CITY OF TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES
PUBLIC UTILITY ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2019

REGULAR MEETING

Regular meeting of the Public Utility Advisory Board of the City of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico held in the City Commission Chambers, 405 W. 3rd Street, at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, April 8, 2019.

INTRODUCTION:

ROLL CALL:

Jeff Dornbusch, Chairman
Ed Williams, Vice-Chairman
Ron Pacourek, Member
Don Armijo, Member
Gil Avelar, Member

ALSO PRESENT:
Morris Madrid, City Manager
Renee Cantin, City Clerk
Bo Easley, Electric Division Director
Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director
Jesse Cole, Water/Wastewater Director
Priscilla Fuentes, Electric Administrative Assistant
Kristen Weddle, Sanitation Administrative Assistant
Ruby Otero-Vallejos, Water/Wastewater Administrative Assistant
Traci Burnett, Grant Projects/P & Z Coordinator
Angela A. Torres, Deputy City Clerk

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chairman Dornbusch called for approval of the agenda.

Vice Chairman Williams moved to approve the agenda. Member Armijo seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Member Pacourek moved to approve the minutes of Regular meeting of Monday, March 18, 2019. Member Avelar seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

None.

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:
None.

Discussion/Update: Electric Department - Bo Easley, Electric Division Director:

Bo Easley, Electric Division Director reported the following:
- The Mud Mountain Tower Project is complete. BLM completed their inspection and it passed.
- The AMI RFP will hopefully go out this week, and hopefully the bid will be awarded before July. If so the process will start after that.
- They plan to meet with NMDOT this Wednesday regarding the roundabouts.
- They are waiting on the contractors to complete the C-field Verizon Tower Project.
- Marto Electric will set new poles on the Western/Eastern side of the Gun Club, as well as the Westside of I-25.

Discussion/Update: Sanitation Department - Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director:

Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director reported the following:
- He ordered a new truck back in August of 2018, and hopefully it will be here next month. The trucks are usually good for 3-5 years.
- He reminded everyone of the Free Spring Cleanup Day on April 27th from 8am-3pm at the City Collection Center.
- They will know by April 29th if they were awarded funds from the RAID Grant.

Discussion/Update: Water/Wastewater Department – Jesse Cole, Water/Wastewater Director:

Jesse Cole, Water/Wastewater Director reported the following:
- His crew fixed 14 water leaks last week.
- The Quarterly Report for the NMED Discharge Permit has been sent in.
- He met with Jeff Thomas from OSE regarding repairs of the pump at the fish pond.
- They fed a camera down the clarifier and it showed that there was some sludge that was stuck in the line. They couldn’t get it out, but they are in the process of figuring that out.
- They installed 3 new valves and controllers at the Vac Station.
- They want to fill the secondary pond at the Golf Course with fresh water. They are looking into getting a meter for that. Bart Rivers at the Golf Course is concerned about the PH with the water. Bart is using a PH Probe that they had at the Wastewater Plant to monitor that a little more closely.
- They are working on quotes for the sulfur burner.
- They have a Bobcat that is currently down and the repairs will cost more than it’s worth. They also need some tires, and possibly a tilt bed trailer for the backhoe so they can pull the backhoe up and down instead of driving it across town. That will save some money on the tires and that will make it a bit quicker to respond to calls.
- He has been to a couple of places where they tried to implement a CUFF Program and it was hard to differentiate between where the line was drawn between the anti-donation clause and being a Municipality. We have to be careful as to those boundaries and how we give out stuff to places or people. Anything that benefits an individual can get you in some rough times. You would also need a Building Inspector (which we don’t have) who would normally go out and do
the inspection on the property so you can show that the resident is actively taking the proper steps for the program. In our case, it would more than likely fall on the Water Department to do the inspections.

Discussion/Action: CUFF Program – Jeff Dornbusch, Chairman:

Chairman Dornbusch said it seems there is a lot more to this program then just making it possible for people to be forgiven.

City Manager Madrid responded that there are ways to do this program. Some Municipalities start the clock when the leak is reported. The forgiveness can take place if the customer hires a licensed plumber to do the repairs and shows a proof of the repair so the same leak doesn’t occur over and over again. The only area that can be kind of grey is how long it takes you to report the leak. The forgiveness is determined by your average water bill. They will take that amount back down to what your average bill usually is and forgive everything above that. Here in T or C it can be done, but it will take a change to the ordinance because the current ordinance does not have any provision for forgiveness of any kind.

Vice Chairman Williams mentioned that Santa Fe and Las Cruces have this program, but the process they go through is a lot. You have to notify the Municipality within 3 months of the leak, and like the City Manager said, you have to have a licensed plumber repair it, and if you don’t, and you repair it yourself, then you have to leave it exposed until someone from the city can go and do an inspection. And only if the bill is 200% over their normal average will they start the forgiveness process, and Santa Fe only forgives one leak per customer, per calendar year. He also feels that the forgiveness amount should be straight across the board.

Member Pacourek mentioned that he had a water leak on his property, and even though his bill was not forgiven, the Utility Office did contact him to let him know that his bill was higher than usual.

