



JOSHUA BASIN WATER DISTRICT
REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, JULY 10, 2018, AT 6:00 PM
61750 CHOLLITA ROAD, JOSHUA TREE, CA 92252

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
3. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM
4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
5. PUBLIC COMMENTS
This public comment portion of this agenda provides an opportunity for the public to address the Committee on items not listed on the agenda that *are of interest to the public at large* and are within the subject matter jurisdiction of this Committee. The Committee is prohibited by law from taking action on matters discussed that are not on the agenda, and no adverse conclusions should be drawn if the Committee does not respond to public comments at this time.
6. CONSENT CALENDAR
 - Approve draft minutes of the Special Workshop Committee meeting of March 13, 2018
7. CHANGES IN OFFICE HOURS OF OPERATION-
8. CUSTOMER ACCOUNT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM-
9. GENERAL MANAGER REPORT –
10. CONFIRM DATE FOR NEXT CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
11.
 - September 11, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.
12. ADJOURNMENT

Pages 2-4

Page 5

Pages 6-9

INFORMATION: State your name and have your information prepared and be ready to provide your comments to the Committee. The District is interested and appreciates your comments. A 3-minute time limit will be imposed. Thank you.

Any person with a disability who requires accommodation in order to participate in this meeting should telephone Joshua Basin Water District at (760) 366-8438, at least 48 hours prior to the meeting to make a request for a disability-related accommodation.

JOSHUA BASIN WATER DISTRICT
Minutes of the
REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
March 13, 2018

1. CALL TO ORDER 6:02 p.m.
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
3. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:

Jeff Dongvillo	Absent
Tom Kayne	Present
Shari Long	Present
Karen Morton	Present via PHONE
Karyn Sernka	Present
Karen Tracy	Present
Gayle Austin	Present

- STAFF PRESENT: Curt Sauer, General Manager
- CONSULTANTS: Kathleen Radnich, Public Information & Outreach
- GUESTS: 2
4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MSC/Kayne/Austin 6/0/1 to approve the Agenda of the regular meeting of the CAC for January 9, 2018.
5. PUBLIC COMMENT –

There was no public comment.
6. CONSENT CALENDAR

MSC/Tracy/Kayne 6/0/1 to approve the draft minutes with the correction of Special Meeting “Rate Workshop” on December 6, 2017, and Gayle Austin to be marked as Present.
7. DISCUSSION: LOW-INCOME RATE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS:

GM Sauer opened the discussion with an overview of the status of proposed programs in consideration at the State level.

SB 401 Affordable and Safe Drinking Water Initiative -Progress on this Bill, to date, has involved steps of passing lesser Bills: SB 88 (failing water system providers mandated to consolidate or take assistance from alternate water providers); SB 552 (failed water providers of disadvantaged communities, must accept managerial assistance as appointed by the SWB); and SB 1263 (helps to prevent the establishment of new, unsustainable public water systems. The biggest challenge is the lack of funding to help subsidize the water rates paid by low-income residents and all other overheads associated with providing water to them.

Tom Kayne, shared a written “break down” of how he saw AB 401 broken down for our District. He felt it was unfair as 1/3 of our ratepayers are at or below the poverty level being considered, with 2/3 of the rate payers paying for a significant portion of 1/3 of these poverty level customer’s bills. A discussion followed as to why we should or shouldn’t subsidize only the first tier rate payers.

Jeff Dross asked if we, “just not raise rates for the poor, while not concerning our time and efforts determining why they are poor.” More discussion followed.

Karen Tracy clarified that it was, “illegal to make 40% pay for 60% of the customers.”

Jeff Dross suggested we try the, “rounding up” program (voluntarily) and designate those funds to help the poor. Discussion followed with a consensus that it would not cover enough of the “needs.”

GM Sauer reiterated “it was illegal, bottom line.”

GM Sauer shared, from AGM Susan Greer, a recap of proposed “Water Account Assistance-related solutions.”

SB 623, not yet adopted, called the Water Tax by ACWA and the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fee (by the Author), this is a 95-cent tax paid by all to be redistributed to disadvantaged communities. ACWA is opposing this legislation.

SB 998, not yet adopted, this bill would prevent the District from locking-off non-payment customers, along with other new unfunded mandate compliance regulations that potentially would increase “bad debt” with accounts from District customers.

AB 401, not yet adopted. Called the Low Income Water Rate Assistance Act; Refer to discussion points in item 7A (above). SWRCB and the State Board of Equalization have not met their deadline to decide on this bill yet.

JBWD CAAP (Customer Account Assistance Program) this is a current program for large bills of unknown or accidental origin, and the cost of this assistance has increased each of the last four years, which is seen as a disturbing trend.

