



COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER ISSUES MEETING

REGULAR SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2022, 8:30 AM

201 S Cortez Street

Prescott, AZ 86303

Council Chambers

Cathey Rusing, Mayor Pro Tem - Chairperson

Brandon Montoya, Councilman – Member Steve Sischka, Councilman - Member

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING OF THE PRESCOTT COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER ISSUES HELD ON JANUARY 11, 2022 IN THE 201 S CORTEZ STREET PRESCOTT, AZ 86303 COUNCIL CHAMBERS.

1. CALL TO ORDER

City Clerk Sarah Siep called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Cathey Rusing Chairperson

Brandon Montoya Member

Steve Sischka Member

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment will be accepted following each agenda item and are limited to three (3) minutes. Please complete a comment card and return it to the City Clerk, speakers will be called in the order received.

4. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

A. Approval of the December 7, 2021 Meeting Minutes

**MOTION BY MEMBER SISCHKA TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 7, 2021
MEETING MINUTES; SECONDED BY MEMBER MONTOYA: PASSED [3 – 0].**

B. Water Service Application No. WSA21-006, Submitted by Jerry Palmer Architects, LTD, on Behalf of Property Owner Prescott Hylands, LLC. Location: APN 109-12-038, Comprising 1.22 Acres, in the SW1/4 of the SE1/4 of the NE1/4 of Section 4, T13N, R02W.

Water Resource Project Manager, Kay Sydow, provided a presentation to the Subcommittee regarding the Water Service Application for an in-fill project on the site.

Applicant Jerry Palmer with Palmer Architects addressed the Subcommittee regarding the project. It is a twenty-two-unit, two-story mountain community type townhome subdivision on a 1.25-acre parcel, each with two-car garages and small private yard.

Chairperson Rusing asked about the landscaping and if the applicant received a copy of the city requirements.

Mr. Palmer confirmed that he has reviewed the requirements and they will be met.

Member Montoya asked what the current water demand is on this site and how it fits into the schematic of the draft policy that is being considered today at the Study Session.

Ms. Sydow responded the current demand is estimated at 4.68-acre feet (AF) however staff doesn't have information as to what the water demand was from the previous establishment.

Deputy Public Works Director, Gwen Rowitsch, responded that this afternoon's council meeting will review a proposed policy around water management based on the Water Resources Management Model (WRMM). It is not uncommon for parcels to move from one use into another, in this case commercial to residential. Typically, residential use is more stable over time and therefore easier to maintain.

Member Montoya questioned where this project would fit into the new policy with regard to the approval of the application. He is concerned about approval of an application amidst the review of the policy.

Ms. Rowitsch stated that this would be done in exactly the same manner as it is now, go before Planning & Zoning, which it has, and then to the Water Issues Subcommittee and then to Council for approval. This is estimated water usage which will go into the WRMM and will be reviewed annually.

Member Montoya stated that if the Subcommittee recommends forwarding to Council it will likely go to Council in late January and it seems to him this is coming in under the wire.

Ms. Rowitsch responded that the application was submitted in August of 2021; the applicant has been going through the process since that time, so they have been in the que and are not "coming in under the wire".

Public Works Director, Craig Dotseth, added that it is unknown whether this application would or would not be considered in the proposed policy budget; there is the potential that the water budget

for 2022 will include previously approved water allocation. Later today is simply the rollout of the proposed policy. We all must wait and see how that transpires.

Member Montoya asked if there are other WSAs that are in the queue. In-fill development is a good thing, he watched the Planning & Zoning Meeting and there was good vetting but feels we need to be careful about what is pushed down the track.

Ms. Rowitsch responded that there is one other that is already in the process that may come before the Subcommittee in February, but that could potentially change.

Member Sischka responded that the city should be mindful that time is money for these people, they didn't come down here because we have a new proposed policy. Most of the four AF being requested will get returned to recharge.

Member Montoya asked staff for an estimate on the return.

