

**CITY OF BELLEVUE
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday
May 5, 2016
6:30 p.m.

Conference Room 1E-113
Bellevue City Hall
Bellevue, Washington

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Swenson, Vice Chair Wang, Commissioners, Howe, Mach, Strom and Commissioner Morin (arr. at 6:35 p.m.),

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Shin, Wang

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Vandana Slatter; Nav Ota, Utilities Director; Martin Chaw, Fiscal Manager – Resource Management & Customer Service; Lucy Liu, Assistant Director – Resource Management & Customer Service; Paul Bucich, Engineering Director; Pam Maloney, P.E., Water Resources Planning Manager – Engineering Division; Joe Harbor, Operations and Maintenance Director

MINUTES TAKER: Laurie Hugdahl

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Swenson at 6:30 p.m.

2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

David Plummer, 14414 NE 14th Place, Bellevue, urged the Commission to recommend the AMI 2017-18 CIP and Operating Budget Proposals be deleted from the Utility Department's Proposed Budget. He stated there is no specified performance, design, reliability, or quality assurance requirements for an AMI system. There are no life cycle cost estimates or cost effectiveness information that could be used to choose a preferred system configuration. He believes the asserted rate payer benefits are essentially trivial. There is no compelling need to rush into the deployment of an undefined system. He asserted the Utilities staff has made no effort to inform the citizens of what is going on with the AMI system nor has there been an explanation of how it will be paid for. He stated he has spent quite a bit of time reviewing the CH2M report and believes it is of little value. He distributed copies of his detailed concerns for the Commission.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made by Commissioner Mach, seconded by Commissioner Strom, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).¹

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

April 7, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Howe, seconded by Commissioner Strom, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

5. REPORTS AND SUMMARIES

- ESC Calendar/Council Calendar

Asst. Director Liu reviewed these items. There were no comments or questions.

- Conservation & Outreach Events & Volunteer Opportunities

Asst. Director Liu reviewed these items. There were no comments or questions.

6. NEW BUSINESS

- Utilities 2017-18 Operating & Capital Budget Proposals

Presenters: Nav Otal, Utilities Director; Lucy Liu, Asst. Director – Resource Mgmt. & Customer Service; Martin Chaw, Fiscal Manager – Resource Mgmt. & Customer Service

Other staff members present: Paul Bucich, Engineering Director; Joe Harbor, Operations and Maintenance Director; Pam Maloney, Water Resources Planning Manager

Director Otal commented that the budget is one of the most important policy documents of an organization because it signals the priorities of the organization. The Utilities Leadership Team takes that responsibility very seriously. She stated that staff has worked hard to develop a thoughtful and fiscally responsible budget. She stated the Capital Program proposals would be presented tonight. In addition, the Commission would be looking at financial obligations. At the May 19 meeting, the Environmental Services Commission (ESC) will review the departments' operating proposals. She highlighted the ESC's role in the budget process as an advisory body and to

¹ Commissioner Morin arrived

provide recommendations to the Results Teams/Leadership Team and Council. Council will take action on the budget on December 5. She discussed the guiding principles for the budget policies. Key policies include steady rates which are sufficient to meet operational and capital needs both now and in the future, wholesale costs are passed through to customers, and adequate reserves for long term sustainability. Budget challenges include: wholesale costs, capital intensive utility, aging systems, capacity to accommodate growth, regulatory environment.

Asst. Director Liu reviewed the ESC's budget notebook and the budget process to date. She explained that the budget was developed with three key objectives: providing services at levels that customer's value; preserving and protecting utility infrastructure; and exercising fiscal stewardship. Key themes of the 2017-18 Budget include a balanced budget; no new FTEs for operations and the base CIP; there are some increases to capital investments to ensure long-term sustainability; system resiliency projects to ensure continued service delivery, and planning studies for future system planning. The Utility 2017-2023 CIP consists of \$221.2M. About 75% of Utilities' proposed investment relates to aging infrastructure for water, sewer, and storm. The remainder is for capacity for growth, environmental preservation, and AMI. By utility, Water has the largest investment of about 60%. The remainder is split about equally between Water and Sewer.

Martin Chaw then walked through the individual projects within Water, Sewer and Storm CIP Proposals.

The aging infrastructure program totaled \$158.8M and includes:

Water (\$103.9M): These proposals include small diameter water main replacement; water pump rehab/replacement; reservoir rehab/replacement; large commercial water meter replacement; pressure reducing valve rehab; water service line and saddle replacement; minor water projects; and miscellaneous projects.

Sewer (\$39.1M): These proposals include pipeline major repairs and replacement; pump station improvements; Meydenbauer Bay Park sewer line replacement; minor sewer projects; I&I investigations and flow monitoring; and miscellaneous smaller projects.

