



City of Woodland

**REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

AGENDA ITEM

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

DATE: December 1, 2009

SUBJECT: Water Rate Advisory Committee

**Report in Brief**

On November 3, 2009, the City Council adopted a water rate increase to pay for critical improvements to an aging water system, complete installation of state-mandated water meters for all properties, and provide initial funding needed to develop a water surface supply project. As part of Council's approval of the water rates, it requested the development of a Water Rate Advisory Committee.

The City is committed to developing and implementing a strategic public outreach program to share information and connect with residents on issues related to utility rate increases, infrastructure improvements, and long-term water supply and reliability. To this end, City staff, working in conjunction with our public relations consultant, has developed a plan for a Water Rate Advisory Committee.

Staff recommends that the City Council receive the Water Rate Advisory Committee plan; provide comments and direct staff to implement the plan at the appropriate time during the public outreach process.

**Background**

During the Prop 218 process for the water rate public hearing, it became clear that a public outreach program was needed to provide accurate, timely, and important information to water ratepayers in easy-to-understand terms. In fact, several residents spoke to the need for more public education during testimony at the public hearing for the water rate increase. As part of Council's approval of the water rates, it requested the development of a Water Rate Advisory Committee.

**Discussion**

In conjunction with the adoption of the water rate increase on November 3, the City Council directed the City Manager to return with a recommended approach for establishing a Water Rate Advisory Committee (WRAC). The role of this committee will be advisory, and a set of guiding principals will be established by the Committee members to engender shared understanding of the WRAC's purpose. Meetings will be facilitated by City staff and the public outreach consultant.

**The purpose of the committee is to:**

- Increase public participation in the functions of City government
- Act as form of public input and feedback on issues related to current and planned water system improvements
- Advise the City on potential challenges and opportunities related to future rate increases
- Promote communitywide education and awareness of water system issues and projects

It is recommended that the committee be comprised of no more than 15 members, allowing each Council Member the appointment of three citizens. Members should be representative of Woodland's diverse stakeholder groups, which include (but are not limited to):

- Residential water users
- Seniors
- Owners of large and small lots
- Long-term residents (10+ years)
- Newer residents (0-9 years)
- Wide range of estimated incomes
- Representation from all areas of the City
- Commercial water users
- Agricultural water users
- Small business owners
- Social service agencies
- Public Health
- Neighborhood associations
- Business/civic organizations
- Taxpayers' advocates
- Environmental interests
- Faith community
- Spanish-language speakers

The City Council should solicit participation through a letter of invitation to all ratepayers, as well as to members of aforementioned target audiences. The letter would serve as a means to inform ratepayers that the City is interested in their involvement in rate-related issues, and encourage interested parties to complete an application for appointment. Applications would be collected,

reviewed, and organized by City staff based upon selected criteria. Selection packets would be presented to the City Council for its consideration. The committee would be seated for a one-year term.

The Advisory Committee will receive information from staff, Council, and the public, yet act independently to develop advisory comments, suggestions, and plans to assist the City in moving forward to develop community awareness about infrastructure improvements and long-term water quality, supply, and reliability issues. The Committee's ultimate goal is to advise the City on issues from the community's perspective and develop a shared understanding of common issues. It is expected that this Committee will be formed in conjunction with public outreach stakeholder interviews. This is a process that will take a few months, so the expected startup time is February or March, 2010.

**Fiscal Impact**

The first meeting will cost approximately \$10,000 due to the mailing costs (\$7,000) and the advance preparations required. Each following meeting will cost approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000. Funds will be used from the Water Enterprise Fund and there are no expenditures coming from the General Fund. It is anticipated that the Committee will meet once a month for the first several months, and then no more than quarterly thereafter (unless the committee determines that additional meetings would be beneficial).

**Public Contact**

Posting of the City Council agenda.

**Alternative Courses of Action**

1. Receive the Water Rate Advisory Committee plan; provide comments and direct staff to implement the plan at the appropriate time during the public outreach process.
2. Provide alternative direction to staff regarding the purpose, composition and other aspects of the Committee.

**Recommendation for Action**

Staff recommends that the City Council approve Alternative No. 1.

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