



REGIONAL WASTEWATER RECLAMATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Transamerica Building
Pima Association of Governments' 5th Floor Conference Room
177 North Church Avenue

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, December 15, 2011

Committee Members Present:

John Lynch	Bob Iannarino	Amy McCoy
Sheila Bowen	Bill Katzel	Jackson Jenkins
John Carlson	Kendall Kroesen	Jeff Biggs
Barbee Hanson	Rob Kulakofsky	

Committee Members Absent:

Ann Marie Wolf	Armando Membrilla
Brad DeSpain	Mark Stratton

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

2. CALL TO ORDER. John Lynch, Vice-Chair, called the meeting of the Regional Wastewater Reclamation Advisory Committee (RWRAC) to order at 7:47 a.m. Veronica Lopez took the roll call. Ed Curley stated that once a quorum was in attendance, roll call will be conducted again.

3. CALL TO THE AUDIENCE. There were no comments from the audience.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES. Mr. Lynch stated that the approval of minutes would be deferred until a quorum was in attendance. The minutes of the November 17, 2011 meeting were approved after the Budget/Financial Plan Update after the quorum was established.

5. COMMITTEE/SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS.

A. CITIZENS' WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CWAC) UPDATE.

Jeff Biggs, Tucson Water, stated that the CWAC has been discussing the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 Financial Plan, which will continue over the next few months and will lead up to the adoption of rates that will begin in July 2012. Mr. Biggs stated that CWAC has also been discussing recommended changes to the Water Service Area Policy that was established 12-18 months ago.

6. DISCUSSION/ACTION.

A. OLD ITEMS/UPDATES

1. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE. Jackson Jenkins gave an update on the Regional Optimization Master Plan (ROMP). Mr. Jenkins mentioned that he and staff have been working on a detailed update of the entire ROMP program and upon completion it will be presented to

the Board of Supervisors (BOS). He is planning to give this presentation to the RWRAC at the January meeting. Mr. Jenkins gave a PowerPoint presentation with updated photos of activities that are occurring for the ROMP. Mr. Jenkins noted that they are currently running about 150,000 man-hours with no lost time injuries and things are going very well at the Water and Energy Sustainability Center Project site. Mr. Jenkins stated that the RWRAC meeting in January will be held at the new lab building, at which time the Committee members will be given a tour of the facility.

- 3. ADEQ/MARANA WRF CAPACITY UPDATE.** Mr. Jenkins stated that he had conversations with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) last week regarding the Marana WRF permit application and there was dialogue with ADEQ to provide additional information and/or to respond to any questions they may have had. Mr. Jenkins stated he received notification that ADEQ is drafting the permit and that it could take 2-3 weeks, but due to the holidays it could be longer. Mr. Jenkins explained what the process is once the permit is drafted and returned to Pima County for review. Mr. Jenkins stated that the expectation for the approved permit is late March 2012.

Mr. Jenkins also stated that Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department (RWRD) has been working on a modification to the connection fee process and charges. Connection fees charges are currently calculated by using the fixture unit equivalent method. A study conducted in 2009 demonstrated that most wastewater jurisdictions have transitioned away from the fixture unit equivalent method to using the water meter size as the basis of calculating connection rates. Water meter size is a simpler method, easier to understand by customers, and less cumbersome to track and calculate for the Wastewater Department. The study also evaluated the anticipated revenue under the system to insure that fee revenue is in line with the costs of installing infrastructure to the system, and to the cost of development for the community. Mr. Jenkins stated the Department has had stakeholder meetings with members of the development community. Next, the Department will be making a recommendation to the BOS to revise the sewer connection fee ordinance and adopt the new method in calculating connection fee charges. This could result in a reduction in the connection fees that are currently charged. Mr. Jenkins will keep the Committee updated on the progress of this project.

Mr. Jenkins asked for any questions from the Committee. Sheila Bowen asked what capacity the Marana treatment plant is going to be with the new ADEQ permit. Mr. Jenkins stated currently the permit application is for 3.5 million gallons per day (MGD). Mr. Lynch asked what types of discussions are taking place with Marana. Mr. Jenkins stated that RWRD staff is working on setting up regular meetings with the other jurisdictions in Pima County. The meetings are slated to improve the dialogue and interaction with these jurisdictions and assure their needs and questions are being addressed. Mr. Jenkins noted that the RWRD and Marana staff have met on a more frequent basis in person to discuss the Town of Marana wastewater treatment issues.

