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Subject: Emerging Public Works Leaders Program: 2019 APWA PWX Seattle, WA

Dear Members of the Executive Committee:

I'd like to begin by thanking you for the providing me the experience of attending PWX 2019 in Seattle as a part of the Wisconsin Emerging Public Works Leaders Program. This was my first intro into APWA, and being able to meet both Wisconsin Chapter members, as well as the National leaders and other attendees, was a very inspiring experience.

General Sessions:

I was blown away by the excitement and energy in the opening general session. The presentations were a great introduction to the organizational structure of APWA National. It was interesting to hear the experience of the past president, current president, and president elect. An aspect of public works that I love is that so many people have such different backgrounds; and that's what makes it so dynamic! The first day's session, "Facing Homelessness with Rex Hohlbein" was a call-to-action and worthy challenge at the start of a few days in Seattle where there is a notable amount of homeless people. Rex humanized the homeless population by intentionally referring to each individual's circumstances and experiences, as opposed to focusing on the challenges the population as a whole can create for cities. The humanity was intense, and it set the tone for the conference.

On Day 2 we heard how to "Master Your Mind and Memory" with Jim Kwik. The interactive presentation provided me tools to improve my memory. I have been a proponent of experiential education since working as a leadership facilitator with an experiential education-based college job, so it was great to be able to practice it with Jim. We learned the 10 best foods for your brain, which I can recall without checking my notes (avocados, blueberries, olive oil, eggs, leafy greens, salmon, turmeric, walnuts and dark chocolate)! I found Jim's techniques to be so helpful that I subscribed to his podcast, and am excited to keep learning.

The third day we learned "How to Think Like a Futurist" from Sheryl Connelly. She reiterated a lot of the issues the globe will face that I previously learned about in Global Health and Environmental Studies classes in college. She emphasized the importance of public works folks to provide more walking/biking options within the city. Her passion for thinking about creating solutions for future problems now while we are building, developing, and maintaining our cities was a crucial reminder for everyone attending the conference.

On the final day Diversity 3.0 was discussed by James Sun. He explained the importance of all people having more diverse entertainment, products etc. to make them more inclusive and begin a new tier of diversity.

Educational Sessions

The educational sessions I attended at the conference were diverse and educational! I struggled to choose which to go to, because I was often interested in multiple presentations that were occurring at the same time. I tried to “divide and conquer” with my mentor, Rob Phillips.

I attended a variety of educational sessions, such as 60 Innovations in 60 Minutes where I both learned about Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL) and the variety of ideas that younger folks in the profession have found successful. I particularly appreciated the idea of creating an interactive and explanatory CIP map.

I also attended two sessions that provided an international perspective, one on salt application, and one about how to use “ecosystem services” as a lens for development and redevelopment in Sweden. I was shocked to hear how much progress can be made to minimize salt use with applicator technology upgrades. The ecosystem services model provides a good framework of how to center cities around the environment and incentivize, or add value, to “softscapes,” which is something that we do not have well-defined with the City of Madison. I really enjoyed hearing how similar challenges are being addressed abroad!

Additionally, while I wasn’t certain what to expect from the Diversity Brunch, it was a great presentation and a great opportunity to meet those dedicated to making APWA more diverse. The presenter, Lora Proctor explained the importance of staying open minded to people that may be easy to stereotype. Something in her presentation that stuck out to me was a quote she shared, “Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance,” by Verna Myers,

Stormwater Summit

I particularly found the stormwater summit to be very useful. I liked that the content was divided into smaller blocks so a lot of information was covered. I learned many methods for simplifying green infrastructure maintenance in the design process, and also found it beneficial to learn about the variety of management programs cities utilize. This will be helpful as my stormwater section is currently planning to complete more survey and maintenance of our existing green infrastructure, and also looking into incorporating green infrastructure solutions with the watershed studies we are using for long term planning.

The sessions also inspired a variety of ideas for projects that I’m working on, including urban stream restoration projects. I’m excited to apply what I learned to my designs, and share the engineering solutions with my coworkers back in Madison.

Exhibit Hall

The exhibit hall was gigantic! I enjoyed talking to vendors and learning about the new stormwater technology.

I saw two exhibitor presentations in the hall and both were incredibly informational. The “Urban Ravine Restoration” presentation detailed the benefits of creating slope stabilization and in-channel infiltration with wood products, and it was intriguing! I have never heard of a similar project in the Midwest, and it may be a way to accomplish more storage and infiltration within our channels. I additionally enjoyed hearing ESRI’s presentation about “What’s New for GIS in Public Works.” I’m currently working on a few story maps for the City of Madison’s stormwater section, so it was great to hear about other tools, and how they can be integrated.

Social Events

The "Get Acquainted Party" at the Museum of Pop Culture was a great way to meet other PWX attendees. Exploring the innovatively designed exhibits and museum made for great ice breakers with other PWX attendees. The band, food, and drinks were also appreciated after a full day at the conference!

The Young Professionals Networking Reception at the Old Stove Brewery was a great way to meet passionate young public works professionals from around the country! I spoke to people from Seattle, California, Kansas and beyond! I also appreciated Mary Joyce and other APWA experts at the event. It was a great way to learn about the breadth of the public works experience and meet people with new ideas. The venue was also a perfect fit to host a large group of people; and the beer was excellent!

The Wisconsin Chapter Business meeting at Palomino tied the entire conference together for me. It was great to meet public works professionals that work in neighboring municipalities, the other Emerging Leader, Genevieve, and so many others. I enjoyed learning how the Wisconsin chapter works, and hear from previous Emerging Leaders' experience, like Eric Dundee and Kamron Nielson.

In summary APWA PWX 2019 was an unforgettable experience. I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend; thank you very much.

Sincerely,



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