

UTILITY COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 9, 2002

The Utility Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on January 9, 2002 at 4:00 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Mike Whalen, Chairman
Bill Jaffa
Claudia Walters

COUNCIL PRESENT

Jim Davidson

OFFICERS PRESENT

None

1. Hear an update on the South Water Reclamation Plant Project.

Assistant Utilities Manager Bill Haney addressed the Council regarding this agenda item and provided a brief historical overview regarding development of the South Water Reclamation Plant (SWRP). He stated that this is a joint project with the Town of Gilbert (Gilbert) and that the site of the planned SWRP is located in Gilbert on a 40-acre site within a 168-acre parcel near the intersection of Greenfield Road and Queen Creek Road. He explained that following the initial project study and selection of the site in 1997, it was determined that the initial phase of the project would consist of a lift station and a pipeline to pump wastewaters to Mesa's Southeast Reclamation Plant until such time that growth demanded that the facility be converted to a treatment plant. He said that due to the rapid growth of this area, Gilbert is now requesting that conversion of the lift station to a treatment plant proceed as soon as possible. Mr. Haney stated that staff is in the process of issuing an RFP for a project consultant and that the target completion timeframe for the project is the summer of 2005.

Mr. Haney reported that although the initial project study called for a processing capacity of 10 million gallons per day, new information indicates that the initial capacity of the treatment plant should be upgraded to 12 million gallons per day. Mr. Haney also reported that Gilbert has indicated that they intend to process solids from their Neely Plant at the SWRP, which are currently being piped by Mesa to the 91st Avenue Treatment Plant. He noted that this would help to alleviate Mesa's future solids capacity constraints at the 91st Avenue Plant.

Mr. Haney stated that the total cost of the project is currently estimated in the range of \$60 - \$70 million, and that Mesa's share of the total cost is estimated in the range of \$13 - \$16 million (1/3 of \$40 - \$50 million). He noted that although staff's report in this matter estimated the total project cost in the range of \$40 - \$50 million, this range did not take into consideration Gilbert's transfer of solids handling from the 91st Avenue Plant to the SWRP and he noted that the additional capital expense related to this change is Gilbert's sole responsibility.

In response to questions from Committeemember Jaffa concerning the availability of bond funds for the project, Capital Improvement Project Administrator Anthony Araza advised that the 2000 bond election only included authorization for design of the plant and not construction because it was not anticipated that construction would occur this soon.

Mr. Haney stated that Gilbert has indicated a willingness to advance Mesa's share of the capital investment so that construction of the project can proceed as soon as possible.

Discussion ensued regarding including authorization for construction of the project in the next bond election.

In response to questions from Chairman Whalen relative to the cost and role of the project consultant, City Engineer Keith Nath advised that the consultant's contract is estimated in the range of \$4 - \$5 million including design, construction and administrative services; that Mesa's share of the total would be covered by the \$2 million authorized through the 2000 bond election for project design; that staff has prepared the RFP, which will be issued in the near future after it is reviewed by Gilbert; and that the consultant's first step will be to conduct a basis of design study to evaluate the changes that have occurred since the initial study was conducted in 1997.

Discussion ensued regarding the projected capacity of the plant, the residential development that is occurring near the project site and the size of buffers surrounding the site.

Chairman Whalen stressed the importance of conducting public outreach programs in conjunction with Gilbert to ensure that nearby residents are kept informed about this project.

Discussion ensued regarding the solids handling process, the marketability of processed solids and the fact that solids currently processed at the 91st Avenue plant are trucked out at a cost to the City and are used in agricultural applications as a soil additive.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen regarding the manner in which operating expenses of the SWRP will be shared between Mesa and Gilbert, Mr. Haney advised that the cost of operating the plant will be proportionally shared based on the volumes of wastewater treated.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that Queen Creek is a customer of Mesa in connection with the existing facility and has expressed an interest in participating in the treatment plant, and Mesa's planned effluent exchange with the Gila River Indian Community that will be facilitated by a future pipeline to the Reservation from the SWRP.

