

Citizens Water Conservation Implementation Task Force

Regular Meeting

Minutes

Monday, September 15, 2008

625 E 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 105

Jennifer Walker called the meeting to order at 5:45 pm. Members in attendance: Margot Clarke, Norman Johns, Jody McDaniel, Nora Mullarkey, Rusty Osborne, and Jennifer Walker.

- I. Approval of minutes from the August 18<sup>th</sup> regular meeting and August 25<sup>th</sup> special meeting.
  - a. Jennifer Walker made a motion to suspend approving the August 18<sup>th</sup> minutes because some group members did not receive a copy. Jody McDaniel seconded the motion. This motion was unanimously approved by all attending Task Force members.
  - b. Norman Johns made a motion to amend the August 25<sup>th</sup> minutes, section II. a., to more accurately reflect his statement about the implication of targeting top ten water users. Rusty Osborne seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved as amended by all attending Task Force members.
- II. Citizen communication
  - a. Bill Bunch of Save Our Springs Alliance addressed the Task Force members to present information on peak day projections and the costs associated with Water Treatment Plant 4. Mr. Bunch passed out a packet of fact sheets and graphs. He noted that initial conservation efforts are a great success and that the City and community can do more conservation to put off the construction of WTP4. He urged the Task Force to discuss WTP4 as a future agenda item.
  - b. Nora Mullarkey asked what was the projected peak day savings from the new watering ordinance and if the Utility had achieved that savings already. Jennifer Walker responded the number is 6.16 MGD over ten years.
- III. Examples of radio, TV, street banners, and other Water Conservation ads – Sonja Stefaniw, Division Manager
  - a. Sonja Stefaniw presented some of the following examples of ads:
    - i. Example 1: Ray Benson ad on local radio, 60 seconds, \$185,000
      1. Jennifer Walker asked how the Conservation Division gauges the response. Sonja Stefaniw said customers,

Council Members, City executive staff, and other utilities have contacted the Division to comment and ask questions. The purpose of this campaign was to saturate the market with a general message to get people to have the conversation, to put out a nonthreatening happy jingle.

- ii. Example 2: Bus wrap advertising with the watering schedule, \$48,000
- iii. Example 3: Statesman and Chronicle ad to call 3-1-1. The Division has seen a 49% increase in reporting
- iv. Example 4: Print Spanish ad
- v. Example 5: Print ad connecting climate change with water use
- vi. Example 6: Print Water IQ ad
- vii. Example 7: Print rain barrel sale
- viii. Example 8: Print ad for Free Toilet Program and increase in toilet and washer rebates
- ix. Example 9: Austin Business Journal ad congratulating green businesses that incorporate water conservation practices or technology
- x. Example 10: Street banners advertising to call 3-1-1 for water waste
- xi. Example 11: New program: Hot water on demand rebate ad
  1. Jody McDaniel asked how much water can be saved with this device. Ms. Stefaniw responded up to 10,000 gallons per year from waiting for water to get hot.
  2. Jennifer Walker asked if this is a partnership with Austin Energy? Ms. Stefaniw stated that it is only Austin Water Utility. The program starts October 1, and the rebate will be \$200. Water Conservation replicated a program from San Antonio Water Systems.
  3. Margot Clarke commented that it is an electrical device. Jody McDaniel asked how much electricity it uses, wondering if extra energy is an added expense. Rusty Osborne noted that it does not take much energy to circulate a little water at a low head.
  4. Sonja Stefaniw noted that approximate cost of a qualifying device is \$300.
- xii. Example 12: TV ad with Ray Benson jingle, \$300,000
- xiii. Example 13: KVUE ad for Project Green. Low production cost from using existing jingle and existing footage of Austin.
- xiv. Example 14: Water IQ TV ad. \$5,000 for the rights and then \$40,000 to run it during the Olympics.
- xv. Sonja Stefaniw wrapped up by saying that this winter the Division is going to focus on indoor water waste. Margot Clarke asked how the Utility got Ray Benson. Ms. Stefaniw explained that after deciding to implement a jingle, Water Conservation staff

approached musicians at Blues on the Green. Ray Benson offered to write the jingle and be part of the ad campaign.

- IV. Water Use and Pumping Information Update – Leigh Byford, Conservation Associate
- a. AWU staff member Leigh Byford provided an update on water usage in millions of gallons per day for 2008. She reported that Mondays (when no watering is allowed for any type of customer) continue to show lower water use than other days of the week. Sundays continue to be the highest usage days of the week. She demonstrated with a graphic example of the first two weeks in September.
  - b. Norman Johns asked how much water is needed to establish new lawns, wondering if due to a slump in the housing market, once the market picks back up water use will increase among new homes. Jody McDaniel responded that there is an efficient method to establish turfs by using a little more water than usual and there is an irresponsible method by leaving water on all the time. Both methods will work. Nora Mullarkey commented that builders will continue to establish and water a landscape even if a home is unoccupied. The LCRA water conservation staff finds it challenging, even with monetary fines, to bring builders into compliance.
  - c. Jody McDaniel said that Homeowners Associations are also challenging to bring into compliance. Leigh Byford commented that she has spoken with several customers who feel harassed by their HOA because their landscape is not green enough. They are upset because they are trying to follow the law but the HOA is threatening to fine them. Jody McDaniel said the Community Association International can help in those circumstances. Nora Mullarkey and Jody McDaniel offered to follow up on this issue and email information to the Task Force and staff.
- V. Examples of irrigation audit results savings – David Turnage, Conservation Associate
- a. AWU staff member David Turnage presented information on irrigation audits. David has 15 years of experience with contracting and irrigation controllers. He noted the following methodologies, common problems and results:
    - i. Customers call to schedule irrigation audits because they become alarmed at the cost of a water or wastewater charge or they respond to advertisements and other outreach methods
    - ii. The auditor goes out to the property to evaluate the irrigation program and identify problems such as leaks
    - iii. The auditor then recommends a watering program and schedule, repairs or adjustments and asks customers to call or write with the results on their bills and health of their landscape
    - iv. Common problems for clients include not knowing how to operate their irrigation controller, operating the system several times a day

every day and drowning plants, and not knowing about or ignoring pool and toilet leaks

- v. As an example, Mr. Turnage brought one client down to 22,816 gallons a month from 131,140 gallons a month, resulting in a monthly savings of several hundred dollars in water and wastewater charges
- VI. Discuss press articles (Sponsored by Jennifer Walker and Norman Johns)
- a. Jennifer Walker and Norman Johns would like the Utility to respond to citizens who feel dismayed that they have abided by the watering schedule all summer and yet the top ten water users waste so much water without consequence. Daryl Slusher stated that the Division already plans to release a “thank you” message at the end of the watering season, but he is willing to draft an op-ed and try to get it in the paper. He said the papers have restrictions on how often a person can submit op-ed material, and even after submission it may not be printed. Nora Mullarkey said that the Utility should continue to collect water use data and release the results showing how well the schedule has worked at the same time as trying to issue a thank you ad or op-ed.
- VII. Discuss, review and prioritize list of future agenda items – Leigh Byford, Conservation Associate
- a. Jennifer Walker proposed not to discuss this item since it was already 7:30pm. Leigh Byford will email the list to Task Force members and solicit their top five preferences for future topics. Leigh will note on the list if topics are already scheduled for a fall meeting. The Task Force members unanimously accepted this proposal.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for October 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm in the Waller Creek Center, Room 104. The following meeting is schedule for November 17<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm in the Waller Creek Center, Room 104.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.