ITEM:

Approve the minutes of the Public Utility Advisory Board for May 15th, 2017.

BACKGROUND:

The attached minutes were approved at their June 19th Meeting.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the minutes.
CITY OF TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES
PUBLIC UTILITY ADVISORY BOARD
MONDAY, MAY 15, 2017

REGULAR MEETING

Action Minutes

Regular meeting of the Public Utility Advisory Board of the City of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico to be held in the City Commission Chambers, 405 W. Third, Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, on Monday, May 15, 2017 at 5:30 P.M.

INTRODUCTION:

PRESENT:
George Szigeti, Chairman
Jeff Dornbusch, Vice-Chairman
Ron Pacourek, Member
Gil Avelar, Member
Randy Ashbaugh, Member

ALSO PRESENT:
Juan Fuentes, City Manager
Robbie Travis, Building Inspector
Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director
Jesus Salayandia, Water/Wastewater Admin. Director
Bo Easley, Electric Division Director
Arnie Castaneda, Water/Wastewater Department Supervisor
Traci Burnette, Grant Project Coordinator
Ruby Otero-Vallejos, Water/Wastewater Admin. Assistant
Tammy Gardner, Electric Division Admin. Assistant
Angela A. Torres, Deputy City Clerk

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Vice Chairman Dornbusch moved approval of the agenda.

Member Pacourek seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
APPROVAL OF MINUTES - REGULAR MEETING HELD MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2017:

Member Ashbaugh made a comment about Tesla bringing in their charging station. He had talked to them for almost three years, about bringing the charging station to where the new Spaceport Visitor Center would be, and tying it in with technology. But he believes the Holiday Inn is as good of place as any.

Chairman Szigeti found a few errors in the minutes. On the bottom of page 2, it should say “the Electric Dept. will be building a new “3 phase line” on the Southside of the Hospital. On the first line of page 3 where it says “test lab project” it should say “Tesla project.” And in the middle of page 3 where it says “twice a week pick up” it should say “bi-weekly pick up.”

Vice Chairman Dornbusch moved approval of the April 17, 2017 minutes as amended.

Member Avelar seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

Ron Fenn, (316 N. Foch) asked the Board if they received, and opened the link to the files regarding the PPA’s for the Solar Farms in New Mexico.

Chairman Szigeti noted that Deputy Clerk Torres did forward the files.

Member Pacourek noted that he was not able to open the link.

Mr. Fenn also noted that we have given away land that has had a tax value of about $3,900 and we gave it to the Solar Farm for $2,500 a year, which is well under the market value for it. He needs to ask for a letter from the city, to prove there was a reason for that, because that parcel of 354-1 was only partially obeyed, or followed in the Solar Farm. He had spoken to the Assessor’s Office a while ago, and they did capitalize the portion of the project that belongs to SSA Solar and the tax bill which was paid to the County was $36,059. The problem with that is that it is his money; it is our tax money that is buying their electricity that they are now paying to the County. And the only thing that we get out of it is higher electric bills from the Solar Farm. We have not made half a cent savings since they’ve been in here, and we continue to lose thousands, and thousands of dollars. And now its $36,000 a year, the County is benefiting from our money that is being passed through the Solar Farm. He brings this up in relationship to the YESCO “fiasco”. He recommends that the Board do their research before putting their stamp of approval on anything, because undoubtedly it’s to make YESCO money, and not to help the people of Truth or Consequences. It may save somebody something, but the savings all go to the company who provides it. Therefore, the people pay the same whether or not we are inefficiently reading meters by hand, or whether we are doing it technologically. And unless the City is willing to dump a couple of employees that currently read meters when they put these self-meters in, then we have saved or gained nothing.
NEW BUSINESS:

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

Sanitation Director Andy Alvarez reported the following:

- April 29th was the Spring Cleanup Day and it went very well. They had 161 people come through with approximately 65 tons of refuse.
- He had two positions open; one for a Sanitation Supervisor, and one for a Scale House Operator. The Interviews will be held this coming Wednesday.
- He needs to advertise that it is the resident’s responsibility to take poly carts into their yard so that they don’t blow into the road on windy days.

