

2006 to 2010 Planning Ahead

Creation of the Master Plan and a 5-Year Capital Spending Cap

The most common “fight” that the Advisory Board had to undertake prior to 2006 was with state and federal regulators over increasingly stringent regulations and mandates. But between 2006 and 2010, the Advisory Board focused mainly on how the Authority could alter its organizational structure and philosophy to save ratepayer money, while still delivering the same level of service.

First, the Advisory Board continued to recommend that the Authority develop a “Master Plan” that prioritized projects and detailed what areas of the system needed to be focused on and in what order. With this list of priorities, the Advisory Board helped develop the second 5-year capital spending cap with the Authority, which would limit the amount of capital spending that could be done from 2009 to 2013. Additionally, the Master Plan was able to identify more efficient ways to restructure the organization.

Restructuring also led to a question of how large, in terms of personnel, the Authority should be to run efficiently. In February 2010, the Advisory Board wrote a letter to the Board of Directors of the MWRA requesting that the Authority undertake a staffing study to determine the appropriate level of staffing for the organization. The staffing study then allowed the Authority to slowly restructure, while keeping their personnel costs low as skyrocketing health care costs were offset by a declining headcount.

Finally, one of the simple but significant victories from this “Planning Ahead” period was the removal of the “back-up landfill” annual standby fee of \$1.25 million. After years of paying to keep a landfill in Utah on retainer, in the event the residuals plant failed, the Advisory Board successfully got the requirement reduced to the point where a few less distant back up options would suffice, savings millions of dollars.

