



**City of Davis**  
**Utilities Commission Minutes**  
**Remote Meeting**  
**Wednesday, March 17, 2021**  
**5:30 P.M.**

Commissioners Present: Gerry Braun, Andrew Cullen, Linda Deos (Chair), Steve Gellen, Lorenzo Kristov, Elaine Roberts-Musser, Johannes Troost

Commissioner(s) Absent: None

Council Liaison(s) Present: None

Staff Present: Stan Gryczko, Public Works Utilities & Operations Director  
Adrienne Heinig, Management Analyst  
Heather Brown, Water Quality Coordinator  
Dawn Calciano, Conservation Coordinator

Also in Attendance: Melanie Holton, Brown & Caldwell

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**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chairperson Deos called meeting to order at 5:31pm.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

Prior to the approval of the agenda, it was amended to reflect Item 6B would be taken up before Item 6A. E Roberts-Musser moved to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by G Braun. Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Braun, Cullen, Deos, Gellen, Kristov, Roberts-Musser, Troost

Noes:

Absent:

**3. Brief Announcements from Staff, Commission Members, and City Council Members**

- E Roberts-Musser provided five articles for review:
  - *America's Drinking Water Supply is Surprisingly Easy to Poison* - ProPublica
  - *City of Camarillo Approves Moving Forward with Designs for Hybrid Solar Microgrids at Five Critical Community Facilities* - PublicCEO
  - *The Unfinished Business of Flint's Water Crisis* - ProPublica
  - *Waste-America's Dirty Secret* – Rotary
  - *City-led Investigation Reveals Recology Knowingly Overcharged San Francisco Customers by \$100M* – KCBS All News
- A Heinig provided two updates:
  - The update to the charge for construction water use was brought to City Council on March 16, and the Council approved the first reading of the ordinance update. If the item is approved at the second reading of the

ordinance, the charge for construction water use will be adjusted to be commensurate with the cost for commercial water use.

- The City has launched a Stormwater Initiative website, and will begin a series of community meetings related to the proposed fees. Information on the Fee Report, the community meetings and more can be found online: <https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/public-works-utilities-and-operations/stormwater/stormwater-rates-and-rate-studies>

#### 4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

#### 5. Consent Calendar

A. **Utilities Commission Draft Meeting Minutes** – February 17, 2021

B. **2020 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Update** (Informational)

C. **Update on Utility Power Usage and Costs for City Assets** (Informational)

D. **Monthly Utility Bill Breakdown for Average Single-Family Residence** (Informational)

Prior to the approval of the Consent Calendar, Items B and C were pulled. Comments from the Commission were shared on Item D.

G Braun moved, L Kristov seconded, to approve the Consent Calendar absent Item B and Item C. Approved by following votes:

Ayes: Braun, Cullen, Deos, Gellen, Kristov, Roberts-Musser, Troost

Noes:

Absent:

The Commission requested that Item D be shared as an informational item when rates will be adjusted, rather than each month.

Item B (2020 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Update) was pulled to include as a regular item on a future agenda to appoint a liaison from the Commission to attend Natural Resource Commission (NRC) meetings when the Climate Action Adaptation Plan will be on the agenda, and to discuss the possibility of forming a Commission subcommittee on the topic. Commissioners Braun, Troost, and Cullen indicated interest in participating in the discussions with the NRC. It was also suggested that the Commission consider having a standing item for the CAAP on future agendas.

Item C (Update on Utility Power Usage and Costs for City Assets) was pulled to include as an item on a future agenda to discuss the current status of the City's power accounts with PG&E, Valley Clean Energy (VCE) and PVUSA, as well as questions related to the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA).

#### 6. Regular Items

B. **Urban Water Management Plan Review** (*heard prior to Item 6A*)

The item was introduced by A Heinig, who introduced City staff present to address Commissioner comments, and Melanie Holton from Brown & Caldwell, who provided the presentation to the Commission.

Discussion also included the following:

- Clarification that the growth projection of 1% per year is included in the Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP).
- Clarification of how water losses in the UWMP are calculated. The losses are the difference between the water produced and the recorded water sales.
- Clarification on the term *groundwater sustainability* – the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) establishes that groundwater management agencies must put in place Groundwater Sustainability Plans, to ensure that water taken from the basin and pumped as groundwater is not going to lower future groundwater elevations or cause subsidence. The pumping includes urban and agricultural uses.
- A request to provide context for the data presented on the energy costs for operating the City’s water system, and feedback as to whether the cost as calculated is high or low. The consultant responded that the data is being collected for the first time this year, so the data of other agencies is not yet available, but it is likely that the City energy costs are lower than other agencies with multiple pressure zones that require additional pumping.
- A request to understand where or how the Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) feasibility study underway could impact water supplies. Staff responded that the purpose of ASR would not be to add to the City’s water supplies, rather ASR would be using excess winter water supplies for summer use.
- Additional clarification on the energy intensity metric, to understand if the energy use to distribute water throughout the City’s distribution system is captured in the data. The consultant indicated that the presented data does include the cost of moving water through the City’s distribution system.
- A question around a former UC Davis-administered in-conduit hydro program, to recapture pumping energy as it passes through the system, and if that program is being offered currently.
- A request to understand how the construction of water tunnels to Southern California could impact local water supplies. Staff indicated that water rights in general are complicated, and include teams of attorneys to assist with the efforts. Staff is not positive that the tunnel construction would or would not impact local water supplies. Staff also indicated that a water update, related to “all things water” is planned for City Council in the spring, and staff will provide the update to the UC as well.
- Clarification on Section 7 regarding the intermediate wells, how the wells are used, and if the hexavalent chromium within those wells remains above the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for drinking water. Staff indicated that the intermediate

