

Citizens Water Conservation Implementation Task Force

Regular Meeting

Minutes

Monday, November 17, 2008  
625 E 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 105

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

- I. Approval of minutes from the August 18<sup>th</sup> and September 15<sup>th</sup> meetings – Jennifer Walker, Chair
  - a. Norman Johns made a motion to move agenda item number seven pertaining to discussion agenda topics up to item number two. Margot Clarke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
  - b. Susan Butler made a motion to approve the August 18<sup>th</sup> and September 15<sup>th</sup> minutes.
  - c. Jennifer Walker discussed the September 15<sup>th</sup> minutes, asking if a public “thank you notice” had been issued by the utility, as noted in Section VI. Daryl Slusher did not send a letter to the media. Sonja Stefaniw did publish a small thank you ad in the Austin American-Statesman. She will forward a copy to the Task Force members.
  - d. Norman Johns discussed the August 18<sup>th</sup> minutes, asking about Section III, b, 3, going paperless on gas rebates. Sonja clarified that was part of the Lean Six Sigma effort. Water Conservation transfers information to Texas Gas Service and TGS then issues the energy portion of the rebates. Norman also asked about the toilet retrofit ordinance in Section V, f. Sonja stated that the Division is still working on this ordinance, some possible changes from the original 2006 Task Force recommendations may be made to increase efficiency. If the ordinance is based on an effective date deadline rather than point of sale, the Divisions toilet replacement incentive programs must stop on that date. There are approximately 220,000 inefficient toilets remaining in Austin. This is about two thirds of the total number of toilets in the service area. Norman asks to amend the minutes to say “future meeting” rather than next meeting.
  - e. Jody McDaniel seconds the motion to approve the minutes, with minor amendment to the August 18<sup>th</sup> minutes proposed by Norman. The minutes for both meetings were unanimously approved by all attending Task Force members.
- II. Discuss list of future agenda items – Leigh Byford, Conservation Associate
  - a. Jennifer asked to include the toilet retrofit ordinance to the list.

- b. Norman asked about the status of the Cost of Service Study briefing.
- c. Sonja mentioned that the bylaws of this Task Force state the group will meet quarterly and that meeting monthly to cover several information topics is a strain on her Division staff time. Margot said that early on the group knew it would meet more often, probably monthly. Norman stated this is a highly motivated and intellectually curious group. Sonja reiterated that requesting labor intensive presentations for information that is readily available on the Austin Water website is not appropriate for the Task Force. It is also more difficult to obtain information from other divisions, such as the Finance Division, over which Sonja has no control.
- d. Norman, Jennifer and Margot expressed that the group does not have the intention of demanding unnecessary work from the Division. Jennifer noted that she requested updates frequently because in her role as Chair she is obligated to stay on top of topics and issues for the group.
- e. Sonja noted that the Cost of Service Study information is regularly updated on the Utility's website. The Finance Division has tentatively agreed to present to this group on February 9<sup>th</sup>, after they complete their report and appear in front of their own task force.
- f. Richard Hatfield stated that starting a new commission or group is difficult in the early stages. He thinks the group has gotten too involved with details and the administration of the Water Conservation Division. He thinks the members and staff should work together to set agendas. Nora Mullarkey agreed with this sentiment and stated she would like to meet less often.
- g. Susan Butler stated that the rate structure is the single most important policy of the Utility that affects conservation and this group should have a say in the future of the rate structure. Rusty Osborne agrees with this point. Susan also believes the task force members are a resource of ideas for the Division.
- h. Daryl Slusher offered for staff to work on a schedule of agenda items and Council recommendations that meshes with the members' list of priorities and bring it to the next meeting for discussion.

