CITY OF TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES  
PUBLIC UTILITY ADVISORY BOARD  
MINUTES  
MONDAY, JULY 16, 2018  

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 5:02 p.m. on Monday, July 16, 2018.

INTRODUCTION:

ROLL CALL:

George Szigeti, Chairman  
Jeff Dornbusch, Vice-Chairman  
Kon Pacourek, Member  
Ed Williams, Member

ABSENT:  
Randy Ashbaugh, Member

ALSO PRESENT:

Juan Fuentes, City Manager  
Mayor Pro-Tem Whitehead  
Bo Easley, Electric Division Director  
Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director  
Traci Burnette, Grant/Projects Coordinator  
Priscilla Fuentes, Electric Division Administrative Assistant  
Ruby Otero-Vallejos, Water/Wastewater Administrative Assistant  
Kristen Weddle, Sanitation Department Administrative Assistant  
Jesus Navarro, Waste Water Treatment Plant  
Angela A. Torres, Deputy City Clerk

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chairman Szigeti called for approval of the agenda.

Member Williams moved to approve the agenda. Member Pacourek seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Vice-Chairman Dornbusch moved to approve the minutes. Member Williams seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously. 

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

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There were no comments from the public.

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

There was no response to public comment.

Discussion/Action: Re-Organization of Board Members:

Member Pacourek nominated Member Ed Williams to serve as Chairman for the Public Utility Advisory Board.

Member Williams stated that he does not want to be thrown into that right off the bat.

Member Williams made a motion to keep George Szigeti as Chairman, and Jeff Dornbusch as Vice-Chairman. Vice Chairman Dornbusch seconded the motion.

George Szigeti, Chairman voted aye.
Jeff Dornbusch, Vice-Chairman voted aye.
Ron Pacourek, Member voted nay.
Ed Williams, Member voted aye.

Motion carried with a 3 to 1 vote.

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

Electric Division Director Bo Easley reported the following:

- The High School Fitness Center is coming along very well. The electrical portion is complete and they are now working on the building.
- The Cielo Vista Subdivision is coming along very well and they have a progress meeting on August 2nd. Right now they are ordering the materials, and the project will start September 6, 2018.
- They are ready to move forward with the Sub Station Battery Replacement Project. They are just waiting for the budget to be approved at tomorrow’s Commission meeting.
- They have been doing some work on the Mud Mountain Antenna. The antenna is in very bad shape and needs to be replaced. He received a $72,000 estimate from Advanced Tower Services to replace the antenna tower.
- They have one position opening and they will be soon advertising for that position.
- He met with Luchini Electric to go over the new first savings bank building.

Member Pacourek- Asked why they haven’t talked about an increase in fees for services that the city provides.
Bo Easley responded that they need to work on that.

Chairman Szigeti suggested that it would be well worth it for the city to place job advertisements in out of town papers.

City Manager Fuentes responded that we are looking at working with a staffing agency for some quick help in different departments. When we met with some of the staffing agencies, they told us that they rarely publish in papers. They mainly use social media and new technology to get the word out.

Member Williams gave kudos to the Electric Department and other city departments.

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

Andy Alvarez, Sanitation Director reported the following:
- They have 3 vacancies within their department. They will have interviews on Wednesday, and 8 out of 13 applicants will be reviewed.
- They got the truck back that was sent out for repairs.
- They budgeted for a new side loader dump truck and they should be getting that in November or early December.
- They’ve had a lot of illegal dumping in the alley by Bullocks. He has been going through there quite often to pick up the items left in the alley, but he doesn’t want to make a habit of that because if people see him picking it up they will continue to dump their “trash” in the alley. He wants to talk to all of the business owners through that alley and let them know that it is their responsibility to try and catch the illegal dumpers.

Discussion/Update: Water/Wastewater Department - Jesus Navarro, Water/Waste Water Department:

Jesus Navarro, Water/Waste Water Department, reported the following:
- Well #7 is now back up. They tested some samples and the samples came out positive for TC. They flushed it today, so hopefully they will have it back online by next week.
- They have to figure out a solution with the restaurants because there is too much grease coming in and it’s clogging up our lines. Hopefully when they put the other system in, they will have a better understanding of what is going on with the restaurants. Restaurants are required to have grease traps, but right now it is kind of hard to determine where the grease is coming from.
- The Morgan Pump Station is at 100%.
- Cook Street has both pumps, but they need to replace the Cla-Val.
- They are moving along on the water leaks throughout town.

Vice Chairman Dornbusch asked City Manager Fuentes where we are at with moving towards dividing the two departments, because he would think it would be a lot easier to find personnel with one certification rather than two certifications.
City Manager Fuentes responded that they are hoping to move the Water Department next to the Waste Water Building and consolidate both Water and Wastewater Departments. We'll still have two departments, but they are going to be under one umbrella which is under the Water/Wastewater.

