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CITY/COUNTY WATER AND WASTEWATER STUDY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

May 21, 2009

Meeting Summary

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice-Chairman Marcelino Flores called the May 21, 2009 meeting of the City/County Water and Wastewater Study Oversight Committee (Oversight Committee) to order at 5:11 p.m. at the Randolph Golf Course Club House Copper Room, 600 S. Alvernon Way, Tucson, Arizona.

Members Present:

Marcelino Flores, Vice-Chair
Vincent Vasquez
Bonnie Poulos
Tina Lee
John Carlson
Rob Kulakofsky
Mark Stratton
Bruce Gungle
Thomas Sayler-Brown

Representing:

Regional Wastewater Reclamation Advisory Cmte (RWRAC)
Citizens Water Advisory Committee (CWAC)
County Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Commission
CWAC
RWRAC
RWRAC
RWRAC
County P&Z
City Planning Commission

Absent:

James Watson
Sean Sullivan
Jim Barry
Bob Cook (alternate)

Representing:

City Planning Commission
CWAC
CWAC
County P&Z

City/County Staff Present:

Nicole Ewing Gavin, City Manager's Office
Leslie Liberti, Office of Conservation and Sustainable Development, City of Tucson
Sandy Elder, Tucson Water
Melody Loyer, Tucson Water
Fernando Molina, Tucson Water
Ralph Marra, Tucson Water
Tom Arnold, Tucson Water
Nicole Fyffe, Pima County Administrator's Office
Kathleen Chavez, Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department
Greg Hitt, Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department
Melaney Seacat, Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department
Eric Wieduwilt, Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department
Suzanne Shields, Pima County Flood Control District
Bill Zimmerman, Pima County Flood Control District

Frank Postillion, Pima County Flood Control District
Evan Canfield, Pima County Flood Control District
Sherri Ruther, Pima County Development Services

A quorum of the Committee was established.

2. **APPROVAL OF APRIL 23, 2009 MEETING SUMMARY***

Approval of the April 23, 2009 meeting summary was delayed until the June meeting because the summary was not distributed to Committee members prior to the meeting for review.

3. **CALL TO THE AUDIENCE**

No one spoke

4. **FOLLOW UP ON RECLAIMED AND DROUGHT PAPERS**

Nicole Ewing Gavin handed out two documents that listed follow up items from the Committee discussion of the Reclaimed and Drought papers presented at the April meeting. Nicole asked the Committee to review the documents and provide any feedback to staff at the next meeting. The follow up documents are posted to the study website.

5. **PRESENTATION: CITY/COUNTY WATER CONSERVATION PAPER***

Melaney Seacat presented the highlights from the City/County Water Conservation paper. Staff on the panel included Sandy Elder, Fernando Molina, Leslie Liberti, and Suzanne Shields.

John Carlson asked for clarification about what is meant by “water efficiency goals”. Staff responded that it is a broader way of looking at conservation that doesn’t just focus on reducing water use but making sure that water is being put to the best use. An example is making sure that irrigation systems are operating properly.

Marcelino Flores asked about the capacity of our pipes and whether this affects the need to conserve. Sandy Elder described the daily and yearly fluctuations in water demand and the Beat the Peak program which is aimed at decreasing water usage during the highest demand periods.

Mark Stratton cautioned against using GPCD (gallons per capita per day) as the sole benchmark of conservation progress because each water provider has different types of customers and systems that affect GPCD. We have for a long time had a strong conservation ethic in Tucson. The next increment of improvement in conservation is going to be more expensive to achieve.

Vince Vasquez stated that conservation requirements have a cost associated with them that someone must pay and we need to be aware of this. We need to consider cost effectiveness of solutions as well as reliability and compare these costs to the cost to acquire new water. Vince brought up the City’s Community Conservation Task Force (CCTF) as a good model for evaluating various conservation approaches based on costs and benefits. The CCTF process also brought about a conservation fee on water bills which helps with conservation price signals.

Mark Stratton asked about Tucson Water’s education programming related to conservation ordinances. Staff described Tucson Water’s base program as well as new programs recommended by the CCTF process and related to implementing new ordinances like those requiring rainwater harvesting and greywater systems.

Rob Kulakofsky discussed the need for retrofit requirements to mandate the replacement of appliances with more efficient models. There could be a 10 year grace period and incentives. We also need to ban inefficient appliances and high water use plants from being sold at retail establishments in Tucson.

Vince Vasquez stated that a retrofit ordinance that requires upgrades at the time of sale increases the price of a home.

John Carlson stated that low-flow toilets can create sewer conveyance problems in some areas and maybe we should educate people about them rather than requiring them.

Tina Lee brought up the importance of letting people know what they are paying for on their water bill (energy, commodity, infrastructure) – base rate vs. commodity rate.

Val Little (audience) stated that she feels a different way of rate making will be coming soon that will not link less water used with higher rates and it will involve base rates going up.

Bruce Gungle stated that the reason water usage is going down is that it is “hip to conserve”. He stated that there are two things that limit growth: land and water. We should acknowledge that at the end of the day, using less water does allow more people to move here.

Vince Vasquez stated that more efficient use of water isn't just about growth but can be about better use of water to improve quality of life.

