



REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

DATE: March 16, 2010

SUBJECT: Selection Process For The 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 surface water supply project. As part of Council's approval of the water rates, the Council 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 the City's public outreach consultant, has developed a selection plan for filling the Water Rate Advisory Committee with appropriate members.

The City has requested volunteers to serve on the Water Rate Advisory Committee and received applications that broadly represent the City in terms of types of water users, geographical distribution coverage and diversity of experience in working with the City.

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the selection plan to form the Water Rate Advisory Committee as described herein.

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.

On December 1, 2009, staff presented Council with the recommended approach for soliciting and seating committee members, along with a description of the understood purpose of the committee. After discussion, Council determined the committee would be comprised of 25 members, five for

every Council Member. Per Council's direction, committee members will be appointed on staggered two-year terms.

Applications for committee membership were sent to water ratepayers in the January utility bill, posted to the City's website, and advertised through media relations activities. A total of 148 residents expressed interest in the water rate process based on their comments which were submitted before the January 30, 2010 deadline. Of those, 116 applicants indicated interest in serving on the Committee.

Discussion

In conjunction with the adoption of the water rate increase on November 3, 2009 the City Council directed the City Manager to return with a recommended approach for establishing a Water Rate Advisory Committee (WRAC). Staff returned on December 1 to present a report summarizing the role of WRAC as advisory with a set of guiding principals that will be established by the members. Staff will work with the WRAC to develop the guiding principles in a manner that will engender shared understanding of the WRAC's purpose. Meetings will be facilitated by City staff and the public outreach consultant.

The specific elements of the WRAC's purpose include:

- 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

WRAC Selection Process

Staff met with the City's Infrastructure Committee on March 12, 2010, to discuss the selection process. The Committee recommends that the Water Rate Advisory Committee be expanded to include 30 members and approximately 10 alternates. Council members will each select three applicants to serve on the committee, for a total of 15 members. The remaining 15 spots and 10 alternate positions are to be filled by staff. Staff will strive to ensure the committee is balanced with members randomly selected from all geographic areas of the City and from each of the water use classifications.

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 will advise the City on issues from the community's perspective.

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 likewise have a significant impact on staff time and 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 and discussion during the December 1 Council meeting.

Applications for committee membership were sent to water ratepayers in the January utility bill, posted to the City's website, and advertised through media relations activities.

Alternative Courses of Action

1. Approve the Infrastructure Committee's recommended selection process.
2. Direct staff to develop an alternative selection process for the Water Rate Advisory Committee.

Council Committee Recommendation

The City Council Infrastructure Subcommittee reviewed this issue on March 12 and provided the recommended selection process.

Recommendation for Action

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

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Principal Civil Engineer

Mark G. Deven
City Manager

WRAC APPLICANTS' LOCATIONS



1

3

4

7

8

2

4

5

6

9

COUNTY ROAD 98

W KENTUCKY AVE

KENTUCKY AVE

E KENTUCKY AVE

W BEAMER ST

BEAMER ST

E BEAMER ST

W COURT ST

COURT ST

E MAIN ST

W CROSS ST

E GUM AVE

COUNTY ROAD 24

W GIBSON RD

E GIBSON RD

EL DORADO DR

PIONEER AVE

FARMERS CENTRAL RD

ASHLEY AVE

COLLEGE ST

MATMOR RD

COLOMA WAY

COUNTY ROAD 101

FARNHAM AVE

COUNTY ROAD 101