

**CITY OF ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO
CITY COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 1376 E. NINTH STREET
6:00 P.M., COMMISSION CHAMBERS
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2002**

MAYOR DON CARROLL

COMMISSIONER DON COOPER

MAYOR PRO-TEM JOHN VAN DOREN

COMMISSIONER ED COLE

COMMISSIONER INEZ MONCADA

CITY MANAGER PAT McCOURT

COMMISSIONER RON GRIGGS

CHF DPTY CLK TERESA GUTIERREZ

COMMISSIONER STEPHEN EASLEY

Call Meeting to Order and Roll Call.

The Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

I. Presentation on existing water system and flows (Public Works Director Jose Miramontes).

Mr. Miramontes gave an overall presentation on the City's existing water supply system, including system demands, sources of surface and ground water, and the history of water production from each source for the last six years (La Luz/Fresnal, Alamo Canyon, City wells, and Bonito Lake).

(Note: A hard copy of the presentation is on file in the City Clerk's office with the backup information to this meeting).

II. Mission Statement of the Water and Sewer Department (City Manager Pat McCourt).

Mr. McCourt explained the need for a Mission Statement, to allow people to make economic decisions on how much water they wished to use. He also briefly reviewed the different funding sources the City currently has to fund our water and sewer systems.

III. City policy on development of water for City use (City Manager Pat McCourt).

Mr. McCourt explained that staff had opted to use our existing sources of water and to protect them as best we can, but to then also look to develop new sources of water to expand the supply of water available.

IV. City policy on protection of existing Alamogordo water (City Manager Pat McCourt).

A) Re-installing stream diversion.

Mr. McCourt explained that staff will use all legal means to protect the water rights of the City. For the re-installing of stream diversions, the City will put stream diversions back into operation with existing spring diversions, and maximize the diversion to the extent of the water right.

B) Request hydrographic survey from Office of the State Engineer.

Mr. McCourt recommended that the City request the Office of the State Engineer to update the Hydrographic Survey of the La Luz/Fresnal area to identify all valid water right holders, the limit of their right, and their priority date associated with the right; to identify all domestic wells, ownership, use of water, and priority date; and to identify all illegal diversions, surface or groundwater. The 1918 Decree gave the City a specific amount of water right, but due to drought and other conditions, the City is using considerably less than its right, as follows: In 1996 the City used 46 percent; in 1997 the City used 50 percent; in 1998 the City used 38 percent; in 1999 the City used 31 percent; in 2000 the City used 29 percent; and in 2001 the City used only 24 percent.

C) Consider a priority call on water to assure Alamogordo supply.

Mr. McCourt said that if the available water from the Canyons continues to decline, or even at the current time, the City could request a priority call on junior users until the City's right is made whole. Coupled with this recommendation, staff's suggestion was that the City assist the group(s) in some form or fashion in the formation of their own water system. The City had the resources to fight this battle if it needed to; however, staff felt that would be divisive to the area as a whole.

Mayor Carroll explained that the suggestion of both of the City's consultants was to just alert the City that we did have the right to entertain this option. Hopefully, however, other steps to be covered in tonight's meeting would preclude the City from having to do that.

Commissioner Griggs and Commissioner Easley both agreed that an adequate hydrological survey was needed by the Office of the State Engineer so that everyone could be dealing with facts, especially as concerned the diversions.

D) Accelerate aquifer storage and recovery project.

Mr. McCourt recommended the City accelerate the Aquifer Storage and Recovery project to utilize water year-round.

V. Immediate and ongoing steps to complete Mission (City Engineer Kevin Heberle).

Mr. Heberle explained the immediate and ongoing steps the City had taken to meet the Mission. Water conservation steps included various water main replacement projects for replacing old, leaking water mains (Hawaii/Rosalia waterline replacement; First Street waterline replacement; Cuba Avenue waterline replacement; Puerto Rico waterline replacement; and White Sands waterline replacement). Other water conservation steps included the tiered water rate structure; the low-flow toilet replacement program; the possibility of adopting an Ordinance which would prohibit the use of evaporative (swamp) coolers in new construction and in major remodels of homes and businesses; the covering of raw water reservoirs in La Luz; and to expand/improve the reclaimed water supply storage and distribution system. Steps being taken to increase the water supply to support the current population and to allow for growth were projects to increase groundwater pumping (drilled new wells 8 and 9, and maintenance and/or rehabilitation of existing wells); and to maintain and/or improve the surface flow collection (maintenance on existing Diversions No. 2 and 3).

