

CITY OF RIVERSIDE PUBLIC UTILITIES DEPARTMENT

1 of 3

Minutes of: Agricultural Water Rates Task Force, Meeting #6
Date of meeting: September 27, 2018
Time of meeting: 5:30 pm
Place of meeting: Mayors Ceremonial Room, 7th Floor City Hall
3900 Orange St., Riverside, CA 92501

Meeting was called to order by Vice-chair Wilson

Pledge of allegiance to the flag was given by Michele Sheehe

Roll Call

Present: Seth Wilson (Vice Chair) Steven Robillard Gilberto Esquivel
Barbara Croonquist Jason Gless Darleen De Mason
Ed Adkison Michele Sheehe Scott Andrews
Rose Mayes Patricia Lock Dawson Tom Evans
Malissa Mckeith (Alternate for Andrew Walcker)
Scott Simpson (Alternate for Jason Hunter)
Gurumantra Khalsa (Alternate for Sharon Mateja)

Absent: Dale Sexton

1. Citizen Participation

None.

2. Approval of meeting minutes for August 23, 2018 meeting

Motion: Andrews Second: Robillard

Ayes: All present

Absent: Sexton

3. Water Rates Comparison Tables

Staff provided a presentation on how to understand and read the water rate comparison tables. Discussion and questions followed. Member Sheehe felt a vote needed to be taken to see how many members of the Task Force were in favor of an Ag rate since the COSA proposal to transition existing WA-3 customers with a residence to a residential rate would kill agriculture. Alternate Simpson suggested that there be just one price for water. Member Adkison suggested staff assist in bringing forth rate option suggestions and also that there be fewer presentations and more

discussion on affordable Ag rate development and proposals. Vice-chair Wilson suggested that staff develop and provide a typical use and billing profile curve for WA-3 and WA-9 customers; receive and file.

Motion: Lock-Dawson

Second: Mckeith

Ayes: All present

Absent: Sexton

4. Open Discussion

Member Evans presented a proposal for a WA-9 agricultural rate and provided his rationale for the proposal. Staff will add proposal to the minutes. Alternate Mckeith suggested the Task Force reaffirm the City's commitment to agriculture, members Sheehe and De Mason agreed. Alternate Simpson presented a rate proposal he had developed and his rationale based on the limitations of law. Staff will add proposal to the minutes. Member Andrews voiced concern of wasting time developing rate recommendations that may not be legal to adopt and he proposed there may be a rate solution outside of RPU that does not violate Prop 218. Alternate Mckeith suggested that the City attorney provide suggestions on how rate proposals can be developed lawfully. City attorney Beaumon provided information on how shortcomings in rates can be handled. There was a discussion about the challenges of some properties not being able to receive Gage Canal water. Member Adkison mentioned how the COSA did not specifically address the cost of agricultural water and what the associated rates should be.

Alternate Mckeith moved that "the Task Force support the City adopting an economical agricultural water rate throughout the City of Riverside" Some discussion followed and Vice-chair Wilson called for a vote.

Motion: Mckeith

Second: Simpson

Ayes: All present

Absent: Mayes, Sexton

Member Evans mentioned how his proposal is not a subsidized rate as it is utilizing a rate from the recent COSA study. Brief discussion of Prop R and Measure C. Member Andrews proposed that a Business Investment District (BID) be formed and the subsequent tax collected from that BID be utilized to provide the funding for any subsidy in Ag rates. Member Robillard mentioned how it's important to keep in mind how any subsidies may be paid, and that it may be necessary to take those proposals to a citizen vote if it involves utilization of taxes.

Public comment: Steve Fessler, owner of Paradise Garden Center, spoke regarding how there are two sets of rules regarding nurseries and how nurseries cannot qualify as “agricultural”. He mentioned to qualify for WA-9 too many citrus trees are required for screening along street frontages. He does not understand how nurseries aren’t considered agriculture yet they get inspected by an Ag inspector and file tax returns as farmers.

Alternate Mckeith mentioned how important it is for the definition of “agriculture” to be clarified by the Task Force and how the City should study if agriculture can be a long term, sustainable and economically viable industry for the City. Member Andrews mentioned how his BID proposal and suggestion would resolve the concerns that Mr. Fessler had mentioned as long as the nurseries were included within the BID boundaries.

5. Discuss Schedule of Meetings

Vice-chair Wilson reviewed the current schedule of meetings and topics. A brief discussion took place regarding shifting topics around and getting more information on Proposition 218. Some other discussions took place regarding future agenda topics regarding Gage Canal shares, Prop R and Measure C and the value and definition of agriculture. Staff made note of the requested changes.

6. Emerging Ideas and Questions and Answers

Vice-chair Wilson reviewed the current set of Emerging Ideas and Questions and Answers posed thus far by the Task Force.

7. Items for Future Consideration

None.

Adjourn

By: 

Richard Small, Secretary for Agricultural Water Rates Task Force

Reminder that all Ag Task Force meetings are videotaped and available for viewing at:

<https://riversideca.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>