

# SEWER TASK FORCE

Daniel Boone Building, Conference Room 2A

## Meeting Minutes- Friday, September 3, 2010

**Present:** Rick Buford, Ken Nivens, Mark Stevenson, Lee Terry, Brian Toohey, Greg Watts.

**Absent:** Scott Southwick

**City Staff:** Lori Fleming, Finance Director; John Glascock, Public Works Director; and Sarah Talbert, Senior Rate Analyst with Public Works  
Pat Burbridge, Public Works Department/Secretary for the meeting

**Others in Attendance:** Mr. Paul Love and Mr. Bill Weitkemper

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Mr. Glascock, Public Works Director. He stated that a chair needed to be elected. After some discussion, Mr. Toohey volunteered. Ms. Terry seconded Mr. Toohey. He was selected by a unanimous voice vote.

### **AGENDA ITEMS**

#### Approve Minutes from Previous Meeting

The minutes of the August 28, 2010, meeting were approved with the correction of the spelling of Mr. Stevenson's name. Mr. Stevenson also indicated that he would like to have verbatim transcripts of the meetings. Mr. Buford asked if it would be possible to put an audio copy of the minutes on the web, and Mr. Glascock indicated that he would check into that possibility. Mr. Stevenson asked to go on record that he was requesting a full transcript of the meetings. Ms. Fleming pointed out that the Task Force does not have a budget. Mr. Stevenson raised the question as to how much the consultants were being paid. Ms. Fleming indicated that it was approximately \$15,000. Mr. Glascock stated that he would check with the City Manager to see if it was possible to hire a transcriptionist to provide a full transcript of the meetings.

#### Review Items E-Mailed to Task Force on 8/24/10

- City Ordinance  
Mr. Glascock stated that there will be no changes, except for rate increases, until this Task Force makes its recommendations. Mr. Stevenson questioned the fact that we are supposed to be revenue neutral yet there is a rate increase going on and wasn't quite sure how these interacted with each other. It appears that the City is trying to raise more money with the sewer utility and he asked if that should be taken into consideration when trying to allocate costs. Ms. Fleming stated that when she says revenue neutral, that means revenue neutral with the anticipated 2011 revenues. Revenue neutral includes the increase that is in the proposed 2011 budget.
- Billing Practices for Other Cities  
Mr. Buford asked if any of these cities offered special rates to universities or other large customers. Mr. Glascock stated that Austin has wholesale customers of the Big 12 cities. Most of Columbia's wholesale customers have individual agreements that have been done in the past. Ms. Fleming indicated that where the customer's water comes from is only relevant in getting the water usage information. Mr. Glascock reported that the City is trying to get an agreement with the University for all utilities for the core campus. Ms. Terry asked if there had been any deal with IBM for their utilities and Mr. Glascock said there was not to his knowledge. He did indicate that Linen King would have their sewer usage metered for about a year to create a curve to know how to bill them because of the amount of water that evaporates in their operation.

Mr. Buford questioned the current arrangement with the University regarding sewer billing. Ms. Fleming reported that the University paid \$750,000 for the City's 2009 fiscal year. Mr. Watts said that the University has paid about \$830,000 for 2010 to date. Mr. Glascock stated that the University is currently paying more than the City Ordinance requires; they voluntarily agreed to pay that. Mr. Stevenson asked if part of the issue again is based on the definition of "customer" and Mr. Glascock agreed that that is the case.

Mr. Toohey questioned the definition of the word "customer." Mr. Glascock stated that the City Ordinance Sec. 22-262 defines "users." Mr. Stevenson noted that it is subject to interpretation. There was a discussion about the terminology in this section and billing. Mr. Buford indicated that it might be reasonable to base fees on the size of the pipe.

Mr. Stevenson asked to recognize Mr. Weitkemper. Mr. Glascock wanted it to be clear that Mr. Weitkemper does not represent the City; he only represents himself. Mr. Weitkemper reported that there is not a definition of "customer" in the ordinance, but there is a definition of "user" in Sec. 22-210. Mr. Buford stated that he felt one of the goals of the Task Force should be to remove the vagaries of the current ordinance, like "user" and "residence." There was some discussion about how to administer the ordinance in a clear manner. Ms. Fleming felt that the consultants will offer alternatives to the Residential Equivalency Unit. She also felt that it would be best to see what alternatives are presented by the consultants. They should be at the meeting on September 24. Their report will be distributed to Task Force members as soon as the City receives it. Mr. Weitkemper felt that sewer and water should have the same definition for a dwelling unit, but Mr. Glascock indicated that there is also a different definition used for solid waste. Mr. Stevenson stated that he felt there should be more of a correlation with electric meters, not water meters. Mr. Love asked if it would be possible to do away with the user fee and just use a usage fee. Mr. Stevenson stated that other issues needed to be settled before that could be decided. He also said that there needs to be a way to include administrative costs in the fees. Mr. Watts reported that the University has some buildings that have more water meters than electric meters. Mr. Glascock indicated that there are some customers who do not have either City water or electricity. Mr. Buford asked about the differences in levels of sewage, and Mr. Glascock reported that some levels require pretreatment. Mr. Weitkemper stated that maintenance costs are higher for some types of sewage, like restaurants, which includes inspections. Mr. Glascock reported that there is 1 FTE City employee at this time to do inspections.

Mr. Toohey came back to the issue that there needs to be a definition of who or what is a customer. Mr. Buford felt that the consensus seems to be that a residential customer is either a water meter or electric meter. Mr. Fleming indicated that the consultant should give information on what should be included in the base fee and are setting up a rate study. Mr. Glascock stated that the report would be sent out before the meeting with the consultant.

- 2009 Sanitary Sewer Revenues  
This information was distributed to the members.

Mr. Stevenson asked for clarity on what pipes the University maintains. Mr. Watts stated that they maintain the lines outside of the buildings. Mr. Stevenson questioned whether anyone should get a break for maintaining their sewer lines. Mr. Glascock stated that it is expensive to maintain the lines. Plastic lining in the pipes helps, but doesn't fix the problem with bad taps. Mr. Glascock reported that the City is making headway on getting storm water out of the sewer system, but not fast enough.

It was agreed that it would not be helpful to meet again until the consultant's report is available. The meeting next week is cancelled. Mr. Glascock will forward the information to the members as soon as it is available.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, September 24, 2010