FSAWWA Fall Conference—Sessions Recap: Managing the Changing Utility in the 21st Century

By Gregory F. Galmin
FSAWWA Contractors Council

This year’s FSAWWA Fall Conference was once again held at the Renaissance Orlando Resort at SeaWorld from November 29—December 3—and what an event! The programs focused on the forever-changing growth in Florida and the ability to plan, budget, contract, and execute the required utility infrastructure projects in the most challenging economic times in our careers.

Along with the program focus, some of the upfront and collateral advantages of attending the FSAWWA Conference ranged from accreditation and professional development to information on cutting-edge technologies and upcoming issues in our industry. Also, the various technical sessions and symposiums offered water professionals from all areas of the industry valuable education and training.

The conference started early Monday morning with the Inaugural AWWA Florida 2030 Water Summit, a Vision for Sustainable Water Infrastructure. The Summit was designed to address the water consumption requirements in the state of Florida for the next 20 years and included topics such as Water Resource Management, Water Conservation, Reclaimed Water, Surface Water, Desalination, Water Allocation/Transfers, Climate Change, Partnerships, and Governance/Funding.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the technical program sessions started, as well as the opening of the Exhibitor Hall. Some of the technical programs offered in this year’s conference agenda included such topics as:

- The 3-Part Epiphany
- Regulatory Challenges and Breakthroughs with Membrane Treatment Facilities
- Information Management
- Utility Management
- Water Supply Alternatives-Groundwater and ASR
- Concentrate Management
- Reservoirs and Surface Water Systems
- Utility Operations Tools for the 21st Century
- Contractors Council Workshop the Evolution of Design-Build & CMAR
- Advanced Treatment Options
- Water Conservation Symposium
- Contracts and Construction
- Utility Management in the Future

The Evolution of Design-Build & CMAR session, along with Contracts and Construction session, were well attended, since both programs are critical to the sustainability of our industry as a whole and the livelihood of most people in attendance.

The FSAWWA Contractors Council Workshop sponsored the Evolution of Design-Build & CMAR technical program, with Tom Donnelly of Stahl & Associates Insurance program as the Moderator. Speakers included representatives and perspectives from both sides of the table. On one side were the owner and/or water authority, and on the other side were the design-build (DB) and/or contractor.

Neither the owner nor the DBCM/Contractor can prosper without the successful execution of a contract; therefore, an acceptable contract delivery method must be presented and accepted by both parties. Peter Kinsley, vice president of the water division for Haskell, spoke in detail about alternative project delivery methods (design-build and CMAR), contractual relationships, and attributes of design-build & CMAR, as well as the advantages/disadvantages of both forms of agreements.

There were also three guest speakers representing three different water authorities: Robert Pelham of Toho Water Authority; Jay Saxena, PhD, P.E., from the city of Cape Coral; and Joanne Flick from the city of Daytona Beach. All of the owner representatives spoke about project-related experiences, the reasons for their decision to use either design-build or CMAR delivery methods, and the benefits as-
associated with each form of delivery methods. To summarize the owners’ perspective on the need for design-build versus CMAR delivery methods, some of the common circumstances that should be considered before selecting the project delivery method are:

1. Schedule – Speed: What is the project duration, and are there specific time constraints imposed by the owner, state, federal government and physical logistics?
2. Budget – Cost: Does the budget support design-build or CMAR delivery methods?
3. Project Specifics – Constructability & Innovation: Is the project design criteria unique/special or typical?
4. Can the project be built on time and within the owner’s budget?
5. What delivery method is less likely to materialize into a claim?

The Contracts and Construction Technical Program, Procuring Engineering Services for Design-Build Projects, was presented by Shajan Joykutty, P.E. LEED AP, from Hazen and Sawyer. Some of the main topics in this presentation from an engineering firm’s perspective were:

1. Types of Engineering Services
2. State Regulations and the Procurement Process
3. Professional Liability Insurance Issues
4. Advice to Utility Owners
5. Advice to Design/Builders
6. Compensation Issues

To summarize the contracts and construction technical program, the procurement of engineering services in design-build (D/B) is an evolving process. The engineering costs normally remain the same, irrespective of the project delivery methods chosen by the owner. Engineering time is generally the same in all delivery methods, and time savings can be realized only by staging construction concurrent with engineering.

In addition to the 13 technical programs, there were also 170 exhibitors—including contractors, engineering firms, equipment manufacturers/representatives, and material suppliers. There was definitely something of interest for everyone in the Exhibitors Hall.

Finally after three full days of symposiums and technical programs—and exhibits for all those in with additional time and energy—the conference ended with a golf tournament benefiting the Roy Likins Scholarship Fund, held at the Falcons Fire Golf Club.

In closing, the FSAWWA Fall Conference was again a great success, thanks to the efforts of all the participating professional members and sponsors.