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 21, 2018 at 5:16 P.M.

INTRODUCTION:

PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Bo Easley, Electric Division Director
Arnie, Castaneda, Water/Wastewater Supervisor
Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director
Traci Burnette, Grant Project Coordinator
Sonya Williams, Utility Office Manager
Ruby Otero-Vallejos, Water/Wastewater Administrative Assistant
Priscilla Fuentes, Electric Division Administrative Assistant
Kristin Weddle, Sanitation Department Administrative Assistant
Chelsea LeClair, Utility Office Supervisor/Accounts Receivable
Brian Bean, Meter Reader Supervisor
Angela A. Torres, Deputy City Clerk

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chairman Szigeti called for approval of the agenda.

Chairman Szigeti asked that item 5.f be deleted from the agenda.

Member Pacourek – I requested that item 5.g be an action item.

Deputy Clerk Torres – I didn’t put it as an action item because it’s an issue that you should take up with Sonya the Utility Office rather than discussing it at a board meeting.

Member Pacourek – She told me that I’m supposed to bring it to this meeting and there are reasons that which I will get to at that time.
Vice Chairman Dornbusch moved approval of the agenda as amended.

Member Avelar seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Regular meeting of Monday, April 16, 2018:

Vice Chairman Dornbusch moved approval of the April 16, 2018 minutes as submitted.

Member Pacourek seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

There were no comments from the public.

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

There was no response to public comment.

Discussion/Update: Bixby Electric for Cielo Vista Subdivision – Bo Easley, Electric Division Director:

Electric Division Director Easley – About 2 weeks ago, they went out to bid on the Camino Del Cielo Primary Underground Replacement Project. The four bids they received were from Great Western Electrical, Bixby Electric, Inc., Lynco Electric Company Inc., and Bohannan Huston. This Wednesday they will go before the City Commission to award the bid to Bixby Electric who was the lowest bidder at $339,483.

Discussion/Update: Electric Department – Electric Division Director Bo Easley:

Electric Division Director Easley reported the following:

- Pole Replacements - They replaced a pole at the corner of Barton and Pershing, and they are also replacing two more poles and switches on the North West and North East side of Riverside and Ash Street.
- High School Fitness Center – Contractors are moving along on that project.
- Substation Battery Replacement – He received one quote for that project, and met with HEI (out of Albuquerque) last week.
- First Savings Bank – He has been working with the Engineers for the new First Savings Bank building.
- They reviewed the 30% drawings for the roundabouts on North Date Street, and it looks like they will have to move 7 or 8 poles.
Discussion/Update: Sanitation Department – Sanitation Director Andy Alvarez:

Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director reported the following:

- They have two vacancies within his department.
- Ryan Vallejos passed his CDL testing, so that gives him another driver for the trash trucks.
- He put back some funding to purchase a new trash truck for commercial business dumpsters. He will be replacing a 1995 Ford Trash Truck that seems to be in the shop once or twice a week.
- The Recycle Center is a high traffic area and has not been paved since 2013, so they applied for the 2018/2019 RAID Grant for paving of various areas at the Recycling Center. Unfortunately, they were not awarded that grant, so they applied for a second grant (through the RAID Grant) for a cove grinder to shred a lot of the vegetation debris, so they can keep that waste from being transferred to Las Cruces. If they do get the grinder, they want to work with the Wastewater Department so they can mix the material with the compost.