VI. Near term steps to complete Mission (City Engineer Kevin Heberle).

Mr. Heberle presented staff's proposed near term plans for continuing to achieve the City's Mission. Water conservation steps included the continuing replacement of leaking water lines; to construct a floating cover on the North (raw water) Reservoir this summer; to install floating covers on reclaimed water storage ponds at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and at the LaVelle Road facility; to continue expansion of the reclaimed water distribution system; to continue the low-flow toilet replacement/rebate program; to continue the tiered rate structure through water billing; to continue prohibiting outside watering between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. and from "watering" streets or sidewalks; and to continue to study the requirement of new and major remodeled homes and businesses to be cooled using refrigerated air.

Mr. Heberle said some near term steps planned to help increase the water supply included the continuance of well maintenance and/or rehabilitation; to continue surface flow collection system maintenance; to consider reactivating

abandoned, high saline wells; and to implement the Aquifer Storage and Recovery project.

A suggestion from an audience participant was the removal of Salt Cedars in the mountain area because of the large amount of water they absorbed. Mr. Miramontes pointed out that the Forest Service would not allow the City to go on its land and cut the Cedars down. The audience participant suggested that the City go on private property with the owner's permission and at least cut those areas down. Another audience member suggested the City look at a xeriscaping proposal. Mayor Carroll pointed out that xeriscaping was presently being studied via the Subdivision Ordinance re-write.

Mr. McCourt pointed out an article from the February 16, 2002 edition of the "El Paso Times" which stated that El Paso was currently reusing 7.8 percent of their wastewater. Alamogordo was currently using 60 to 70 percent of its wastewater.

An audience member questioned the City's loss of water through the system from the time it left the plant until it reached the residences. Mr. Miramontes said approximately 10 to 15 percent, which was due to leakage, fire hydrant flushing, and faulty meters.

VII. Regionalization of water system (City Manager Pat McCourt).

Mr. McCourt reviewed the options which may be possible through the concept of regionalization of the City's water delivery system, including the following:

A) Immediately surrounding the City (outside City sales).

i. Individuals through contracts.

ii. Water user groups.

B) Long term and emergency needs of Holloman AFB.

C) La Luz water users/Tularosa.

D) Users in the Canyons--La Luz/Fresnal.

Commissioner Easley said the City was offering for areas, such as La Luz and Tularosa, to join in with the City early on in the project.

Mayor Carroll pointed out that as part of the application process for this project, there was a requirement of the City to not affect any other users prior to tapping any wells for the RO project in the Basin.

The Commission recessed at 7:55 p.m., and reconvened at 8:03 p.m.

VIII. Long term steps to implement Mission (Eddie Livingston--Livingston Associates).

Mr. Livingston made a PowerPoint presentation which covered the following points:

A. Rationale for searching north of City.

B. Securing water rights.

C. Quality of water.

D. Quantity of water.

E. Delivery system to City.

i. New Bonito Line.

ii. Old/existing Bonito Line.

iii. New Line.

iv. Through La Luz Plant/Direct.

F. R.O. Plant.

i. Location.

ii. Size.

iii. Priority of Operation.

a. Surface water.

b. Wells.

c. R.O.

iv. Use of Bonito Lake Water.

a. Effect on La Luz TDS.

b. Agreement with Air Force.

(Note: A hard copy of the entire presentation is on file in the City Clerk's office with the backup information to this meeting).

An audience member questioned the security of the well fields once established. Mayor Carroll explained that the outer edges of the system, including the well fields and reservoirs, were less likely to be vandalized and/or subject to terrorist activities, as opposed to the inner workings of the system where an individual could actually put some foreign substance into the residential waterlines.

Mr. Livingston explained that this technology had been around for a long time, and was now becoming more common because of the economic affordability. Commissioner Easley said electricity for the pumps and so forth was a major part of the operation of the system. What relative percentage of the cost would that be? Mr. Livingston said the overall electrical cost for the wells and two of the pump stations would be roughly 50 percent.

An audience member questioned the size of the test wells. Mr. Livingston said they ran approximately 1,000 feet each, with a six inch diameter.