Vice-Chairman Dornbusch asked if it would be advisable to add addresses to the poly carts encase they blow away.

Mr. Alvarez responded that he advises the residents to add their household number to the carts, because the residents are responsible for their poly carts.

Chairman Szigeti noted that there are serial numbers on the poly carts that can be traced back to the address.

Chairman Szigeti asked if the County sites were open on the free cleanup day, and if the City received any reciprocal funding from the County to help pay for the county residents who brought their stuff into our site.

Mr. Alvarez responded that four locations were open on that day, and there were also four 40 yard roll offs that were brought to them. The county absorbed the cost for that.

Member Ashbaugh asked about possibly having the free cleanup days once a month, or on a quarterly basis. He thinks even doing it on a quarterly basis would tremendously help clean up the community.

City Manager Fuentes responded that this process was an initiative started by Mayor Pro-Tem Whitehead, and he knows that Commissioner Hechler has moved on it as well. But the intent was to have at least one free cleanup a year; possibly two, but not on a regular basis, because it is an expense to the city, and it is a lot of work for those of us who are out there working on that day. Unfortunately, we have people in the community that will save all their trash and will not pay to use the facilities that are out there. They know that we sometimes have the free dump day event, and they take advantage of that by bringing in trailers, and horse trailers completely filled to the top. This is an enterprise operation, and we have to provide that service, but we must also be able to pay for that service. To do it on a regular basis would be a burden on staff.

Member Ashbaugh noted that the city no longer picks up in the alley ways or picks up debris like they did years ago. He still sees a lot of debris in the alley ways. He would like to see something done quarterly, because a lot of people cannot afford nor do they have the means to take their trash to the Transfer Station.
Discussion/Update: Electric Department - Bo Easley, Electric Division Director

Electric Department Director Bo Easley reported the following:

- They have all of the electrical hooked up at the new Microbrewery.
- The High School Fitness Center should be breaking ground around August 2017.
- They started building the 3 phase line up to the Hospital on the South East side.
- Tammy & Traci have been working on an NMFA Grant to get a primary ground replaced on Corona and Camino Del Cielo.
- A vendor is coming in to show them new Electric & Water meters.
- They were contacted by a company who does ultra-sonic testing for poles. They will test to see if the poles are rotted out, or need to be replaced. We would like for them to do a majority of the downtown area.

Vice Chairman Dornbusch asked if there has been a history of poles rotting.

Mr. Easley replied "they have found a few throughout the years."

Member Avelar noted that the life expectancy for newer poles is around 40 years. Some of the poles we have are 60 years old if not older.

Member Pacourek asked if the city has funding for this testing.

Mr. Easley responded that he does have the funding for it.

Chairman Szigeti asked if Mr. Easley had a chance to look into the T & D report, and if so, did he find any significant issues.

Mr. Easley noted that the absence of the tags was the basis of the complaint they received from Mr. Fenn. T & D took pictures of the meters and stuff like that. They also took pictures of the poles and tagged them. Some poles have been replaced that were on the T & D report, and when the guys replaced the pole they weren’t putting the tag back on. But he had them go back, and put the tags back on all of the poles.

Chairman Szigeti asked if the information on the inventory with the poles and electric meters is being updated. And if not, he advised them to do so.

City Manager Fuentes noted that we are advertising for a new position for a GIS Tech and the purpose for that is to address that issue. The T & D report did give us some GIS files, as well as some of the other studies that they had for the water system. Their goal is to track the inventory.