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

Arnie Castaneda, Water/Wastewater Supervisor reported the following:

- Belt Filter Press - The contractor came back to work on their belt filter press. There were some inadequacies with the original pump so they reinstalled a new pump. The belt filter press is working and its doing its job, but it still has some computer glitches. All they have to do now is call the contractor back to see if they can fix those glitches.
- Alarm Panel - Turner Electric is here working on the alarms that are sent over to Central Dispatch.
- Clancy lift station - They were at Clancy last week removing some of the big pumps.
- Manhole Project – The contractor is pretty much finished with the major work, they are putting concrete rings around some of them, and he saw them paving one of the last manholes on Vester Street. As far as construction goes, they should be out of here by the end of this week.
- Effluent Water - They are trying to get a Sulfur Generating Unit that will change the chemistry of the effluent water. A sulfur generator is the best option for the cost itself, which is around $14,000. They will be sending out a purchase order for that this week, so they can get that unit in here. A couple of months back they videotaped the wells, including the non-potable wells 2 & 3, and in order to rehab those two wells, it will cost anywhere from $25,000-$35,000 to get them cleaned, and to put in the new equipment so they can start pumping. The problem they have here in T or C is the quality of the water has a lot of sodium in it. Fight now, we can't change the quality of that water, and those two wells that we are going to rehab, will eventually get clogged up again and we will have pull them, clean them, and put it back which is a constant thing every 3-4 years. He suggested that they install the unit at the Treatment Plant because there is a lift station over there in which they get divert the effluent water that goes to the river, to the wet well, and from there they pump it to the pond. So by the time the water gets to the pond, it is already treated.
- Potable Wells #4 and Wells #8 - We are getting quotes to repair those wells, and hopefully we can get that before summer comes around.
Discussion/Input: 2020-2024 Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) – Water/Wastewater/Solid Waste/Electric Projects – Traci Burnett, Grants/Project Coordinator:

Traci Burnett, Grant Project Coordinator reviewed the following:

- ICIP Definition/Information.
- Review of Infrastructure.
- Fiscal Year 2019-2023 ICIP Recap.
- Developing the Local Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan:
  a. ID projects (New 7 Current Inventory).
  c. Adopt ICIP by Resolution.
- Available Funding Sources.
- Funded ICIP Projects.
- Water and Wastewater Projects.
- Electric Projects.
- Solid Waste Projects.
- Review of ICIP FY 19-23 Project Summary.

Discussion: Wastewater (sewer) Utility Bill Calculation – Member Pacourek:

Member Pacourek – He has five of his previous utility bills with him today, and on bill #5, his sewer average was calculated at 6,000 gallons. We all know that you calculate the sewer rate from December, January, February, and March, and you take out the highest one, take the other three, average it, and that calculates your sewer rate for the next 12 months. Well... this calculated out to 6,000 gallons, and it is wrong. So one of his concerns is, if it was wrong on his bill, then is it wrong on other’s bills as well? He is wondering if there are any cursory checks once and a while, to see if the billing is correct on other people’s bills. The pink portion on his handout shows the service dates from and to, and on #5 it shows the service dates as February 22nd – March 24th, but the actual date they read the meter was on April 4th. How do they determine December, January, February and March off of these 5 bills?

Chairman Szigeti – He thinks the question is based upon the dates that the meters are read. How do you determine whether a particular reading falls in a particular month? He believes that would make a difference on the first or the last of the winter readings.

Utility Office Manager Williams – In your handouts, I showed where we basically put the calculation in Tyler and it does it. As far as some of the bills being calculated wrong, whenever that happens, that person comes in and we fix them. I cannot say that we are never going to make mistakes, we just do the best we can.

Ron, I was looking at your bills today, and called Tyler to talk to them about it (because she was a little unsure herself) and the way they explained it was that December, January, February and March was used to calculate your average.

Member Pacourek – The 12,000 reading on the service from and to, was 10/25 – 11/24, but the reading was on 12/7 which was 14 days from the end of the service date.
Utility Office Manager Williams – That was your December reading, and that’s why it was calculated in December.

Member Pacourek – It doesn’t make sense to me that we have a service from and to date on this piece of paper (on page 1), and then 14 days later they read the meter, and are billing me at that time. So which is it? Is this calculating the sewer rate from the current date, or from the service from and to dates? So back to... if I caught this on mine, then there has to be errors on other people’s bills.

Utility Office Manager Williams – I’m sure there were other errors, but like I said, whenever they have an issue, they come into the office and we fix it. Unfortunately, all those people aren’t on the Utility Board, so they can’t bring it in front of us whenever we have these meetings.