Chairman Whalen thanked staff for the update.

2. Hear an update from Salt River Project on electric infrastructure upgrades at Williams Gateway.

Chairman Whalen introduced Tony Spangler, Engineer and Distribution Facilities Consulting Manager for Salt River Project (SRP), and Kathie Lee, Intergovernmental Relations Manager for SRP.

Mr. Spangler stated that SRP began supplying power to Williams Air Force Base in the 1940s. He explained that the base had its own electrical system and that at the time the base closed, the system was not in conformance with commercial standards. Mr. Spangler stated that to date, SRP has invested more than \$2 million in repairs and upgrades to the electrical support system on the Williams Gateway Campus and that 60% of the planned repairs and upgrades have been completed. He advised that the additional improvements planned by SRP over the next several years will include: 1) additional 12kV feeders from the Williams Substation to serve the campus; 2) 69 kV line work; 3) a 69 kV loop to the Williams Substation; 4) installation of a second transformer in 2006; and 4) continued upgrades of the old 4kV system to a standard 12kV system throughout the campus.

Mr. Spangler said that SRP is committed to working with the City to ensure future growth at Williams Gateway and that SRP's system has the capacity and flexibility to handle the projected growth. Mr. Spangler added that SRP appreciates the City's support in line siting at Williams Gateway.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Mr. Spangler advised that the Williams Substation does not serve any areas outside of the Williams Gateway Campus.

Committeemember Walters voiced appreciation for SRP's investment in improvements at Williams Gateway and stated that the improvements will help the City to attract additional businesses to the area.

Committeemember Jaffa commented on the possibility that SRP might be interested in partnering with the City regarding the installation of fiber optic conduit in the Williams Gateway area and also suggested that SRP participate in upcoming General Plan discussions concerning development in the Williams Gateway area.

Vice Mayor Davidson joined the meeting at 4:20 p.m.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that power is supplied to the Williams Substation through the Browning and San Tan Substations, and the existing and planned alternate sources that will supply power in the event of a failure.

Chairman Whalen voiced appreciation for the cooperative working relationship that exists between the City and SRP and thanked Mr. Spangler for the update.

3. Discuss and consider conversion of a portion of alley garbage collection service to curbside collection service.

Acting Solid Waste Management Director Tim Mahon and Operations Research Analyst Peter Klimoski addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item.

Mr. Mahon provided a brief historical overview regarding alley garbage collection service within the City. He referred to and commented on photographs on display in the Council Chambers that depicted the various equipment historically used to provide this service and discussed the progressive level of productivity achieved through automated equipment. He also noted that with each upgrade of equipment beginning in the early 1980s, a number of alleys were

converted to curbside garbage collection service as a result of equipment access and safety issues.

Mr. Mahon stated that the City currently provides garbage collection service to approximately 105,000 single family and small multi-unit customers including approximately 6,000 alley customers. He added that during the peak alley service years in the 1970s, the City serviced approximately 12,000 alley customers. Mr. Mahon commented on the major safety concerns related to alley garbage collection service and displayed numerous photographs depicting examples of alley ingress/egress problems, overgrown foliage and illegal dumping.

Mr. Mahon discussed the numerous benefits associated with curbside garbage collection versus alley service, including: 1) tractor/trailer equipment used for curbside collection has a larger capacity, is more efficient and has a longer life span than equipment that must be used in alleys; 2) alleys pose a high risk for property damage and equipment damage; 3) an equal level of base service is provided to curbside customers (90 gallon containers), whereas the service provided to alley customers cannot be measured due to shared alley containers (440 gallon); and 4) there is no accountability for overload, inappropriate or illegally dumped items with alley customers.

Mr. Mahon stated that staff is seeking approval to proceed with converting approximately 1067 solid waste customers from alley service to curbside service because of safety concerns previously described, regardless of customer concurrence, and also to proceed with safety related conversions in the future as deemed necessary by staff.