Storm (\$15.8M): These proposals include storm system conveyance repairs and replacement; NE 8th Street Culvert at Kelsey Creek; minor storm projects; and video inspection enhancement.

Director Otal explained that this slide summarizing the Replacement of Aging Infrastructure (\$158.8M) clearly shows where the City is in the life of replacement of its infrastructures. Water is in the middle of replacement, but

that is not the case with Sewer and Storm yet. Sewer is just beginning replacement, and the main focus is on repairs. Similarly, in Storm, the main focus is on repairs.

Mr. Chaw reviewed the proposals under Environmental Preservation (\$27.8M), which is driven primarily by regulatory requirements. He pointed out that Stormwater is most heavily affected by these requirements. Commissioner Morin asked why adding on-site power at the sewer pump station under #140.08NA was part of Environmental Preservation. Mr. Bucich explained that this is for installation of an onsite generator. The reason it's under Environmental Preservation is because if there is no backup power, wastewater will discharge into streams and lakes.

Commissioner Mach referred to the Mobility and Infrastructure Initiative and asked for confirmation that the only difference between that and the Fish Passage Improvements and Stream Channel Modification Program items is location. Director Otal confirmed and explained that Council made a commitment to stream restoration in the Bel-Red area as part of the Bel-Red Development Plan. Commissioner Mach suggested noting the specific area in the title for clarification.

Mr. Chaw then reviewed growth-related projects (\$9.9M) including a project for increasing drinking water storage availability for the West Operating Area (\$2.7M) and a new water inlet station (\$5.2M). Water facilities for the Northeast Spring Blvd. Multi-Modal Corridor (\$2.0M) will be constructed in coordination with the Transportation Department.

Director Otal reviewed the AMI investment proposal. She reviewed the background on the project. She noted that the biggest challenge with the current system is that customers receive a bi-monthly Utility bill, thus there are only six data points for the customer each year. If there is a leak, it could be two months before the meter is read again and almost another month before the customer gets the bill. This results in the potential for water loss. In the last five years there have been 1,000 leaks that the City has made adjustments for. Adjustments are only done for very specific reasons such as service line leaks. For the 1,000 adjustments made over the past five years, the adjustments ranged anywhere from \$20 to \$68,000. The average was \$700. Last year the City made 200 leak adjustments that cost the Utility \$165,000. In addition there were almost 30 leaks that were not eligible for adjustments and ranged from \$120 to \$6000.

Director Otal discussed specific examples of leak situations and discussed the enormous amount of staff time and customer cost involved. She stated that these situations would not have happened if there was timely data from AMI. Additionally, the huge water loss would not have occurred. With real-time consumption data, customers are able to self-monitor and adjust their

consumption. Additionally, the City's meters are getting old and slowing down so accuracy in measuring consumption degrades overtime. This means customers aren't paying the full cost of their water usage and those who have newer, more accurate meters are essentially subsidizing the cost for those who have older meters.

Environmental benefits of AMI include the promotion of water conservation, the ability to detect backflow to prevent water contamination, improve system planning, and reduce greenhouse gases. Economic benefits of implementation of AMI are: the new meters would have a higher accuracy and wouldn't slow down; it would postpone development of a new water supply; it would reduce meter reading labor and vehicle use; it would reduce meter repairs; and the City would receive the salvage value from old meters.

Councilmember Slatter asked staff to show how savings could offset the cost of AMI investment. This would be helpful for the Council in making its decision. Director Otal concurred and discussed data that the City currently has. She noted that the costs shown do not take into account any of the savings the City will realize.

Commissioner Morin expressed concern about setting the City up for a huge expense in 20 years. Director Otal replied in order to experience the true benefits of the system you have to put it in all at once. She noted there currently is no replacement plan for meters. If there were, the cost would be zero.

Councilmember Slatter asked if there would be an R&R for meters if AMI was implemented. Director Otal indicated it would be considered. Councilmember Slatter stressed the importance of AMI for the public's benefit. Director Otal replied that staff will bring back information about the debt service, the offsetting costs or additional revenues, and the delta.

Commissioner Morin suggested also including some analyses of other water meters besides just the one that is being considered. Director Otal noted that would not be part of the budget process, but would be part of the RFP process. Director Otal commented that of the total project cost of \$24.5 million, about \$15 million is for just the meters and the meter boxes. She stressed that meters would need to be replaced anyway over time. The additional costs would be for the technology to achieve the reduction in water loss, postponement of new water supply, etc. Commissioner Morin asked how much water is being wasted by leaky pipes. Director Otal commented that Ken Howe from Woodinville Water District said Woodinville discovered its leakage rate was 25-30% when their system was replaced with AMI. She noted that most leaks go undetected because of their small size. She reiterated that the potential savings have not been included in any of the cost estimates.