Bonnie Poulos stated that the paper does not focus enough on conservation in the existing built environment and that this is harder than in new areas. We need to set standards for redevelopment and infill that include requirements, incentives and rebates in the permitting process. We also need to address barriers in the current code that prevent people from redeveloping. Suzanne Shields replied that building permits discussed in the report refer to infill and redevelopment also.

Bonnie Poulos pointed out an error on p. 6 of the report regarding the role of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Staff will correct this in the on-line version.

Mac Hudson brought up no-flow toilet fixtures and suggested that we should provide incentives for these.

Vince Vasquez reiterated that we need to look at cost-benefit and cost comparisons of conservation options. In some cases, retrofitting the built environment would be cheaper than mandating requirements for new development (e.g. toilet replacement is cost-effective and has measurable and reliable results).

Bonnie Poulos suggested that Tucson Water and Pima County Wastewater should factor in alternative energy and alternative water sources to help stimulate the green energy market here and to set an example of what citizens need to do.

Bonnie Poulos stated that we should be conserving reclaimed water, not just potable.

John Carlson brought up the fact that Las Vegas limits the amount of turf that golf courses can have.

William Crosby stated that water efficiency is an important aspect of conservation. An example is that aerating turf makes better use of water.

Nancy Freeman stated that it is important to distinguish water use by commercial, residential, indoor and outdoor use. We need to stop the sale of high water use plants in Tucson.

6. **PRESENTATION: STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PAPER***

Suzanne Shields presented the highlights from the Stormwater Management technical paper.

Mark Stratton asked about further upstream solutions to slow urban flows. Suzanne Shields responded that it is easier where new development is taking place. She gave the example of the Golder Ranch dam that was breached and was not an effective solution. The geology of our area makes it difficult and dams would not be desirable in many areas.

Bruce Gungle brought up the water harvesting/traffic calming devices on 9th St. in Rincon Heights neighborhood as a good model.

Vince Vasquez asked about the functioning of stormwater harvesting at the lot-scale and how this relates to detention basins. Suzanne responded that one of the purposes of stormwater harvesting is flood control and that lot-scale systems can reduce the size of basins but wouldn't likely completely replace them.

John Carlson discussed the need to coordinate between local, state and federal projects that are dealing with flood control. John stated we should produce information for homeowners regarding stormwater harvesting opportunities in their neighborhood.

Tina Lee asked about the possibility of having a stormwater utility on a regional scale. Suzanne Shields responded that this is closely tied to land use so each jurisdiction wants to maintain control. It could make sense for projects on major rivers.

Bruce Gungle asked for clarification on various figures and charts in the report. Staff provided explanation.

Vince Vasquez asked about how stormwater is best used with other water resources for riparian benefits. Suzanne responded that the Kino (KERP) project is an example of this as is Swan wetlands. We're learning how best to design these projects making best use of water resources. In these cases, reclaimed water is used only for the establishment of the vegetation.

Rob Kulakofsky stated that we should reconfigure watercourses most like their natural state. The Santa Cruz River south of Irvington is an example.

Nancy Freeman stated that we are permitting development and roadways in floodplains without concern for downstream impacts.

William Crosby brought up the issue of climate change and future flood events.

7. **PRESENTATION: RIPARIAN PROTECTION PAPER***

Suzanne Shields presented the highlights from the Riparian Protection technical paper.

Mark Stratton brought up pumpage in the Sabino Creek area and the fact that exempt wells are so significant in number there. We would need a way to limit existing exempt wells at the local level to really protect riparian areas.

Mark Stratton asked about the location of surface water diversions in the region. Staff responded that the primary one is at Cienega Creek for Del Lago golf course (400 acre-feet).

John Carlson asked for definitions of hydro-riparian, meso-riparian and shallow groundwater.

Bonnie Poulos suggested the use of satellite imagery as an educational tool to help people see the impacts of groundwater pumping.

Vince Vasquez stated that we need to wheel renewable supplies to areas with wells if we really want to improve riparian areas. Whether the community would be willing to subsidize this is a question.

Bonnie Poulos asked about taxing wells. Staff responded that non-exempt wells are already taxed and that there is no mechanism to tax exempt wells because they are not even tracked.

Vince Vasquez stated that planned communities are much better than “wildcat” developments, from a riparian protection perspective. We need to make sure we are not encouraging “wildcatting” by heaping too many regulations on subdivisions.

Margot Garcia stated that exempt wells were sunk in midtown neighborhoods prior to the change in the law.

Beryl Baker cautioned that we don't want to regulate people out of being able to own their own water.

Marcelino Flores mentioned the importance of articulating the legislative issues in the committee report.

8. **AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING***

No discussion

9. **CALL TO AUDIENCE**

Beryl Baker stated there is phosphorous in wastewater and that maybe we could mine it.

11. **ADJOURNMENT***

The meeting was adjourned by Marcelino Flores at 8:55 p.m.

Attendees:

Nancy Freeman
Sheila Bowen

Mac Hudson
Claire Zucker
Kathy Cheney
Val Little
William Crosby
Andrea Borlizzi
Tim Cloninger
Rich Franz
Beryl Baker
Anne Campbell
Chuck Freitas
Holly Lachowicz
Cindy Shimokusu
Margot Garcia

DRAFT