### III. Citizen communication – Jennifer Walker, Chair

- a. Scott Johnson addressed the Citizens Task Force members regarding a letter he sent in 2006 to the Water Conservation Task Force. He recalled some suggestions that he still thinks are appropriate, such as requiring rainwater harvesting systems as part of the LEED standards for City facilities, indicating on the monthly utility bill the amount of energy used to treat and pump the amount of water each consumer uses, and requiring that City Department Directors review their department's utility bills each month. He also observes overspraying and misdirected heads in the evening, after 10:00pm. He thinks Water Waste staff should patrol during these hours.
- b. Bill Bunch addressed the Task Force members to encourage them to insist they be involved in Water Treatment Plant 4 and to ask the Council to stop construction until the City finishes its comprehensive plan, of which water planning is a key component. He stated that Water Conservation is critical to climate protection because of the energy used to treat and pump water. He believes current conservation efforts are not aggressive enough. Mr. Bunch

noted that he had taken his presentation to the Water and Wastewater Commission, but there are too many conflicts of interest between the members of the Water and Wastewater Commission and Water Treatment Plant 4.

IV. Water Use and Pumping Information Update – Dan Strub, Program Coordinator

- a. AWU staff member Dan Strub provided an update on water usage in millions of gallons per day up to fall 2008. He reported that Mondays (when no watering is allowed for any type of customer) still show lower water use than other days of the week and Tuesdays and Fridays still peak higher (Commercial and Multifamily water days).
- b. Susan Butler asked what would happen if one of the two operating treatment plants had to go offline. Dan stated that the Utility Director and City Manager have the authority to implement emergency water restrictions. Leigh noted that both treatment plants typically do not operate at peak and have the ability to temporarily increase production if necessary.

V. Water Conservation Division Update – Sonja Stefaniw, Division Manager

- a. Sonja Stefaniw reported on the following Division Fiscal Year 2008 highlights:
  - i. The Division was close to meeting the peak day usage reduction goal
  - ii. The Division exceeded the customer participation goal
  - iii. Sonja has hired several new staff members and will hire a few more by the first of the calendar year
  - iv. The Division, along with the reclaimed water program, far exceeded the goals for the year by approximately 100%
  - v. The Division is a model in the Utility for the lean six sigma program
  - vi. The staff cost per peak gallons saved is down from previous years
- b. Dan Strub clarified that the peak day usage reduction numbers do not include savings from the new watering schedule. Rusty Osborne asked if the participation numbers included customers who only receive the energy portion of the rebate from Austin Energy or Texas Gas. Sonja was not sure, she can ask the Program Coordinator. Dan noted that it would be only a small fraction of the total participation numbers.

VI. Discussion and possible action on a recommendation for a rebate in the amount of \$126,475 to Water Management, Inc. for the installation of water efficient toilets at the University of Texas Austin's central campus. – Dan Strub, Program Coordinator

- a. Rusty Osborne recused from discussion and voting on this item.
- b. AWU staff member Dan Strub described the rebate. Water Management, Inc. has a performance contract with UT. The company is receiving the rebate because they purchased and installed the toilets for UT. The rebate includes 703 toilets, including tank type and flush valve. The money will

come from the toilet rebate program, not the Industrial Commercial Institutional Rebate Program. The Council must approve the rebate because it is above the capped amount that requires Council approval.

- c. Richard Hatfield made a motion to approve supporting the rebate. Jody McDaniel seconded the motion. All members voted in favor.

VII. Election of 2009 Task Force officers – Jennifer Walker, Chair

- a. Margot Clarke nominated Norman Johns for Chair. Norman declined.
- b. Jennifer Walker nominated Susan Butler for Chair. Nora Mullarkey seconded the nomination. Richard Hatfield moved to close nominations. Margot seconded the closing. All members voted in favor of Susan Butler for Chair.
- c. Norman Johns nominated Jennifer Walker for Vice Chair. Nora seconded the nomination. Margot made a motion to close nominations. Susan Roth seconded the closing. All members voted in favor of Jennifer Walker as Vice Chair.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for January 12<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm in the Waller Creek Center, Room 105.

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 pm.