Commissioner Morin asked if the City reserves funds for the development of Lake Tapps. Director Otal commented that with Lake Tapps the driver needs to be the water need. However, the City has financial policies that direct what is done. The rates are based on an average year. There are policies that state that excess revenue goes into R&R. This is the City's long-term funding plan. Commissioner Morin asked if money is ever taken out of R&R to reduce rates. Director Otal replied that it has been done in order to levelize rates, but not to buy down rates.

Commissioner Mach suggested showing the cost of replacing the existing meters as compared to AMI which might help show the true cost. He commented that the City would also lose revenue if there were fewer leaks. Director Otal replied that this has been considered as part of the study in addition to revenue impacts from greater water conservation. Chair Swenson reviewed his experiences with water leaks and the associated costs to make plumbing repairs in addition to the cost of the water. In his opinion the \$1.80 a month would have been well worth it. Commissioner Morin commented that the situation would have been the same with AMI except for the water costs.

Commissioner Strom asked if staff is seeing an increase in leaks due to aging plumbing in homes. Director Otal noted the City only has data for the past five or six years, but it does appear that costs are going up.

Councilmember Slatter asked if the AMI meters would be more sensitive than the current meters. Director Otal replied that the meters staff is considering are more sensitive and would measure very low flow.

Commissioner Howe commented that she sees this as a wonderful mechanism for protecting our water resources. Commissioner Mach agreed. He stated this is the only benefit he can really see.

Director Otal stressed that this is not really a discretionary expense. The ability to do additional things will be extremely valuable.

Mr. Chaw continued his presentation by discussing the CIP-related Operating Proposals (\$82.3M). He noted that 80% of the cost represents transfers to CIP and R&R program to address aging infrastructure, fund growth projects, and fund environmental preservation projects. The Capital Project Delivery program represents the engineering and design team consisting of about 27 FTE's who work very closely with contractors to execute delivery of the CIP program. The AMI segment totals \$1.2M and represents the net debt service cost for implementing AMI and 3.5 FTE's (excluding the existing spending for meter replacement, which will be redirected to servicing this debt). Finally, Mr. Chaw discussed Financial Obligations in the amount of \$154.6M to cover expenditures governed by legal and contractual obligations such as purchased water, Cascade Regional Capital Facility Charges (RCFC), Metro

Wastewater Treatment costs, Taxes and Franchise Fees, and Interfund Payments. There are no new requests in this group.

Mr. Chaw stated that staff would be coming back to the ESC on May 19th with details on the remainder of the department's operating budget. He referred the ESC to the summary in the binder for each of the remaining operating proposals. Assistant Director Liu added that staff would also provide a copy of the AMI Feasibility Study to the ESC within the next week or so.

7. COMMISSION REPORT

None

8. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE REPORT

Director Otal commented that on May 23 staff will be taking a number of water-related issues to the Council. She referred to other areas that have been in the news lately with water quality issues. She noted that Bellevue is in the midst of active replacement and is learning a lot as pipes are replaced. The initial assessment is that there are not any lead contamination issues. This is partly due to the fact that Bellevue's system is not as old as some of the communities that have had problems.

Director Otal explained that another issue staff will be discussing with Council will be regional water supply resiliency. She and other Bellevue Utilities staff members participated in a project the Water Forum commissioned on the resiliency of the water supply in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. Areas the project looked at included earthquake, water quality, climate change, and drought. A lot was learned in the project, especially on the earthquake side, which will inform some of the proposals on the City's budget. She explained that depending on the severity of the earthquake, the region could be without water for as long as 60 days. She noted that one of the things in the proposed budget would be to evaluate the feasibility of developing water rights. Another item is a seismic vulnerability assessment of reservoirs and pipes.

In addition staff will be briefing the Council on Bellevue's water rates. As a result of an erroneous news report, this has become a topic of conversation recently. Staff will brief Council on what the rates pay for and how Bellevue compares with other cities.

Finally, staff will be discussing the water rate structure with Council. Councilmember Robertson has asked staff to look at the rate structure to determine if it is unfair to large families. Staff will brief the Council on work that has already been done.

9. COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS

Councilmember Slatter stated this is her first budget review process and solicited ways she can help facilitate the recommendations to Council. She referred to the CH2M study Mr. Plummer referred to in his comments and asked staff to take a look at his suggestions to see if there is anything that can be added to the way the study is done. She also stated she sits on the Cascade Water Alliance and has slides on the RCFC's if anyone is interested.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Commissioner Mach, seconded by Commissioner Morin, to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 p.m. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 p.m.