Chairman Dornbusch suggested that they investigate this program a little bit more and come up with the perimeters for what they can present to the Commission, because he would really like to see this move forward.

Discussion/Action: Trash Forgiveness Program - Jeff Dornbusch, Chairman:

Chairman Dornbusch feels like this could be a great program and he would think that the county would be very grateful to us for doing this, because it seems like a lot of the illegal dumps happen on county property, and they are the ones tasked with cleaning it up. He doesn’t know what the cost to the city would be, but if we limit it to a half a ton once a month, he thinks the benefit of having people taking it in would outweigh any of the loss of revenue. Plus if we get people more interested in recycling, we could raise the $30,000 saved last year to $50,000 saved in transportation costs. People are recycling on their own by separating and transporting it, and we are benefiting from it, so he doesn’t see any reason why the city should not give back the service that they used to provide by picking up couches and stuff that were placed by the dumpsters.

Vice Chairman Williams thinks this is something we should look into. However, back in the day Sanitation didn’t charge for a lot of services they were providing and they were losing a lot of money, so
that is the reason why a lot of things changed. He thinks it's a decent thing to look into, he just doesn't know about it being on a monthly basis.

Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director stated back then when they were picking things up in the alleys, they had a landfill to keep the cost down, but they no longer have a landfill, and they now have to transport the trash, and the cost for that is $49 per ton. We send out 3-4 trailers a week, and we're looking at $800 - $900 a trailer, and at the end of the month I'm looking at a $29,032 bill that needs to be paid.

Chairman Dornbusch responded he does not see why yard waste has to go to the dump. We can compost that kind of stuff.

Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director responded we can compost yard waste in small amounts, but he will have to apply through NMED, and the residential owners by the Recycling Center may not want that, so he may have to look at other property due to the odors and such that are produced through composting. He will also need more man power, bigger equipment, and additional equipment. The chipper they were looking at was $500,000 and then they are looking at two or three more men at the Facility, because it is a big operation. We can reduce the waste going out there, but then you have to look at the cost to do this.

Member Avelar asked how many extra trailers they haul on the Free Trash Day.

Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director responded they haul 3 extra trailers which is an average of $800 - $900 a trailer.

Member Avelar asked if the County could help with the costs since we are helping them out.

Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director responded this time around they will be open for a full day, and they will have their Arrey, Hillsboro, and Winston site open. They will bring the waste to us, but they are paying for their disposal fees.

Chairman Dornbusch when you do it once a year, people clean their yards and they take a years worth of trash. If you are doing it every month, chances are at the beginning there will be a lot, but after that it will slow down, so he thinks it would be beneficial to everybody because you will have more people interacting with the Sanitation Department when they bring their trash down there. And the more people who recycle, the more we save in transportation costs.

City Manager Madrid noted that the first variable is the cost, and more activity means probably more personell, and more hours. It is definitely less revenue, and that is the biggest unknown factor that we have. Until we can identify what that is, we can't make a recommendation.

Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director said this is something he needs to look into due to the cost.

Chairman Dornbusch asked that this item be tabled until they have more information to make a decision.
Discussion: Inaccurate Statement on Utility Bill – Ron Pacourek, Member:

Member Pacourek reviewed the back of his utility bill where is says, per city code if you have an electric meter you will be charged trash services. The notice on the back of the utility bills does not show which city code they are referring to. He looked up city code (Section 11-2) and it says that all persons having city water or electricity shall be liable for garbage collection fees, but the back of the utility bill only refers to electric. Another issue is that a referencing code number is not included on the bill. The reason he brought this up is because he heard that there are people who are only paying for water and sewer, and they are not paying trash fees.

The board came to the conclusion that water meters needs to be added to the code, and Section 11-2 needs to be added to the statement on the back of the utility bill.

Discussion: Discussion of Ordinance No. 664 - Ron Pacourek, Member:

Member Pacourek reported on the Renewable Energy Ordinance 664 under Section 1-8 it states “the city reserves the right to deny interconnection for over-sized systems and in no case may the renewable energy generation system be sized such that its inverters rated capacity exceeds 90% of the most recent 12 month average of the customers' usage.” He feels that the wording should be changed from over-sized system to any system so the city is covered, because if we get to a point where there are more people who install solar, there is nothing in this ordinance saying that we cannot deny them solar.

Vice Chairman Williams informed Member Pacourek that the city has the right to refuse any solar connection if it doesn’t meet all of the codes and standards.

COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD:

Member Pacourek mentioned that the March 29th newspaper ad said that the City Commission will review Ordinance #701 which is the Wastewater Impact Fee Land Use Assumptions. They haven’t had an Impact Fee Board Meeting in a while, so he is wondering why they were not informed of that meeting.

City Clerk Cantin clarified that the meeting in question is to review the the Impact Fee Study which was recommended by this board. The reason why the notice says Land Use Assumption is because we were required to use that wording.

COMMENTS FROM STAFF:

There were no additional comments from staff.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Public Utility Advisory Board, Jeff Dornbusch, Chairman, declared the meeting adjourned.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 17th day of June, 2019.
Jeff Dornbusch, Chairman
Public Utility Advisory Board