) regarding existing and potential future APWA sustainability efforts.