- 2. FY 2011/12 BUDGET / FY 2012/13 FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE.** Patrick McGee stated that as of November 30, 2011, RWRD is on track with their current year budget at 37%, which is right in line of the total expenses and Operations and Maintenance expenses are at \$27 million and the budget is for O & M is \$72.9 million. Mr. McGee stated that they are in the preliminary stages of working on the budget and financial plan for FY 2012/2013. Mr. Lynch asked how the revenue picture is looking. Mr. McGee stated that he will look into that and provide that information at the next meeting.

Mr. Curley suggested that while the next presentation was being set up, that the Committee could take roll call again to establish a quorum and also to approve the minutes of November 17, 2011. Ms. Lopez took roll call and a quorum was established.

B. NEW ITEMS

- 1. 2012 WORK PLAN.** Mr. Curley pointed out that there are more items on the 2012 Work Plan than of the 2011 Work Plan. Mr. Curley explained that the 2012 Work Plan includes periodic updates and Department activities, such as Odor Control and the Capital Improvement Program, as well as items that have been requested by Committee members or are of interest. Mr. Curley stated that if any of the Committee members have any suggestions or requests for items to be placed or moved around on the Work Plan, the Work Plan can be amended as needed.

A. OLD ITEMS/UPDATES

- 4. NEW DESIGN MANUAL REPORT.** Carol Johnson, Chief Engineer of Engineering Services, presented a PowerPoint Presentation to provide an overview and historical perspective of why there are design standards and discussed the standards that are in place today, as well as the effort and the time being put into updating these standards. Ms. Johnson noted that Pima County took over the wastewater service area under the 1979 Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Tucson (COT) and in 1983 published a document known as the Manual of Engineering Standards and Procedures, which was revised in 1988, and this is the document that is still used today.

Ms. Johnson stated that currently a user-friendly manual has been created which will combine all current design and construction standards into one document. Ms. Johnson stated that the Standard Details for Public Improvements, 2003 Edition manual, also known as the “Blue Book” will no longer be the COT and Pima County manual. Ms. Johnson stated that Pima Association of Governments (PAG) is updating the manual and removing the main sections that have to do with wastewater, which are Sections 508, 509, and 1010-3, but will make references to refer users to the local jurisdictions for those standards. Mr. Carlson asked if PAG must receive approval from the jurisdictions involved prior to making the updates. Mr. Lynch stated that all the jurisdictions that comprise PAG are on the committee responsible for updating and developing the existing manual, so they are involved in the process and able to make comments or suggestions.

Ms. Johnson named who participated in the internal and external efforts during the 2-year period review. Ms. Johnson stated that 800 comments were received from RWRD and internal stakeholders, as well as 700 comments received from external stakeholders and the public, with the majority being from Southern Arizona Homebuilders Association (SAHBA). Ms. Johnson noted the final meeting with SAHBA and Tucson Utility Contractors Association (TUCA) were completed this week and that “courtesy comments” were received from ADEQ. Ms. Johnson explained that per the Arizona Administrative Code to design sewers, the minimum design requirements by ADEQ need to be met and the only way they could review and approve this document is to amend the code since ADEQ is not permitted to undertake any new rulemaking at this time; they could provide comments, but it would not be considered a formal approval because that would have to be done through rulemaking. Sheila Bowen asked if ADEQ’s

legislative requirements would affect the County's overall ability to put the new manual to use. Eric Wieduwilt stated that Ms. Bowen's question will be addressed at the end of the presentation.

Ms. Johnson discussed the major changes included in the new manual. Mr. Carlson asked what a curvilinear sewer is. Ms. Johnson explained where typically a manhole would be, say for a change in direction or if there is a turn in the sewer, you can curve the sewer as long as it is within the tolerance limits of that material. Mr. Carlson asked what the logic is behind the depth limit increase. Ms. Johnson stated that the depth limit is for standard trench detail and because compaction methods have improved they are looking at increasing standard trench details from 10 feet to 15 feet.

Bob Iannarino stated that he wished to compliment Mr. Wieduwilt, Ms. Johnson and their staff's ability to navigate through this and to remain open-minded about following through with another year of stakeholder meetings after the Final Draft was posted on the website in December 2010 and how it brought alert to the public sector. Mr. Iannarino noted that this was a concerted effort over the last year to try and navigate through this and feels it was a very positive stakeholder group over the last year. Ms. Johnson stated that she also appreciated the time that was invested by the private sector community.

Ms. Johnson stated that they plan on having Mr. Jenkins approve the manual in March 2012. Ms. Johnson noted that annual updates will be done to this manual.

