

Are Water and Wastewater Enterprises being ignored – Again?

On January 13 the Budget Committee posted a City Council Policy describing the “Budget Process”. Nowhere in this document is there a mention of the Water and Wastewater Enterprise budget process. **If the budget committee is not watching Enterprise financials – who is?**

- The last two years the Budget Committee gave water and sewer only cursory review. The City Council similarly ran out of steam after long budget meetings and did not dwell on either expense or capital improvement plans.

For this meeting the council is being asked to review and approve salary increases for Administration and Public Works. These are the two departments with the highest allocation of expense to Water and Wastewater rate payers. The fiscal impact section does not mention the impact of these increases on the Water and Wastewater financial plan. If the Administration/Finance Director is not watching the impact of these allocation increases on rate payers – **who is?**

The Water and Wastewater Enterprises Funds were ignored by the past three councils as the operations ran annual deficits. The Reserves were depleted, and it was still ignored until the funds finally had to borrow \$1MM from the General Fund to continue providing water and wastewater services to rate payers.

In order to restore the reserves and pay off the \$1MM debt water rate payers both residential and commercial had to absorb huge increases in costs for these basic services.

Of further concern the plan presented in the water rate study is to restore reserves so the city can borrow millions of dollars to replace well 4. This well replacement is created by the fact it was contaminated with toxic dry-cleaning fluid.

In October 2023 our past city manager/attorney stated that he expected to get a settlement from the business that caused the contamination or there are grants available for water systems. What is the status of the effort to avoid taking on additional debt and potentially accelerate the effort to lower the contamination risk from this well?

Consider adding Water and Wastewater as a separate “department report”. This would increase the focus on the state of the operations, ongoing issues and repairs and an update on the effort to get funding for Well 4 that does not include a huge loan.