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### Water Residential Assistance Program Draft Evaluation Report

Agenda of: October 28, 2020  
Item No.: **2020-369**  
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**TO:** The Honorable  
Board of Directors  
Great Lakes Water Authority

**FROM:** Sue F. McCormick  
Chief Executive Officer  
Great Lakes Water Authority

**DATE:** October 28, 2020

### RE: Water Residential Assistance Program Draft Evaluation Report

#### MOTION

Upon recommendation of Nicolette Bateson, Chief Financial Officer & Treasurer, the Board of Directors (Board) of the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), **receive and file the presentation and draft report regarding Water Residential Assistance Program evaluation as prepared by Public Sector Consultants**, and authorizes the Chief Executive Officer to take such other action as may be necessary to accomplish the intent of this vote.

#### BACKGROUND

The current contract for Water Residential Assistance Program Third Party Administrator (CS-010) with Wayne Metro will expire on December 31, 2020. There are two key tasks to accomplish prior to the expiration of that contract: evaluation of the current program and solicitation of proposals for program continuation. Both tasks rely heavily on stakeholder engagement.

Before developing the request for proposals for the WRAP Administrator, GLWA first solicited quotations for a WRAP Advisor to evaluate the current program. The purpose of the WRAP Advisor engagement is to a) strengthen program effectiveness, b) develop scope and performance criteria for WRAP program provider performance, and c) better define and conduct program evaluation.

To evaluate the current program, GLWA engaged Public Sector Consultants (PSC) to serve as the WRAP Advisor. PSC is an objective, nonpartisan research and consulting firm based in Lansing and Detroit. They have been conducting program evaluations for more than 20 years and are well versed in a variety of process and impact evaluation methods, including developing theories of change and logic models, qualitative and quantitative data collection using tools such as focus groups and multimode surveys, in-depth informant interviews, cost-effectiveness analyses, and comprehensive data analyses to yield deep insights and actionable findings.

PSC began work on July 6, 2020 and since that time has completed meetings with GLWA's Chief Financial Officer and Finance staff, Detroit Water and Sewerage Department's (DWSD) Chief Financial Officer and Finance staff, Wayne Metro, GLWA's Chief Executive Officer and DWSD's Director and their General Counsel, individual GLWA Board Members and a focus group for GLWA Member Partners. These meetings, and the feedback gathered, were the basis for PSC's draft report and recommendations which is being presented to the Audit Committee on October 23, 2020. PSC's draft report, and an accompanying presentation, are attached to this memo.

### **JUSTIFICATION**

The following is a summary of the key finding from the draft WRAP evaluation report.

#### **Key Findings** - Program Successes

- Provides essential financial support to low-income households, reaching over 22,000 households since 2016.
- Combines monthly assistance, arrearage payments, and conservation services is seen as impactful for customers.
- Allows flexibility in requirements for income and eligibility and makes accessing assistance easy.
- Evolves through periodic program changes/ updates to better serve customers.

#### **Key Findings** - Opportunities for Improvement

- Program should be available to all residential customers served by GLWA whether their municipalities have opted in or not.
- Program structure may not be suitable for addressing all various forms of household need.
- Program reporting is not sufficient to determine progress on desired outcomes.
- Program uptake and adoption has been limited in some communities.
- More can be done to support program expansion, administration, and reporting.

**Next Steps:** Pending feedback from the Audit Committee, the next step proposed is to present the draft report to the GLWA Board of Directors for discussion at their meeting on October 28, 2020.

Staff envisions several outcomes from those discussions that balance the following considerations.

- ✓ Given the challenges of the COVID-19 operating environment as well as minimizing the impact on current WRAP operations and clients, the effort for GLWA to issue, and for the resource-constrained nonprofit/vendor community to respond to, a request for proposal does not appear to be the best course of action at this time.
- ✓ Instead, an emerging recommendation for next steps is to focus on piloting quick wins of WRAP delivery improvements identified in PSC's report to constituents across the GLWA service area. This would expeditiously address urgent stakeholder concerns - particularly where participation has been low but where need exists.
- ✓ Concurrently, map out program delivery model improvements and lessons learned from the above pilot to rollout an improved WRAP in calendar year 2021.
- ✓ Amend the current WRAP Administrator contract (CS-010) to provide for the piloting of program delivery model improvements and amend the expiration date to June 30, 2021 to transition beyond what we hope well past is the peak of COVID-19 demands and better align the revised program delivery model with the beginning of a fiscal year.

### **BUDGET IMPACT**

All proposed recommendations in the draft WRAP evaluation report will be incorporated into the program design and will not impact the over-all WRAP budgeted funding for FY 2021.

### **COMMITTEE REVIEW**

This matter was reviewed by the GLWA Audit Committee at its meeting on October 23, 2020. The Audit Committee recommends that the GLWA Board of Directors review the draft WRAP evaluation report from Public Sector Consultants at its regularly scheduled meeting on October 28, 2020.