Mr. Wieduwilt addressed Ms. Bowen's question regarding ADEQ's legislative requirements and if that will affect the County's ability to put the manual to use. Mr. Wieduwilt explained that it is unknown at this time because the manual cannot get formally adopted until ADEQ changes their moratorium on new rulemaking. Mr. Wieduwilt continued to say that the department will be in an interesting position because there will be an adopted design manual, but State regulations will refer to a manual that will no longer be enforced or published so there will be a disconnect between the State regulations process and what local utilities are trying to do to stay abreast with new changing technology. Mr. Carlson asked how this could be fixed. Mr. Wieduwilt stated the Governor would have to be made aware and acknowledge that this is important enough to provide a variance to their moratorium on new rulemaking.

Mr. Lynch stated that over the past eight to nine years the existing standards have been amended through department directives and asked how that differs from adopting this manual. Mr. Wieduwilt replied that he believes this is similar and the County has the authority to set our standards. Mr. Lynch commented that there may be an issue if you are requiring something that conflicted with the minimum ADEQ standards, or are going below their standards, but in most cases you are applying their standards or typically something greater than or above their standards. Mr. Carlson suggested that RWRAC respond to this issue. Mr. Wieduwilt asked that a response be withheld until March 2012 and this issue could be re-visited at that time. Mr. Carlson suggested that this be placed on a future agenda for further discussion.

Bill Katzel stated that he is impressed with the fact that 1500 comments were addressed during this process. Mr. Lynch asked what are the lessons learned and are there things that would be looked at or reflected on in a different way. Mr. Wieduwilt stated that it was important to develop a good relationship between the stakeholders involved, which

allowed them to speak freely and have serious discussions.

5. CUSTOMER ADVOCACY ISSUES.

- a. **BILLING APPEALS.** Marla Berry stated that Pima County has a Customer Service and Billing Section, that consists of seven employees who are devoted to wastewater and sewer billing issues and are responsible for approximately 265,153 sewer user accounts and also for assuring these accounts get billed properly each month. Ms. Berry explained that out of those accounts, 29,000 are sewer user accounts that are serviced by private water companies. Pima County contracts with four billing providers, which are Tucson Water, Oro Valley Water, Marana and Metro Water, and they do the billing for the customers that are served by those water companies. Ms. Berry noted that 20,000-22,000 customer calls are received per year by the Customer Service/Billing Section.

Ms. Berry stated that the County bills according to Sewer User Fee Ordinance 13.24 and sewer bills are based on winter water usage, which is December through February, when typically people use the least amount of water outdoors. Ms. Berry discussed how the Department calculates the new sewer bill for the new fiscal year.

Ms. Berry stated that also under the Sewer User Fee Ordinance, there is a Vacant/Vacation Rate that users can request when they will not occupy their residence for a minimum of a month or longer. Ms. Berry explained that during the Vacant/Vacation Rate billing cycle, the flow volume portion of the bill is suspended and only the monthly service fee is billed, which is an advantage for winter visitors since they do not occupy their homes for a prolonged period of time. Ms. Berry also noted that customers must call and request to be placed on the Vacant/Vacation Rate before the next billing cycle.

Ms. Berry pointed out that RWRD's website has a Customer Service section, which contains contact information, forms, and Frequently Asked Questions. Ms. Berry stated that RWRD reaches out to customers via inserts that are placed with the bills in July, November and December.

Mr. Katzel inquired about a constituent he is aware of that had a sewer leak and has been charged a \$94/month sewer bill on a continuous basis due to the December through February average, and asked what is being done to correct this problem. Ms. Berry stated that if customers have a leak and then have it repaired, they can submit evidence of that to RWRD. Mr. Jenkins asked for the constituent's name and stated that they will look into this issue further. Mr. Katzel mentioned that in Green Valley the sewers are not metered. Ms. Berry clarified that sewers are not metered anywhere in Pima County and in Green Valley there are 4 private water companies, so the bills for the water and sewer are separate.

Mr. Carlson stated that he is a member of a Home Owners Association (HOA) where there are nine meters and some of the meters are tied to area irrigation. Mr. Carlson asked how they can reduce their bills without having to meter every home. Ms. Berry explained that if the water meters serve homes then they are subject to the same billing process where the sewer is based on the December through February usage and if there are ten homes attached to one water meter then the HOA may be able to divide the costs.

Mr. Lynch asked if the significant number of foreclosures on homes is creating issues with sewer billings. Ms. Berry stated that some banks require that the water remain on in the

home and in that instance the sewer rate can be kept on at the Vacant/Vacation Rate.

