MINUTES
City Council Public Works & Utilities Committee

Wednesday, January 3, 2024 – 3:30 PM
City Council Chambers

Members Present: Mac Morrow, Chair, Council Member
Lauren Wise, Vice-Chair, Council Member
Owen Carson, Citizen Member
Mayor Maureen Copelof, Ex-Officio

Staff Present: Wilson Hooper, City Manager
Wesley Shook, Acting Public Works Director
Dennis Richardson, Water Treatment Plan Supervisor
Emory Owen, Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor
Aaron Winans, WWTP Staff
Alex Shepherd, Assistant to the City Manager
Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator

A. Welcome and Call to Order

Committee Chair Mac Morrow called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

Assistant to the City Manager Alex Shepherd certified that a quorum was present.

C. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Mr. Wise, seconded by Mr. Carson to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes

1. December 6, 2023 Meeting

Motion by Mr. Carson, seconded by Mr. Wise to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2023 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Wastewater Treatment Plant RFQ Update

Mr. Hooper informed the committee that the Wastewater Treatment Plant RFQ has been advertised on several sites and has been sent out to several engineering firms. The next steps that need to take place will be discussed at our meeting on February 7. We will provide the committee with an update on the submissions we have

received. Later in February, we will schedule a special meeting of this committee to interview the applicants. AECOM will be present to assist us in interviewing the engineering firms. One question I would like to pose to the committee is regarding your desired level of involvement in selecting the finalist. Would you prefer to actively participate in narrowing down the firms, or would you like staff to help with the initial selection, with the committee then making the final decision based on staff recommendations? We can dedicate the February 7 meeting to discussing the selection criteria for narrowing down the firms.

Mr. Wise stated that he is comfortable with staff vetting the engineering firms until we reach the top four, at which point the committee will become involved in selecting from the remaining firms.

Mr. Carson and Mr. Morrow both agreed with Mr. Wise's statement.

Mr. Hooper mentioned several key points regarding the RFQ. Firstly, we seek a firm capable of designing a wastewater treatment plant and forecasting our needs over the coming decades. We also expect them to propose a facility capable of supporting a potential countywide system, despite no formal discussions on the matter. Building a plant to last fifty years necessitates careful consideration to accommodate future expansions. The estimated plant capacity is crucial, as size significantly influences costs. Economies of scale are limited, meaning costs don't necessarily decrease with increased size. Overbuilding could lead to unnecessary expenses. Secondly, we require a firm with experience navigating state permitting processes. Wastewater treatment plants are subject to stringent regulations, necessitating expertise in this area. Lastly, we need a firm skilled in securing funding for similar projects. Finding financing for such endeavors is paramount to their success.

Mr. Carson asked if it's typical for the clause in the RFQ to be phrased as we reserve the option to continue forward to final scope design.

Mr. Hooper said yes, indicating that they would carry it through all the appropriate permitting and approvals at the state level. Then, they would have the option to draw the blueprints for us.

Mr. Wise asked about the timeline once the firm is hired.

Mr. Hooper responded that he does not know and that we will have to negotiate with the selected firm, but he hopes it will take around a year.

Mr. Morrow asked if the engineering firm will analyze the inflow and infiltration numbers while designing the report.

Mr. Hooper informed the committee that Ms. McCann has been working on a wastewater treatment plant webpage that will notify the public of updates and frequently asked questions.

Ms. McCann stated that the page will be updated regularly and will provide a general overview of the plant's history, funding sources, and other relevant information.

Mr. Carson asked how often we have exceeded our permit and received fines.

Mr. Owen clarified that we have never received a fine requiring payment. As long as we notify the state and keep them informed of everything happening at the plant, we have not been penalized.

Mr. Wise asked when do you think it would be a good time to start engaging the County more actively.

Mr. Hooper responded that our last meeting with the County was around two weeks ago, and we mentioned this to them. However, they didn't have much to say. In the year to come, we really need to engage with them to see if they want to pursue a regional authority and contribute to the wastewater treatment plant.

Mr. Wise inquired how typical of an arrangement is that.

Mr. Hooper replied it is typical, and the State encourages this.

Additional Comments:

Mr. Winans informed the committee that the Wastewater Treatment Plant started a new chemical and so far, it has been performing well.

F. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Public Works & Utilities Committee was scheduled for Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at 3:30 p.m.

G. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:09 p.m.

X

Minutes Approved: February 7, 2024

Mac Morrow
Chair, Council Member

X

Alex Shepherd
Assistant to the City Manager