Ms. Rowitsch replied that there is a requirement of 70%, and that is what staff expects from this project.

Mr. Palmer added that they are using water-wise appliances, utilizing drought tolerant landscaping and each unit will have its own water meter.

Chairperson Rusing commented that the concern is with the review of this new policy; wants to make sure there is not a surge of new applications.

Member of the public Matthew Cordia addressed the Subcommittee regarding the proposed development stating that the estimated .34 AF for landscaping is incorrect.

Ms. Rowitsch responded that landscaping is calculated at 1.5 AF per acre and the estimated .21 acres is estimated correctly. Staff can speak with the citizen to see if anything needs to be changed.

**MOTION BY MEMBER MONTOYA TO FORWARD ITEM 4.B. TO COUNCIL;
SECONDED BY MEMBER SISCHKA: PASSED [3 – 0].**

C. Review and Discussion Regarding Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) Website and Overdraft.

Water Resource Project Manager, Leslie Graser, provided a presentation to the Subcommittee regarding innovative tools related to water management which the city needs to begin utilizing. She provided an overview of the AMA Overdraft Dashboard on the ADWR website, which depicts annual inflows and outflows, and overdraft amounts across the active management area, explaining that this tool would allow the Subcommittee to see the total picture.

Member Montoya noted that it in 2005 there was a time when the overdraft dropped but it's been mostly hovering at the same level and commented that, since this tool allows you to toggle back and forth between other AMAs, that it would be useful to look at other areas doing better with overdraft

to see what ideas can be borrowed. He also inquired as to when the modeling will become more current.

Ms. Graser confirmed and added that she contacted ADWR to find out when it will be updated and was informed that it will be updated through 2019 in approximately four to five months (she will verify) and the tool will be part of the 5th management plan for the AMA.

Member Sischka commented that the Subcommittee has to understand that the Prescott AMA has, by far, the highest number of unregulated wells. He asked staff if the Colorado River situation has anything to do with the Prescott AMA.

Ms. Graser commented that although we are in the Colorado River Basin, we do not use water from the Colorado River directly, adding that even though there is not a direct connection we should be cautious. She added that you can also look at “components” on the graphs and dashboards to review what is impacting the inflows and outflows. All of this information can help make decisions going into the future and help communicate those to the public so they understand what Council and staff are looking at.

Chairperson Rusing commented that water was a big topic for the Governor’s State of the State address.

Member of the public Howard Mechanic commented that this tool is a relic, adding that 7-10 years ago ADWR denied his request to continue to provide the overdraft information. He hopes this important information will continue to be seen as a priority. Agrees that Prescott has the highest overdraft as a percentage of water usage, but household exempt wells can’t be blamed for the problem; everyone has to work together and participate in developing a plan to reach safe yield in the AMA. Feels the Subcommittee should provide input to ADWR regarding keeping this information up to date and include 20-year projections.

Member of the public Leslie Hoy addressed the Subcommittee and said that she was told that ADWR is prohibited by state law to show the cumulative overdraft and asked for confirmation.

Ms. Graser commented that she doesn’t believe there is anything stating that they cannot, nor is there any direction stating they have to. She reassured the Subcommittee that staff would not bring them an outdated tool, adding that there are many options that the Subcommittee should be aware of and choosing one common tool is important for consistent communication. Nobody else is putting together all the cumulative reports so there needs to be something to use as a bench at the state level which is what this information is.

Member Montoya asked if staff has spoken with other cities/towns in the region about using these tools.

Ms. Rowitsch responded that about a year and a half ago Prescott began conversations with Chino Valley and have made progress. Prescott has not begun conversations with Prescott Valley but would like to do so.

Member Sischka commented that he is not blaming the exempt wells for the problem but is difficult to have regional conversations with 13,000 well owners and that is an issue that other AMAs don't have.

Ms. Graser added that the Governor's water group has a post 2025 Committee with an Issue Paper specific to exempt wells in the Prescott AMA and how that should be addressed. We are all pumping and need to figure out what the needs are for the municipalities if the wells go dry.