Member Pacourek – How does Tyler determine that 12/7 which is 14 days past the service date, become December?

Utility Office Manager Williams – Because the reading was for 12/7, and it went from November to December, and that’s the way it was calculated, and that’s the way it’s always been calculated.

Member Pacourek - I do not want to hear that.

Chairman Szigeti – They determine what month that reading represents, based upon the month that the meter was read. So in that case, if the meter was read on the 7th of December, you’re actually using most of November’s usage for that calculation. It does not represent the same calendar expanse of time for everybody because they are read on different days. It all depends on what cycle you are on.

Utility Office Manager Williams – If we get the automated meter reading system that would simplify everything.

Member Pacourek – I still do not understand, on page one it shows that the service is 10/25 – 11/24, but yet, you use this billing to calculate my sewer rate, because they read the meter 14 days after the service due date.

Utility Office Manager Williams – My recommendation would be for you to come into the office and we can talk about this, because honestly to come to this meeting and talk about your personal bill is very unprofessional.

Member Pacourek – Let’s get back to the initial item then. The item was... if my bill was wrong, then others peoples are wrong. Where’s the checks and balances?

Utility Office Manager Williams – We do check them. Has anyone come to you and said that their bill is wrong? Is that why you are speaking up, or are you talking about your personal bill?

Member Pacourek – I feel I represent our community. Can you ask Tyler why this was calculated wrong?

Utility Office Manager Williams – Yes, we can do that, and you can come into the office and do that.

Member Pacourek - The last time I went in to talk to you only wanted to talk about water.
Utility Office Manager Williams – That’s because sewer is not metered, your water is metered, and that’s what we go off of, it’s based off of your water usage.

Member Pacoure – My point is, if it happened to me then it happened to someone else, and this should be an action item.

Chairman Szigeti – No... we will record the point that there was an error on your bill, and if an error happened on your bill, it could happen with others.
I sat down with Sonya one time and she was going through the billing (on a particular cycle) and they do multiple checks on each of the utilities. There are multiple processes there, to make sure that they are correct. They can’t catch everything, and when that error happens, it’s up to the customer to contact the Utility Office.

Member Pacoure – So there’s your checks and balances... it’s the customer’s responsibility to make sure they’re doing their job.

Chairman Szigeti – The customer is always responsible for their bill. For example, if you go into a store and purchase an item and they ring it up wrong, it’s your responsibility to catch that. I’m sorry, but yes, it’s their job to do the best they can in assuring the accuracy of the bill, but they’re not infallible. If you believe you’re having issues with your electric bill then you need to learn to go out and read your meter, and verify that your meter is reading like it is reported on your bill. I don’t see how we can guarantee that every bill is going to be perfectly correct every time. He has never heard of anyone in the office giving somebody a hard time because there was an error on their bill. However, there are times when somebody just doesn’t understand the bill, and they have to explain it to them, but I don’t see why we need to take an “action” on this.

COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD:

There were no additional comments from staff.

COMMENTS FROM STAFF:

Deputy Clerk Torres – We have four terms that will expire here in June, Chairman Szigeti, Vice Chairman Dornbusch, Member Pacoure, and Member Avelar. If you want to re-apply, I have applications available. I do however want to mention that I have to advertise the vacancies in the newspaper, so if you see that, please don’t freak out, it’s just a protocol we have to take.

Utility Office Manager Williams – I just wanted to let you guys know that the Utility Office is re-vamping, so we hired a Meter Reader Supervisor (Brian Bean) who will be in charge of the meter readers for both water and electric and we also now have an Accounts Receivable/Utility Supervisor (Chelsea LeClair) and all payments will now go through her in the Utility Office.

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 18th day of June, 2018 on a Motion, duly made by Jeff Dornbusch, seconded by Gail Havelar, and carried.

[Signature]

George Szligeti, Chairman
Public Utility Advisory Board