

SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 14, 2010

Mayor Jeff Bearden called the Special Meeting of the City Commission to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Western Room of Wilbarger Memorial Auditorium, and a quorum was declared present.

Present: Mayor Jeff Bearden

Commissioners: Jimmy Dennis, Russell Brownlow, Travis Taylor and Phil McCuiston

Staff Present: City Attorney Trish Byars. Public Works Director Bob Cochran, Police Chief Tom Wilson, Fire Chief Kent Smead, Community Development Director Monica Wilkinson, Finance Director Anne Garmon, and City Secretary Linda Byers.

Commissioner Brownlow led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. and Texas flags, followed by the invocation.

Mayor Bearden welcomed those present. City Manager Mitch Grant was absent due to a family emergency. Also at the head table was Jeff James, Engineer with the firm of Kimley-Horn and Associates.

PRESENTATION BY CITY STAFF

Public Works Director Bob Cochran presented a power point presentation that outlined:

- The history of the Nitrate Removal Plant,
- How the Ion Exchange process was selected
- The nitrate plant shutdown and the process for restarting the nitrate plant,
- The choices for disposal of the brine that is generated from the Ion Exchange process,
- Estimated costs of each option.

Engineer Jeff James, who did the feasibility study to give the city the options for discharge, outlined the costs of each of the available options.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mayor Bearden opened the meeting to Public Comment from those who had submitted Requests to Speak during Public Comment Forms.

Jose Cardenas said that his reasons for opposition to the discharge into the Pease River was that the city would be dumping toxins such as chromium, arsenic and lead into the river, and there is an option to drill an injection well to discharge wastes, also there are many years of damage done to the river and the river discharge option will involve legal suits and involvement of the EPA and Federal Government.

Andy Brumley said that the damage that has already been done cannot be fixed. He was here to prevent new damage. There has been no testing on aquifers done after discharge such as that proposed on the river. Because of the increased use of nitrate in fertilizer, our problem is likely to increase in the future, so we need to plan for a process that won't be obsolete in the near future.

Larry Sparks owner of Sparky's Guide Service at Lake Texoma is concerned with putting anything into the water that would affect the property and the Lake downstream. He asked the Commission to be sure that they are right in what we do because it affects others downstream.

Danny King is concerned for the affect the discharge into the river will have on the wildlife and fish in the river.

Sara McDuff owns property on the river. She is concerned for the future and wants what's best for all concerned.

Elton Zoch has problems with discharge into Pease River. There is no river flow in the summer. Discharge will evaporate and seep into the aquifer.

Henry Weed, representing Red River Authority is opposed to an increase in water rates.

Dan White, representing Northside Water Authority, said that their water had a nitrate level of 14.73ppm. He challenged the statement that the water is unsafe to drink. He is in favor of lower water rates.

Richard McDuff is concerned with a long term resolution and asked if the current solution would be a long term fix.

Mike Owen said that the City had a history of choosing the quick and easy solution. Our solution adds brine to the river. The City should pick the best solution, not the quick and easy fix. He asked the Commission to be visionaries and fix it right.

Jimmy Koontz drilled water well test holes along the Pease and Red Rivers for the Corp of Engineers. Heavy salt water was found at the bottom of these wells. Salt water won't blend but will go to the bottom of the river. He suggested injection well as a solution.

Cathy Schur asked that the City not dump toxic waste into the river.

Tim Schur asked what do Oklahoma and other entities think of our plan, and hoped that there should be a better way than discharge to the river.

William and Nancy Barrow were both opposed to dumping in the river.

Meg Heatly said that the city had not considered the cost of dumping into the river. The costs of lawsuits should be considered. An easy solution now would be a problem in the future.

DISCUSSION REGARDING DISPOSAL OPTIONS

Commissioner Dennis thanked everyone for their comments. He stated that the Commission needs to put this as a priority and figure how to do this right.

Commissioner Brownlow said that the comments indicated that the Commission did not understand what was going on, but that's not true. He said that the discharge into the river would not be composed of things that are on the EPA list of toxic substances. He also said that the City needs to solve the problem with the filtration at the plant and the decision that is made will be the right decision for the times.

Commissioner Taylor stated that the city commission is working hard and looking at all of the angles. They will look for the cost effective, taxpayer, and future points of view for the best choice.

Commissioner McCuistion wondered if an injection well would not also enter the aquifer.

Jeff James noted that the cost estimates were for only equipment and did not include operation costs.

Public Works Director Bob Cochran emphasized again that Vernon's drinking water was safe to drink for most people, did not contain any toxins, but only has increased levels of nitrates.

Mayor Bearden stated his appreciation for the citizen's input on this important decision about how the City can maintain long term compliance with state and federal environmental regulations in a fiscally responsible way.

In response to comments made, Mayor Bearden emphasized that there are no toxins in Vernon water. Wichita Falls, Burkburnett and Seymour are all discharging into adjoining rivers without noticeable problems, and Burkburnett is discharging into the Red River. If there are damages, the commission would like to see proof of the damage. The City is being asked to prove a negative. TCEQ required the City to prove that our process was going to work, and they were satisfied enough to issue a permit for discharge into the river. The City cannot qualify for a grant when we have a financed, low cost solution, and would not qualify for a grant for a more expensive solution. Increasing rates are a concern, and a long term solution will be hard when we don't know what future regulations will bring.

The Commission is interested in doing the right thing, and will take all of the comments, questions and suggestions, and any hard core supplementary information and take that into consideration and work for a solution that we can all live with.

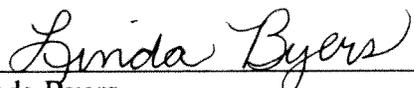
ADJOURN

The meeting was declared adjourned at 6:40 pm.



Jeff Bearden
Mayor

ATTEST:



Linda Byers
City Secretary