wells do have less optimal water quality than the deep wells, however the wells are fully permitted for use. The hexavalent chromium concern is that the MCL has been rescinded, primarily due to legal issues, and staff expect that an updated MCL will be provided by the State once the current review process is completed. Once established, staff will likely have to develop a plan to mitigate hexavalent chromium in the intermediate wells, or will discontinue use of the wells short of clearly defined emergency use. Ten of the City's intermediate wells have been disconnected with the introduction of surface water, four intermediate wells remain active and are regularly tested. The operational plan calls for use of the connected intermediate wells only in cases of emergency or peak demand.

- A question related to the plan to transition intermediate wells to irrigation-only wells. Staff indicated that the well selected, Well 11, could potentially be a good location for an ASR well, so the project is on hold until the ASR study is completed.
- Clarification on the dry year scenarios, and if the UWMP projects that future dry years will be more severe than previous dry years. The consultant indicated that the current plan does not include projected climate change impacts, except for the data provided by the Woodland-Davis Clean Water Agency (WDCWA) on the projected impacts to surface water availability. Clarification was also provided that the modeled scenario reflects the last drought, and includes the data on water availability provided by WDCWA.
- Concern that the water supply chart supplied by the UWMP paints a more optimistic picture than what could occur with another drought. Staff indicated that one of the main reasons that the chart does not show significant impacts is that the City utilizes a conjunctive use system, with the groundwater offsetting potential cuts to surface water availability in dry years.
- Whether or not contamination of the water supply was considered as a scenario. While the UWMP focuses on drought impacts, the possible contamination of the water supply was included as a reason for reduction of supplies within the Water Shortage Contingency Plan.
- Clarification that the submittal of annual water supply and demand assessments is required every year in June.
- A request to understand the role of the Commission in looking at the UWMP, and how the review of other Commissions may inform the UC deliberations.
- A comment that public education is crucial to ensure that the community continues to conserve water, and concern that the chart demonstrating plenty of supply might cause mixed messaging. Staff indicated that the community has met reduction goals from the State, and the new regulations currently in discussion will include indoor and outdoor water use targets, so the work to conserve water does not stop, even if the City has a stable water supply.

There were several points presented by Commissioners around concerns about wanting to understand more about the UWMP's climate change assumptions, and requesting more information on any *actual* cost of service impacts for the water utility, in addition to concerns about the compressed timing the approval process for the UWMP. No formal motion was made by the Utilities Commission on the adoption of the Plan due to these questions.

Additional discussion included:

- Clarification as to the reasoning behind the decision not to share the data or assumptions behind the risk assessments conducted for City assets or WDCWA. Staff indicated that there are federal laws around the security of assessments conducted for water systems, and releasing information on potential water rights negotiations would disrupt or derail the process. Staff added that information from the resiliency assessment (assessed from 1915 to current day, with a review of Term 91 frequency) could potentially be shared with the Commission.
- With the concern voiced that the review of drought conditions was retrospective rather than a forward view, staff indicated that WDCWA participated in a pilot conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) using the [Climate Resilience Evaluation and Awareness Tool \(CREAT\)](#), which did model future impacts.
- A concern that projections that are adjusted each year would indicate that the City is not taking climate change as seriously as necessary, and a request to see different models that would demonstrate different rates of change. Additionally, it was requested that the City hire consultants with expertise on climate change impacts.
- A request that the UWMP include an executive summary.
- A request from staff that the Commission submit remaining questions to staff prior to the next meeting as the feedback is helpful. Staff also indicated that specific questions should include the section of the document as reference to ensure that staff is able to clarify and have the content understood.

Motion: Appoint Andrew Cullen as liaison from the Utilities Commission to the Natural Resources Commission for their discussion of the Urban Water Management Plan on March 22, 2021.

Moved by JT, seconded by LD. The motion passed by the following votes:

Ayes: Braun, Cullen, Deos, Gellen, Kristov, Roberts-Musser, Troost

Noes:

Absent:

*There was no public comment on this item.*

**A. Commission Workplan Discussion.** *(heard after Item 6B)*

The item was introduced by S Gryczko and A Heinig, who outlined the staff report on the workplan item, which included suggested projects to include in the workplan, and discussion and reflection on the Commission/Council joint discussion from the night prior. Staff indicated that follow-up with the Council might be necessary to fully understand the direction or requests from Council.