Discussion/Update: Water/Wastewater Department - Jesus Salayandia, Water/Wastewater Director

Water/Wastewater Director Jesus Salayandia reported the following:

- Phase I at the Treatment Plant is almost complete.
• Smith Co. has started Phase 2A and they started digging the auxiliary pond. They haven’t hit any ground water. And the piping should be the only thing that will be submerged.
• They have a meeting on the 23rd for the manhole repairs which are mostly on Veater Street.
• They pulled wells 7 & 8 last week. They found a lot of build up around the screen on the casing. They will do testing to see what will have to be done for that. Production will be great once they get those back.
• Water Production has gone up lately and flow at the wastewater plant has also increased.

Discussion/Action: Review of Utility Bills; calculation, format, and sewer average – Jeff Dornbusch & Ron Pacourek:

Vice Chairman Dornbusch wanted this to go before the City Commission for a decision.

Member Pacourek stated that the code states: 
*July of every year hereafter, the fees shall be adjusted automatically to reflect a 5% increase to our Solid Waste.*

Vice chairman Dornbusch noted that he is mostly concerned with the water bill. He doesn’t have a problem with the Solid Waste. His concern was that the format of the bill has not accurately reflected the information on it. Sonya from the Utility Department informed him that the Tyler system is going to be adding an average for the sewage use. He likes the graphs on the new bills, but Tyler should have added the average to the bills quite a while ago.

Vice-Chairman Dornbusch moved that this item go before the City Commission for review to determine whether or not it needs to be changed or be added as a tax.

Member Pacourek seconded the motion.

Chairman Szigeti noted that this item was discussed two meeting ago, and was voted on and approved to be sent to the City Commission.

Manager Fuentes advised Mr. Szigeti to forward a Commission Action form to the Clerk’s Office so that he can get that on the City Commission agenda. Ms. Torres will forward you a template of the Commission Action Form.

Member Ashbaugh noted that he believes the pass thru ordinance is “very simple” for all the things it pertains to. It needs further examination. He asked that a copy of the ordinance be sent to him.

Chairman Szigeti noted that the pass thru formula is not in the city code. It is in the Electric Department Operational Procedure Manual. The first step to this re-calculation is to tie this cost adjustment to the cost of energy that we have and to re-calculate it on a regular basis, so that the customers get the advantage of the lower cost of energy. We also need to re-name it to reflect what it actually is.

Vice Chairman Dornbusch withdrew his motion.

Member Pacourek had concerns about how the cost is written in the code, and he would like something that shows how the utility bill is calculated.
Discussion: Impact Fees – Randy Ashbaugh

Member Ashbaugh noted that he called for a State Audit on the Impact fees. The State Auditors did come down and did an audit on the Impact Fees. He requested that a copy of that report be sent to him. To his knowledge the Impact Fees have not been utilized for anything. Mr. Ashbaugh explained the proper procedures of Impact Fees to the Board. He noted that Impact Fees are for ‘growth’ they are to help offset expenses acquiring water rights, extension of lines, engineering, and things like that. He feels that the ordinance the city passed for Impact Fees needs to be reviewed.

Arnie Castaneda, Water/Wastewater Supervisor gave a PowerPoint presentation in regards to the Impact Fees and what projects and improvements the city has done over the years.

Discussion/Action: Scheduling of Impact Fee Board Meeting – Juan Fuentes, City Manager

The Board agreed to schedule the Impact Fee Board Meeting at 5:00 p.m. before the Public Utility Meeting. The City will advertise that the Public Utility Board Meeting will immediately follow the Impact Fee Board Meeting.

COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD:

Chairman Szigeti requested that “Response to Public Comment” be added after “Comments from the Public.”

COMMENTS FROM STAFF:

Building Inspector Robbie Travis noted that he was a custom home builder for 35 years before became the Building Inspector, and they paid Impact Fees to Bernalillo County and several other places. Compared to those places, our Impact Fees are fairly low. It is expensive, but it is something that is needed for growth, and to keep building your systems up to handle more volume.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

APPROVAL:

PASSED AND APPROVED this 19th day of June, 2017, on a motion duly made by________________________, seconded by________________________, and carried.

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George Szigeti, Chairman
Public Utility Advisory Board