Vice Chairman Dornbusch asked if that will require all of the operators to be double certified.

City Manager Fuentes replied no. The Water and Wastewater certifications will still be separate. It would be ideal to have dual certifications, and that's an incentive for staff so they can assist the other department if needed, but we would not require the employees to get both certifications. It really depends on the job description. Obviously in a director position, we are looking for a 4/4 but the requirement may be a 4/3. Some positions may require that, but not necessarily in a labor position. The relocation of the Water Department is really going to help to bring a closer working relationship among staff. We are still going to have two separate departments, but the two enterprise funds will be overseen by one director.

Chairman Szigeti noted, when well #7 was down, we were reaching a scary water level in the tanks. He knows there was a public service announcement made about conserving water, but he hasn't talked to very many people who have actually noticed it. When the water in those tanks gets down below a certain amount, we need to declare a water emergency and get the word out immediately to the affected people so they can conserve their usage, because he knows that there are people out there watering their grass, washing cars when the water level in the tanks was getting pretty critical. He feels that we need to somehow decide, when we get to a certain point we should call an emergency, and not wait until we're sucking it dry at the bottom of the tank.

Traci Burnett responded when she put the notice out, not only did she notify all of the Commissioners, the Public Utility Board and city staff, she also notified both of the papers, and she knows that one of our local papers posted it on their Facebook page. We used social media, as well as the city website, and at that point it was a precautionary measure. It was kind of a first step while we were dealing with well #7 at that time and then Jesus was monitoring things. Our ordinance gives our City Manager the permission to at any point inact any type of emergency measures at that time. She saw a lot of the comments on Facebook so she thinks a good portion of the public saw it.

Vice Chairman Dornbusch had a few comments regarding the increased water rates and the water leaks throughout town. It looks kind of bad when we want to increase water rates but people are complaining day after day about a water leak on their street. They're wanting to do the right thing by calling it in, but if the city doesn't show it cares, why would anybody else show that they care. He thinks if we are going to be raising the water rates we should start a program where the moment a leak is called in, we get on it right away.

City Manager Fuentes responded, within these last couple of months we have had unique circumstances with staffing and some of the lines being asbestos lines. Obviously some of our staff members are concerned with even touching those lines, so we had to contract some of the lines out. Right now we are looking into different ways of how we can do things.
Traci Burnette, Grants/Project Coordinator reported the following:

- Phase 1 of the Wastewater Treatment Plant – All of the contracted work has been completed. They are doing some minor warranty work out there and finalizing a few things. Our contractor has been paid in full, but we did reduce their payment by $9,800 for a time delay, because of their subcontractor, and we did put into service our liquidated damages at that time. Our engineer currently has one outstanding invoice for Phase 1 but its being reviewed by USDA at this time. We did receive in writing a request from our engineer letting us know that there were no outstanding invoices for them or the contractor, so some of our remaining grant funds that we had at USDA were de-obligated at that time because we didn’t use all of them. After those funds were de-obligated, our engineer came back and said “oh wait, I have an invoice for you.” They know that there is no guarantee of payment on that invoice which is $22,000 but USDA is reviewing the invoice to see if they can re-obligate any of those funds to cover the invoice.

- Phase 2a – We are doing some final testing and training this week. A Substantial completion walk through with our contractor will happen on Thursday. They estimate final completion around mid August. The initial funding shortage for the project was $300,000 and it has been reduced to around $22,000 to $38,000.

- Phase 2b – We received all of our final concurrence with NMDOT, New Mexico Environmental, and NMED and that was all sent to USDA with the final design and bid documents. We are just now waiting on some final concurrence with USDA. We should hear back from them within the next two weeks, if not sooner. Once they approve those documents, we will go out to bid for starting construction of Phase 2b. We are estimating construction to start about mid September.

COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD:

Member Pacourek asked where we are at with the electric pass thru or energy cost adjustment because it hasn’t been on the agenda for a while. He is curious on how we put the energy cost adjustment on the bills, but the ordinance has not been changed yet.

Chairman Szigeti explained that we have changed the name to match the ordinance. That’s why the name was changed.

Member Pacourek asked about the energy cost adjustment.

Chairman Szigeti stated that will be addressed when he gets back with this. He has not worked on it as diligently as he should, but he does want to bring it back to the board possibly next month. If he can’t get it back on the August agenda it will be on the September agenda.

Member Williams asked what they are looking at with the energy cost adjustment.

Chairman Szigeti explained the energy cost adjustment to Member Williams.

COMMENTS FROM STAFF:

There were no additional comments from staff.
ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Public Utility Advisory Board, George Szigeti, Chairman, declared the meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 20th day of August, 2018.

George Szigeti, Chairman
Public Utility Advisory Board