Staff provided the following notes as a summary of the Commission/Council Joint Discussion:

- The Council is highly supportive of the Commission looking at utility resiliency moving forward;
- The Council will continue to look to the UC to provide recommendations to maintain fiscal health and resiliency of the utility funds, and would consider recommendations the Commission may provide regarding support for those ratepayers that struggle with payments;
- The Council is concerned about the dry weather, and the indications of another drought on the way, and would like the UC to review and discuss the implications of drought conditions on the City's utilities;
- The Council is interested in the discussion of municipal broadband, especially with the possibility of Federal opportunities for broadband infrastructure funding. Unclear if the Council would like a subcommittee of the Council to review;
- The Council is interested in Commission deliberations and discussions related to SB 1383 changes to solid waste collection; and
- The Council appreciates the support of the Commission in the public discussions related to the City's stormwater initiative.

Discussion included the following:

- A question of whether it would be appropriate to talk about community broadband with the Council in the context of resiliency strategies overall, and provide a recommendation on the process that the Council might take. Commission discussion on the item included caution to tread carefully on the topic of community broadband and recommendations.
- A request that the Commission reach out to Council to provide more direction, especially on the goals related to community broadband, as the direction from Council was unclear, and as an intermediate route request clarification from the Council liaison to the Commission. Staff cautioned that direction from the Council needs to come from the full Council body, not just one member such as the Commission liaison. Staff suggested formulating questions or suggestions (without providing a recommended action), for Council reaction.
- On the community broadband topic, if the Commission believes community broadband is a solution to a specific problem it might be better to approach Council rather than first having Commission discussion on the topic. Staff

indicated that identifying ways in which the environment has changed, and may be different than the approach of the prior Task Force, may be the best information to put before Council.

- Clarification that the Wave contract approved by Council did not include 100% connectivity to all City utilities.
- Caution that the Commission may not have a good grasp of what the Council is interested in the Commission working on. Commission members suggested that the Commission start work on utility resiliency to gather thoughts and focus on next steps.
- The suggestion that the Commission explore the nuance of the approach to utility resiliency, and plan the approach with the general big picture as a starting point, rather than ask the Council to provide that direction.
- A request that the Council liaison attend the agenda preparation meetings between staff and the Commission Chair/Vice Chair, or participate in the workplan discussion, rather than attendance at occasional meetings.
- A concern about the absence of the Commission liaison at meetings, with the understanding that absences are unavoidable.
- The federal funding from the stimulus package and the priority of using those dollars for COVID-19 relief measures (criteria is still being assessed), as well as the ongoing discussion of large infrastructure bills that may provide funding for utility work in the future. The Commission discussed the potential for a significant amount of funding for infrastructure.
- A request to dive into how the Commission sees progress around key goals, with a proposal to start developing metrics and put them in place to get at the health of the City's utilities, to be able to measure progress, so monthly or annually the Commission has a better idea of where the utilities are and where the utilities are headed. There was further clarification to outline the metrics to be used as an evaluation for the City, in communicating to the public what services they receive for their money. Staff indicated there are existing metrics produced as part of the budget process, and annual updates might be a good place to start, but staff would welcome suggestions. It was also suggested the metrics effort might lend itself to a subcommittee to work with staff.

The items added to the Workplan include:

- Community Resilience Strategies (as an ongoing task), including exploring opportunities for addressing the digital divide
- Urban Water Management Plan Update review
- Solid Waste Rate implications of the implementation of SB 1383
- Long-term *Holistic* Strategy of Utility Services
- On-street Yard Material Pile Collection program review
- Update to the City sewer connection fees for new developments
- Integrated Waste Management Plan Update Review

- Added to the utility rate setting process: Support for public education for rate adjustments; and include analysis of all factors that impact the revenue received
- Tracking potential opportunities for federal investments in City infrastructure (ongoing)
- Include public education on water conservation
- Discovery effort of metrics of value to develop in aid of understanding the health and resiliency of City utilities

Motion: To approve the Commission Workplan as updated, and submit to the City Council for review.

Moved by L Deos, seconded by E Roberts-Musser. The motion passed by the following votes:

Ayes: Braun, Cullen, Deos, Gellen, Kristov, Roberts-Musser, Troost

Noes:

Absent:

*There was no public comment on this item.*

## **7. Commission and Staff Communication**

### **A. Long Range Calendar**

The item was introduced by S Gryczko, who outlined the items included on the Long Range calendar for the next few months. He outlined the items included in the calendar over the next few months.

Discussion included the following:

- Should the Commission form a subcommittee related to the development of metrics for City utilities, the first discussion of those metrics could be in July, with the update for the Water fund.
- Added items to the April meeting including the Climate Action Adaptation Plan, the Utility Energy item and the Urban Water Management Plan. It was suggested that the items related to the update to sewer connection fees and the community resiliency discussion may be shifted to a future meeting.

## **8. Adjourn**

Motion: To adjourn the Utilities Commission meeting at 8:16pm.

Moved by L Deos, seconded by J Troost. The motion passed by the following votes:

Ayes: Braun, Cullen, Deos, Gellen, Kristov, Roberts-Musser, Troost

Noes:

Absent