

Citizens Water Conservation Implementation Task Force

Special Meeting

Minutes (Amended Version, item II. a.)

Monday, August 25, 2008

625 E 10th Street, Room 105

Jennifer Walker called the meeting to order at 5:40 pm. Members in attendance: Margot Clarke, Norman Johns, Jody McDaniel, Rusty Osborne, Susan Roth, Susan Butler, Gene Reagan and Jennifer Walker.

- I. Recommend to Council authorization of an increase in the maximum per project rebate amount for the water conservation institutional, commercial and industrial (ICI) rebate program.
 - a. Daryl Slusher, Assistant Director of Austin Water Utility, introduced the item. He made the following comments:
 - i. This will be the first year to combine the energy and water conservation rebates for ICI customers.
 - ii. AWU is increasing the cap to make the rebate more attractive.
 - iii. The proposed increase is from \$40,000 cap per project to \$100,000 cap per project.
 - iv. The cap is in place to prevent from exhausting the program funds in one year and allowing several customers to participate.
 - b. Norman Johns asked how AWU calculates the payoff for projects. Dan Strub, Conservation Program Coordinator, explained that AWU staff meter the customer before and after the project to take measurements for the savings.
 - c. Rusty Osborne asked if the rebate is structured to focus on retrofits or remodels. Dan replied that the rebate program looks at all applications on a case by case basis.
 - d. Susan Butler asked about the difference between a peak gallon and an average gallon. Dan explained that a peak gallon is worth more than a baseline gallon because peak demand drives capacity at treatment plants.
 - e. Jody McDaniel asked for a list of ICI approved rebates from the last several years. Dan will send the list to the group.
 - f. Norman Johns questioned whether we should be offering rebates or raising rates to incentivize industrial customers to change to water saving equipment and practices.
 - g. Margot Clarke made a motion to recommend the rebate increase. Susan Roth and Susan Butler seconded the motion. Norman Johns requested a friendly amendment to increase the rates for ICI customers. Jody McDaniel proposed

addressing that as a separate issue and agenda item for a future meeting. Norman withdrew his amendment.

- h. Jennifer Walker asked for public comment. Bill Bunch spoke in favor of examining the rate structure and encouraging more water conservation.
- i. The motion passed unanimously for the recommendation to Council to increase the rebate cap.
- j. The Task Force members requested a briefing on the current rate structure and the Cost of Service study before December.

II. Discuss Top Ten Water Users Press Articles

- a. Norman Johns made the observation that if the top ten users identified by the Austin American-Statesman reduced their water use down to 50,000 gallons per month then the savings from just those ten would be equal to one million gallons, which is equivalent to 1,200 average users (8,000 gallons per month) saving 10%. Helping to reduce water use 10% is the goal and purpose of this task force.
- b. Gene Reagan questioned the integrity of releasing utility account information to the press to draw attention to water use. Daryl Slusher clarified that the Statesman made an open records request for the information and Austin Water Utility and Austin Energy complied with Texas state law on the type of information released. Gene further noted that it is not illegal to choose any type of landscaping on any size property and to water it according to the ET rate.
- c. Rusty Osborne and Margot Clarke commented that some landscapes, particularly native plant scapes, require less water and thus have less of an impact on water use and the environment. Rusty said that even though people have the right to choose large properties and non-native landscapes, they are then also choosing to drive peak demand for irrigation and drive the need for treatment plants. All customers share the cost for treatment and facilities.
- d. Gene Reagan made a motion that AWU conservation staff members evaluate indoor and outdoor water use and irrigation according to the ET rate when performing irrigation audits. Sonja Stefaniw, Division Manager, confirmed that staff already performs those actions. Gene withdrew his motion.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 15th at 5:30 pm in the Waller Creek Center, Room 104.

The October meeting is scheduled for October 20th at 5:30pm in the Waller Creek Center.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.