IX. Ownership of Water and System (City Manager Pat McCourt).

A) City owned.

B) Private owned.

C) Some combination.

Mr. McCourt explained that the City of Alamogordo used a combination of public and private operations. The City maintained ownership of all its water rights, most delivery systems, and all treatment and delivery systems. Operationally, the City contracted out most construction, both new and replacement, the operation of the Water Treatment Plant, the Wastewater Treatment Plant, maintenance of the collection system in the mountains, maintenance of the water storage tanks, and used consultants to assist in specialized areas of hydrology, engineering, and legal matters. Mr. McCourt said that he would strongly recommend that the City maintain ownership of all water rights and the infrastructure to deliver the water to the City.

X. Funding options for water expansion (City Manager Pat McCourt).

Mr. McCourt said that the primary source of funding had been the user fee system. However, the City had infrastructure needs of over \$15,000,000 in the next four years, and staff did not believe that this was a source for major increases in revenue. The second largest source of funding had been the 1/4 of 1 percent Gross Receipts Tax. By general rule of thumb, this level of revenue could support a \$10 million debt issue. Mayor Carroll said they were also utilizing a portion of that in the rebuild of the Bonito Line between the City and Filter Plant. He pointed out that any monies taken from this 1/4 of 1 percent Gross Receipts Tax and utilized for this project, would have to be made up for through water rate

increases in the Water/Sewer Fund because that money would basically now be used to subsidize the Water/Sewer Fund operation. Mr. McCourt said the third source of funding had been the use of General Obligation Bonds (Property Tax Bonds). A fourth source had been the use of Grants from the State and Federal Governments. Commissioner Easley said he was in favor of applying for all the State and Federal monies we could, but we needed to not wait indefinitely on them as the need was there to get going on this project. Mr. McCourt said a fifth source, which had been used in the past but was not used currently, was the General Fund receipts. Due to funding concerns in other service areas of the City, it was not recommended that this source be used at this time for this purpose. A sixth source of funding would be to go out and seek private dollars for the project. Any of those methods, of course, would have to be paid back. Commissioner Easley said perhaps we could creatively combine some or all of these options to fund the project.

Mr. Len Stokes, Progressive Environmental Systems, Inc., said that before starting this project, the City needed to have the water rights secured, which process would take at least a year. The City couldn't borrow a dime from anybody without having these rights secured. They also had to secure rights-of-way from BLM which he guessed would take about the same amount of time. Mayor Carroll added that they would have at least a year and a half before the Bonito Pipeline construction period was over. Until that pipeline was replaced, they had neither the old nor new pipeline to utilize for the water. They had probably a year and a half to two years before the City could really get into actually doing anything other than trying to make the basic decisions. Mr. Stokes said he wanted to make it clear that the City should not rest during that time period, but should continue to determine what size of a plant we would pursue, policies, engineering, and financing issues. This project was not only reasonable, but was probably the best solution we had for the long term.

Mr. Livingston clarified that the amortization costs he had presented were based on the cost per 1,000 gallons, with the plant running 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Commissioner Griggs felt it was important to put in place a plan to pursue the project with actual time tables. For Alamogordo and Otero County to have any sort of dependable water supply and sustainable growth, there was no other answer than this project. Commissioner Easley felt this project would go a long way to assist in the recruitment of industry and economic development for the area. In fact, he felt there was no more single important project to work on at the present time than this one.

Commissioner Cole felt we needed to definitely look at General Obligation Bonds as a funding source.

Mr. Livingston said he had attended a meeting with Sandia National Labs and the Bureau of Reclamation in Las Cruces a couple of weeks ago. Senator Domenici had funded the Water Supply Security Act, and through that he had authorized Sandia National Labs, in cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation Water Quality Improvement Center, to locate a national desalination research facility in the Tularosa Basin. So that was how visible this technology was. Part of that analysis was going to be siting a facility somewhere around Alamogordo which industry and universities could use to further their research into desalination. Mayor Carroll said we may very well want to talk to those people with the idea of them co-locating their facility with ours.

Mayor Carroll adjourned the Meeting at 9:50 p.m.

Mayor Donald E. Carroll

ATTEST:

City Clerk Angie J. Rahn

(SEAL)

(Prepared by Chief Deputy Clerk Teresa Y. Gutierrez)

Approved at the City Commission Regular Meeting of March 12, 2002.



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