United Way Program - Allow the United Way to distribute to qualifying accounts some property tax revenues received plus charitable donations from account holders. Unable to use water revenues to fund any assistance program, GM Sauer stated that he just learned the United Way program only charges \$50/month administrative fees to distribute charitable funds for water needs.

Jeff Dross suggested we put a “donation box” on our water bills.

Gayle Austin was in support of looking into the United Way program. Her concern was that we just voted on a significant rate increase (affecting everyone) and that hiring staff to implement any charity program would not be appropriate.

GM Sauer suggested that staff could investigate the United Way program further.

Gayle Austin asked about also checking with the “Haven and Arch” organizations for assistance.

GM Sauer clarified they were umbrella organizations under the Basin Wide Foundation.

Karen Tracy endorsed the United Way opportunity.

MSC/Kayne/Long 6/0/1 to move forward on the United Way opportunity.

8. GENERAL MANAGER REPORT

GM Sauer offered an update on the progress of Well 14—that to date, it was moving forward. So announced the hiring of Mark Ban, our new Operations Director. He shared the time and dates of the Finance Committee meeting (which has been moved to the 2nd Wednesday of each month.

Kathleen Radnich reminded the CAC about the upcoming Water Education Day event and the potential fall District Tours, and to forward potential candidate names to her. A new program called, "Droplets," which will involve tracking the CIP progress and enhance District transparency.

9. CONFIRM DATE FOR NEXT CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE-

- May 8, 2018, at 6 p.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

MSC/Kayne/Long 6/0/1 to adjourn the January 9th, 2017, Regular Meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee at 7:06 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Curt Sauer, General Manager

INFORMATION: State your name and have your information prepared and be ready to provide your comments to the Committee. The District is interested and appreciates your comments. A 3-minute time limit will be imposed. Thank you.

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JOSHUA BASIN WATER DISTRICT
MEETING AGENDA REPORT

Meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee

July 10, 2018

Report to: Committee

Prepared by: Curt Sauer

TOPIC: Changes in Office Hours of Operation

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend that the CAC Committee accept and refer to the Board of Directors to approve office hours of Monday through Thursday, 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

ANALYSIS:

Administrative Code Section 4.04.10 Hours of Employment states: It shall be the duty of the General Manager to devote his entire time to the duties of his office. The General Manager shall see that the office is open to the public from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM five days a week, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.

One of the recommendations of the Organizational Assessment is to close the office on Fridays. The purpose of this closure is to better align employee responsibilities and reduce the amount of hours that Finance employees are required to cover Customer Service, estimated to be 32 hours per month. It also gives 16 additional hours per month to the Distribution staff to conduct planned operations and maintenance work rather than responding to service orders. Emergency calls will still be covered.

Additionally, Customer Service has recommended that changing the office hours from 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM to 7:30 AM - 4:30 PM would be an improvement for a variety of reasons. Internally, these hours would allow the Customer Service Representatives (CSR) to cash out and reconcile all daily payments from 4:30 – 5:00, creating more timely payment posting and simpler reconciliation. The cash out could then occur outside the presence of the public, which is a safety improvement. Furthermore, closing the office doors half an hour before the end of the CSR's workday is also likely to alleviate the overtime occasionally incurred when customers arrive in the office just before closing time. Best of all, this change would increase customer convenience by allowing customers the opportunity to conduct business in the early mornings on their way to work – especially helpful on lock off day.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Discussion

JOSHUA BASIN WATER DISTRICT
STAFF REPORT

Meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee

July 10, 2018

Report to: Committee

Prepared by: Curt Sauer

TOPIC: Customer Account Assistance Program – Recommended change to policy

RECOMMENDATION: Authorize the General Manager to draft a Resolution to change policy, making assistance available only to primary residence customers.

ANALYSIS:

The Customer Account Assistance Program (CAAP) was established to assist customers that experienced large bills from unknown circumstances, such as large or prolonged leaks.

For the past five years, the total assistance provided via the program each year is:

2013 - 609.34

2014 - 1199.97

2015 - 1647.74

2016 - 6184.60

2017 - 6373.71

See page 4 for a 2017 breakdown.

In addition to the financial aspect of the program, we should also consider staff time. Val will spend two to three hours at the parcel and make arrangements to meet the owners at the parcel. For non-co-operative customers Peggy can spend two to three hours over the course of two to three months, re-contacting them because of incomplete compliance with the program.

The demographics of the District are changing, with increasing second homeowners that do not live in the area and do not routinely monitor their properties. A second change in the client base is the significant increase in vacation rentals.

Each year the District has provided CAAP assistance to account-holders including some that are not living in their properties as their primary residence. CAAP credits provided to non-primary residence customers now constitutes about 30 percent of all CAAP monies credited to accounts.