Chairperson Rusing asked for confirmation on a statistic that Prescott is responsible for 75% of the water pumped out of the AMA.

Ms. Graser said that she can't confirm that, but it can be investigated.

Member Montoya commented that he feels this is an opportunity for us and others to reach out and work cooperatively to have conversations about water.

Ms. Graser concurred and added that in the ten years she has worked for Prescott, regional outreach has been the goal. She reviewed that overdraft equates to less inflows than outflows adding that state law AAC R12-15-716 does allow a 100-year depth-to-static water level = 1000 ft. below land surface. Individual cities and towns determine whether they want to follow this strictly or create their own framework.

Member of the public Peter Kroopnick added that there are spreadsheets within the ADWR records which he has taken and graphed through 2017 and found that demand is growing at about 3.5% per year throughout the entire AMA which looks grim to him. Need regional conservation plans.

This item was for discussion only. No formal action was taken.

D. Discussion Regarding the Calendar Year 2021 Rebate Program Update.

Ms. Sydow provided a presentation to the Subcommittee regarding the 2021 rebate program. Reviewing the rebate element, the city issued 56 rebates for washing machines, 56 for 1.28 and 1.0 gallon dual flush toilets (includes thirty of the letters that were sent to owners who purchased the incorrect toilet), 15 for irrigation controllers, 14 for turf removal projects, and 11 for rainwater harvesting tanks.

Rebate Dollars Issued:

\$12,200 – washing machines

\$9,250 – toilets (includes \$2058 for single flush)

\$1125 – irrigation controllers

\$2,493 – (\$.50/sq foot or gallon) turf or rainwater harvesting

Gallons Save Annually:

250,100 gallons – washing machines

774,675 – toilets

129,200 – irrigation controllers
1,316,667 – turf removal
108,150 – rainwater tanks
Total saved – 2,578,792 gallons which is equivalent to 7.91 AF

Ms. Sydow commented that \$40,000/year is typically budgeted for the Rebate Program with the flexibility to exceed.

Ms. Rowitsch added that as part of the budget process they look at trends and budget accordingly. If it goes over budget, funds are shifted within the budget. The focus is not on the money spent in rebates, but on the water saved.

Member Montoya asked if this extends to commercial in the community

Ms. Rowitsch confirmed that the rebates extend to all water users.

Ms. Sydow added that she continues to share information to users and water service applicants regarding the program, etc. In December 2020 she conducted a water audit at all the local schools and then sent information on how to make improvements. Also conducted water audits for Chamber of Commerce and Sharlot Hall in August/September 2021.

Chairperson Rusing commented that there is a concept of ornamental turf and asked if staff identifies those users.

Ms. Sydow commented that she has not, but staff recognizes the opportunity for those communications.

Member of the public Leslie Hoy commented that the turf removal does stand out as the big water saver and asked what success staff experienced regarding outreach to homeowners with turf. Noted that CWAG utilized an intern to help identify well owners with water tanks.

Ms. Sydow said staff can investigate that and appreciates the offer.

This item was for discussion only. No formal action was taken.

5. General Announcements from Staff

Ms. Graser addressed the Subcommittee with the general announcements:

- The Decision and Order was filed on 12/17/21 and is available on the city website
- City's drought plan (due every five years) was filed with ADWR on 12/13/21 and is available on the city website
- Adjudication Piece – Subflow Technical Report due dates have been revised. Council can review the report filed at provided website link
- AZ Legislature began the 55th Session on Jan. 10, 2022

6. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Chairperson Rusing adjourned the meeting at 9:58 a.m.


Cathey Rusing, Chairperson

ATTEST:


Jennifer Wiita, Deputy City Clerk

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Regular Subcommittee Meeting of the Council Subcommittee on Water Issues of the City of Prescott, Arizona held on January 11, 2022. I further certify the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this 3rd day of February, 2022.




Jennifer Wiita, Deputy City Clerk