Mr. Mahon reported that staff routinely receives requests from alley customers for conversion to curbside service and that Council's previous direction regarding these cases is that 100% of affected residents must support conversion in order to convert a neighborhood. Mr. Mahon stated that staff is also seeking approval to proceed with conversion of these cases when 75% of affected customers approve the conversion.

Mr. Mahon commented on the process and timeline planned by staff to convert the proposed 1067 alley customers to curbside customers. He said that the process will consist of five phases as set forth in staff's report, include notifying District Councilmembers prior to conversions in their respective districts and will include a comprehensive door-to-door notification process of all affected customers.

In response to a question from Committeemember Jaffa regarding 100% conversion of the City's remaining alley service areas to curbside service, Mr. Mahon stated that staff supports full conversion of the City's remaining alley customers, except for a small percentage of customers in various areas of the City where conversion to curbside service would result in unsafe conditions.

Committeemember Jaffa voiced approval of staff's recommendations and said that although he also supports City-wide conversion to curbside service where safe to do so, he has numerous concerns relative to alleys, including utility easements, crime issues and the abandonment of alleys to residents. He requested that staff provide the Committee and the Council with updates regarding the parallel issues relative to alleys.

Development Services Manager Jack Friedline advised that in most cases where alley service has been converted to curbside service, the alleys are left open and remain in good condition. He noted that cases where residents request that an alley be closed and barricaded are referred to the utility companies having utilities in the alley.

Committeemember Walters voiced support for staff's recommendations to convert approximately 1067 alley customers to curbside service due to safety concerns and for reducing the required percentage of concurring neighborhood residents to 75% in conjunction with customers seeking conversion to curbside service. Committeemember Walters said that although she concurs that there are numerous other issues related to alleys that should come before the Council, these issues do not necessarily fall under the purview of the Utility Committee. She stated the opinion that alleys that are closed off with gates generally have a more attractive appearance than alleys that are left open.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Committeemember Jaffa, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendations to convert approximately 1067 customers from alley to curbside garbage collection, and to reduce the required percentage of concurring neighborhood resident approval from 100% to 75% in areas where residents have requested conversion to curbside service, be approved.

Committeemember Walters said that although the motion does not encompass blanket authorization for staff to conduct future safety-related conversions without the approval of the Committee and the Council, she is generally supportive of future conversions and encouraged staff to return to the Utility Committee when they are in a position to proceed with the next series of conversions.

Vice Mayor Davidson stated the opinion that converting alley garbage collection to curbside collection frequently leads to requests from citizens to close alleys and he voiced concerns relative to closing alleys, including impacts on utility companies. He urged staff to advise Salt River Project regarding the City's discussions concerning the elimination of alley garbage collection service. Vice Mayor Davidson also voiced the opinion that the process of closing alleys may lead to the total elimination of alleys, which he is opposed to. He stated that as the City approaches build-out in the future and begins to focus more on neighborhood preservation and revitalization, alleys will be considered an asset. Vice Mayor Davidson also commented on a new neighborhood design concept that is being used nationwide which utilizes a more sophisticated street design in conjunction with the use of alleys for utilities infrastructure.

Chairman Whalen spoke in support of staff's recommendations and noted that a significant percentage of the proposed conversions are in District 2. He also stated support for City-wide conversion to curbside garbage collection, except for areas where it is unsafe to do so.

Carried unanimously.

Mr. Friedline commented on the safety issues associated with large garbage collection trucks negotiating narrow alleys and displayed a child's tricycle that was damaged when a City garbage truck struck a guy wire causing a power line to fall on the unoccupied tricycle.

Chairman Whalen commended staff for providing garbage collection service on Christmas and New Year's Day.

4. Adjournment.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Committeemember Jaffa, that the Utility Committee Meeting adjourn at 5:15 p.m.

Carried unanimously.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Utility Committee Meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 9th day of January 2002. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

pjt