

City of Sierra Madre Agenda Report

Joe Mosca, Mayor John Buchanan, Mayor Pro Tem MaryAnn MacGillivary, Council Member Josh Moran, Council Member Nancy Walsh, Council Member

Nancy Shollenberger, City Clerk George Enyedi, City Treasurer

TO: Honorable Mayor Mosca and Members of the City Council

FROM: Elaine I. Aguilar, City Manager

INITIATED BY: Elisa C. Weaver, Director of Community & Personnel Services

DATE: July 27, 2010

SUBJECT: Water System Educational Program

SUMMARY

At the regular City Council meeting of July 13, 2010 the City Council directed staff to develop an education and public outreach program to provide information to the Sierra Madre Community on the City's water utility and the reasons the City initiated a water rate increase process. Staff has developed and begun the initial steps to implement this program as summarized below.

ANALYSIS

There are a variety of ways to get information into the community and to engage two-way communication. In general, these methods include press releases, community input/outreach meetings, direct mailings, use of SMTV3, printed materials (such as brochures and fact sheets), City E-Blasts, etc. Below is a summary of the proposed outreach and education program, which has been categorized into six main areas.

1. Walk & Talk

The Walk & Talk was developed during the initial water rate increase process. Residents were invited to tour the water treatment & distribution plant, meet the water department staff, and see for themselves where our water comes from and what it takes for water to go from our aquifer to the kitchen sink. There is also a financial presentation component which speaks to the City's need for a rate increase in order to keep the water department solvent, meet State and Federal requirements, as well as contractual requirements. The presentation format is informal and encourages active participation by attendees. Staff is planning two Walk & Talks to occur on Saturday, August 14, 2010 at 10:00 am and on Wednesday September 29, 2010 at 6:00 pm at the Public Works Yard.

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2. Water System Public Service Announcement

Working with Community Media of the Foothills, staff is developing a 30 minute public service announcement (PSA) based on the information provided at the "Walk & Talks". The PSA will highlight where the City's water comes from and the complexity of owning and operating a water department. The idea is for this PSA to be a piece that can be shown on SMTV, looking at the water infrastructure from a more global perspective and encouraging water conservation for years to come. Production on the PSA will begin the week of July 25, 2010.

A five minute condensed version will be created to be a part of the community presentation (described below).

3. Community Presentations

The community presentations will provide various opportunities for interested individuals to obtain information about the water utility. Each session will last approximately 60 minutes and will cover:

- 5 minute video clip (described in #2.)
- Water Capital Improvements
- Day-to-Day Water Utility Operations
- Debt, Loans, and Bonds
- What Happens if the Water Department becomes Insolvent?
- What's Next / What Can Residents Do?
- What is Prop 218?
- Questions & Answers

Staff has scheduled three Community Presentations for:

- Tuesday, August 17, 2010 at 6:30 pm in the Council Chambers (this will be broadcast live and replayed on SMTV),
- Wednesday, September 1, 2010 at 12:30 pm at the Hart Park House Senior Center as a part of the Lunch & Learn program, and
- Monday, September 13, 2010 at 7:00 pm in the Youth Activity Center.

Staff or the Council could also make presentations to community groups, homeowners associations, and residents interested in hosting a group presentations. All organizations participating in the Coordinating Council will be mailed notice of the opportunity to schedule a presentation; any other interested parties are invited to contact Director Weaver to schedule a presentation.

4. Panel Discussion

In the future, should the City Council re-initiate a water rate increase, the Council may wish to consider hosting a panel discussion with representatives speaking on the pros and cons of a water rate increase.

5. <u>Direct Mailings</u>

It is anticipated that throughout the public outreach process, a variety of direct mailings will occur. For example:

- A half sheet postcard can be developed for a direct mailing to all Sierra Madre Postal Customers providing notice of the Walk & Talks and Community Presentation sessions.
- A newsletter similar to the "Mud Newsletter" will be developed addressing all the bullets in the community presentation and mailed to all the postal customers.
- Another postcard can be generated prior to the first mailing of the new-formatted water bills and the postcard can include information regarding the upcoming outreach programs, or other timely water utility information.
- When the Council decides to consider a rate increase, another mailing will be prepared to provide information regarding the rate increase proposal.
- Lastly, Staff will be requesting an "executive summary" be included in any revised rate study so that the information can be included in a water bill mailing.

6. Other Publicity Measures

Press releases, eBlasts, and quite possibly the new AM radio station will all be utilized to disseminate information as well, namely promoting the Walk & Talks, Community Presentations, etc. Staff will prepare the initial press release upon Council's authorization of the outreach program providing on update summarizing, what's transpired and what to expect next.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

There are costs associated with this educational program including overtime for non-exempt staff participating in the Walk & Talks and Community Presentations. The direct mailings are expected to cost approximately \$1,500 for each mailing.

PUBLIC NOTICE PROCESS

This item has been noticed through the regular agenda notification process. Copies of this report are available at the City Hall public counter and the Sierra Madre Public Library.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council provide direction regarding the public outreach program and authorize Staff to initiate the water utility educational and public outreach program.