Our Rules and Regulations define residential and commercial water services as:

Residential Water Service: Water service to a customer for use in connection with his/her habitation of his/her dwelling unit including landscaping. It excludes water use that would fall into commercial, industrial, agricultural or public water service.

Commercial Water Service: Service of water to a private, non-governmental customer engaged in commercial activity for the purpose of profit. Churches, private educational institutions, private hospitals, private research institutions, cults, communes, performing arts groups, and similar organizations will come under this definition.

The General Manager is recommending the CAAP policy be changed to apply only to customers that are living at their primary residence. If they are living on a parcel that also has a vacation rental on the parcel, the account will be classified as commercial.

This past 12 months it would have resulted in increased revenues of \$1,884. Importantly, this policy change will concur with the requirements of the new Low-Income Assistance Program and that simplifies administration.

The Board should consider whether it is appropriate for the District to offer this program to owners of parcels that are 1) not their primary residence or 2) conducting a business enterprise. The General Manager believes that large water bills at these locations should be considered a cost of doing business, and not be eligible for CAAP assistance credits to their account.

Article 1.23 (b) is included here for your review:

b) Customer Account Assistance Program

The Customer Account Assistance Program provides a method to request bill reduction for a bill of unknown or accidental origin as defined by the customer, specifically the CAAP application. The Program was created to assist customers who have experienced extraordinary or unusual circumstances.

The procedure includes the customer's written application and JBWD investigation. Until the JBWD receives the customer's written application; the bill is due as presented. The application, plus information obtained as a result of the review and investigation will be forwarded to the General Manager or a designee. While the CAAP application is being reviewed, a good faith payment, equal to the amount of the bill for the same month in the prior year, must be paid by the due date.

The General Manager or a designee shall determine the amount of assistance, if any, based upon a review of the information obtained and in accordance with the current policy. No assistance will be considered for excessive water use cases that result from a violation of the JBWD Rules and Regulations.

Guidelines for assistance

- Account holder must show proof of repair of any leaks before receiving assistance. A Water Survey is also required before assistance is provided. Customer, or representative, must be present at the water survey conducted by a District employee.
- Customers are limited to two (2) CAAP's within a five (5) year period at the same location. A new owner-customer at the same location may be considered for additional assistance.

- Assistance is limited to no more than two consecutive monthly billing cycles; assistance is calculated by comparing the difference between the current and the prior year's bills for the month(s) in question. If water bill is greater than \$400.00 compared to the previous year's usage, the customer is eligible for assistance. If this is a new account with no previous year comparable, then an average consumption of all months on the account will be used as the comparator.
- If the difference is less than \$400.00, the account is not eligible for a CAAP. A payment plan, following existing procedures will be offered.
- If the difference is more than \$400.00, an adjustment of no greater than 25 percent of the water usage may be approved by the General Manager (or designee), up to a maximum assistance of \$800.00. The remaining bill is the customer's responsibility to pay. The customer may request a payment plan for the balance.

Fiscal Impact: Potential increase of revenue by eliminating CAAP assistance to non-primary residence customers and vacation rentals.

NON PRIMARY RESIDENT

NAME	ADDRESS	AMOUNT	DATE
Customer #1	Non Primary	\$ 153.80	Jun-17
Customer #2	Non Primary	\$ 619.68	Jul-17
Customer #3	Non Primary	\$ 120.61	Nov-17
Customer #4	Non Primary	\$ 137.37	Mar-18
Customer #5	Non Primary	\$ 283.37	May-18
Customer #6	Non Primary	\$ 411.78	May-18
	TOTAL	\$ 1,726.61	

PRIMARY RESIDENCE

NAME	ADDRESS	AMOUNT	DATE
Customer #1	Primary	\$ 124.62	Jan-17
Customer #2	Primary	\$ 119.30	Jun-17
Customer #3	Primary	\$ 100.83	Jul-17
Customer #4	Primary	\$ 582.71	Sep-17
Customer #5	Primary	\$ 195.43	Sep-17
Customer #6	Primary	\$ 276.61	Oct-17
Customer #7	Primary	\$ 402.96	Nov-17
Customer #8	Primary	\$ 213.36	Nov-17
Customer #9	Primary	\$ 144.07	Nov-17
Customer #10	Primary	\$ 100.06	Nov-17
Customer #11	Primary	\$ 155.12	Dec-17
Customer #12	Primary	\$ 178.73	Dec-17
Customer #13	Primary	\$ 198.62	Dec-17
Customer #14	Primary	\$ 271.41	Dec-17
Customer #15	Primary	\$ 185.82	Jan-18
Customer #16	Primary	\$ 240.81	Jan-18
Customer #17	Primary	\$ 279.62	Feb-18
Customer #18	Primary	\$ 217.61	Mar-18
Customer #19	Primary	\$ 158.00	May-18
	TOTAL	\$ 4,145.69	