

## Citizen's Water Conservation Implementation Task Force

### Regular Meeting

#### Minutes

Monday, January 14, 2008  
625 E 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 104

Jennifer Walker called the meeting to order at 5:42 pm. Members in attendance: Susan Butler, Margot Clarke, Norman Johns, Nora Mullarkey, Rusty Osborne, Gene Reagan, Susan Roth, and Jennifer Walker.

- I. Greg Meszaros, the new Austin Water Utility Director, introduced himself to the members of the Task Force.
- II. Approval of minutes from the December 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.
  - a. Margot Clarke made a motion to approve the December 10th minutes. Susan Roth seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.
- III. Citizen Communication
  - a. Jody McDaniel with Greater Texas Landscapes and BOMA asked City of Austin conservation staff how much water has been saved since the new water use restrictions were put in place and how many citations have been issued since the new restrictions took effect.
  - b. Water Conservation Acting Manager Dan Strub reported that 3 official warnings have been issued since the restrictions took effect October 1<sup>st</sup> of 2007. There have been 209 violations reported to the Water Conservation Department since October 1<sup>st</sup> through email, phone calls, and staff reporting. Conservation staff has followed up with 123 complaints through verbal notification to the property owners/managers, 7 complaints have been followed up with written notifications, and 23 complaints were found to not be in violation of the ordinance. No citations have been issued since October 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - c. As far as water savings are concerned, Dan Strub explained the difficulty in calculating that number due to the number of variables and the short amount of time the water restrictions have been in place. Dan reported that there has been a small spike (roughly 10%) in the water use on Tuesdays and Fridays, the commercial watering days, since the new restrictions took effect.
- IV. Ethics briefing from the City of Austin Integrity Officer John Steiner
  - a. John Steiner reported that since the Citizen's Water Conservation Implementation Task Force was created as a temporary board that will expire in 2010, it is not subject to all the new board and commission rules recently

approved by City Council. The purpose behind these new board and commission rules was to standardize many of the procedures and practices across the board.

- b. John Steiner stated that the task force is still subject to the general conflict of interest ordinance. Although the Task Force is not responsible for making final decisions concerning water conservation policy, as a public servant, a member will need to recuse him or herself from deliberations if a vote or decision could reasonably have a direct effect on a member's "substantial" (meaning economic or kinship) interest, good or bad. The meeting recorder also needs to make a note of the recusal in the minutes and meeting record—and the member should take no part in the discussion or possible decision making. Since the group is a task force rather than a stakeholder group, the desire is to have objectivity and therefore the conflict of interest ordinance applies.
- c. The Task Force should adopt bylaws and have the flexibility to decide which of the various boards and commissions requirements should apply.
  - i. Norman and Jennifer volunteered to work on the bylaws and have something ready by the following meeting.

V. Update on water conservation elements of Austin Green Building Program, Katie Jensen of Austin Energy

- a. Katie Jensen, the Multi-family coordinator with the Austin Energy Green Building Program reported on Austin Energy's efforts to encourage water conservation within Austin. She stated that Austin Energy Green Building works mainly with building professionals throughout Austin to design and develop efficient homes. It is primarily a voluntary program unless required by zoning or a smart housing initiative or development agreement.
- b. When asked if the rating system would ever deduct points for having things like an irrigation system, Katie stated that the rating process for green building is done through encouragement rather than discouragement—giving points for incorporating water conservation features, rather than deductions for projects lacking in conservation. The five star green building rating is achieved through a mix of voluntary measures and basic requirements. The single family program is rolling out their new ratings shortly and the department is also in the process of developing an ac condensate and rainwater harvesting calculator to use in the updated rating systems.
- c. The Green Building Program has rated over 6,000 homes and 6,500 Multi-family units, plus there is a lot of resource conservation that happens outside of the City's process which focuses primarily on new construction and renovation. Growth this past year for the program was over 950%.

VI. Update on recent City Council items (media contract, free toilet contract)

- a. The free toilet contract was approved by City Council on December 6, 2007 for high efficiency (using 1.28 gallons per flush) toilets. The conservation department plans to do a "soft" opening for the first few weeks to work out any initial contractual problems before opening it up to the public at large.

- b. The media contract with TKO Advertising, Inc. was approved by City Council on January 10, 2008. The contractors will be working to get the radio, print, and television advertisements ready for the beginning of May when the watering restrictions will take effect for all customers.
- VII. Update on community response to the new Water Use Management Ordinance
- a. According to Acting Manager, Dan Strub, the community response to the new water use management ordinance has been positive overall. Customers and property managers have been diligent about submitting their landscape variances, with the most common variance application for new residential landscape installations at this time.
  - b. Although the water savings have not been tracked at this time, conservation staff will begin to monitor the water use patterns, expecting to see a marked decrease in water use on Mondays this summer when the watering ordinance will take effect for all customers. Beginning May 1<sup>st</sup>, no customer will be allowed to water on Mondays unless using a hand-held hose or a variance has been filed with the City of Austin.
  - c. 2 full time positions have been reclassified as enforcement and will be posted on the City of Austin's employment website in the next few weeks.
- VIII. Other updates
- a. On Wednesday (January 16<sup>th</sup>), the TCEQ will be considering for publication the proposed new state irrigation rules. If they vote to publish them, the comment period will start on the first of February and will continue for 30 days.
  - b. Susan Butler volunteered to contact the restaurant association to see if they would be interested in having a representative on the task force.
- IX. Set time and date of next meeting
- a. February 19, 2007 at 5:30 in the Waller Creek Center, Room 104 (meeting was later changed to February 25 due to scheduling conflicts).

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 pm.