Rob Kulakofsky asked what the Vacant/Vacation Rate is. Ms. Berry replied that is charged the monthly service fee of \$11.14. Mr. Iannarino asked if there has been an increase in calls from customers inquiring about their sewer bills rising. Ms. Berry stated that when she managed the Customer Service Section they would see an increase in calls every year when the rates increased. Ms. Bowen asked how customers are informed of the Vacant/Vacation Rate. Ms. Berry stated that customers can be notified if they call Customer Service and state that they are not going to be occupying the home for a prolonged period of time, information is also posted on the website, as well as some HOA's may include it in their newsletters. Mr. Biggs asked if RWRD verifies that people are not using water. Ms. Berry stated they do not because there is no way to verify if the residence is occupied.

- b. RATES AND CHARGES/SOS PROGRAM.** Matt Matthewson, Special Assistant to the Director, discussed the customer advocacy aspect of rates and charges. Mr. Matthewson explained what the process is and how rates and charges are determined. Mr. Matthewson stated that the last time there was a comprehensive review was in 2010 and the rates were set for four years, so in 2014 the process will be conducted again. Mr. Matthewson stated that a review is done every winter and spring of the existing rate and a financial plan is recommended. Mr. Matthewson noted that the public will have opportunities to provide input at the RWRAC and Board of Supervisor meetings.

Mr. Matthewson discussed the Sewer Outreach Subsidy (SOS) program offered to low-income families to provide sewer bill reduction. Mr. Matthewson stated that the income reviews and eligibility requirements are made on behalf of RWRD by the Pima County Community Action Agency, which is an entity that is accustomed to providing social service programs and processing applications and requests for assistance.

Mr. Katzel asked if the financial projection for 2014 will provide for a reduction in rates after the construction on the ROMP project is completed. Mr. McGee stated that they are still in the process of looking at that and cannot say at this time and they will have to look at the revenue for the next couple of years.

- c. COMMUNITY OUTREACH.** Laura Fairbanks, Community Relations Manager, stated the Community Relations section communicates with the public either in person or by written communication. Ms. Fairbanks provided examples of written communication, such as inserts that go out with the bills, Tucson Water monthly newsletter column, and HOA newsletters discussing various topics. Ms. Fairbanks also stated that on the RWRD website there is a Questions/Comments section, and e-mails get sent directly to the Community Relations staff for response. Ms. Fairbanks pointed out that a lot of the questions are regarding rate increases and those questions are referred to the Customer Service section. Ms. Fairbanks commented that the Customer Service staff does an excellent job in responding to customer questions/concerns. Ms. Fairbanks explained how a recent sewer emergency that occurred in a residential neighborhood was handled.

Ms. Fairbanks stated approximately 20-30 outreach events are conducted per year, to include presentations to HOA's, special interest groups, classroom events and construction meetings. Mr. Katzel asked how many of their outreach events are associated with odor control. Ms. Fairbanks replied that odor control issues/concerns is a primary

reason why they are asked to conduct presentations to different groups. Mr. Carlson asked if presentations are still being conducted at schools. Ms. Fairbanks explained that although they still do school presentations, the amount of invites has decreased due to the AIMS Testing as certain criteria. Mr. Katzel suggested that letters be sent to area principals to offer presentations at their schools. Mr. Jenkins noted that currently there is a Kids Section on the RWRD website.

- d. **VECTOR ROACH CONTROL.** John Warner, Deputy Director, provided background information on the Vector Program. Mr. Warner stated that the Vector Program has grown and is very effective and cost efficient. Mr. Warner discussed the Service Notice handout he provided and explained how it is used. Mr. Warner stated that crews leave the door hanger notice with customers to notify them that their call was responded to. Mr. Carlson commented that the crews should be commended for their prompt response to service calls.

Mr. Katzel stated he wished to thank all the Customer Advocacy presenters as this was an agenda item that he requested and felt that each presentation was very comprehensive and impressive.

7. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS.** Rulemaking Issues for the New Design Manual (March Agenda).
8. **CALL TO THE AUDIENCE.** There were no comments from the audience.

Mr. Lynch announced January and February's meetings will be held at the new Water and Energy Sustainability (WES) Center. Mr. Curley distributed maps with directions to the new WES Center. Mr. Jenkins reminded the Committee members to be cautious upon turning onto the road where the WES Center is located due to back-ups and congestion during rush hour traffic.

9. **ADJOURNMENT.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 a.m.