

MEETING REPORT
PUBLIC OUTREACH COMMITTEE
MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2011
9:00 A.M.

Directors: Bob Behee
 Delbert Rotelli

Public: Ron Ringen

Staff: Pete Kampa
 Melissa McMullen
 Lisa Westbrook

Review Customer Service Outreach Program

Lisa Westbrook distributed the proposed changes to TUD customer service, which included;

1. The District is looking to partner with Union Bank to add the following customer service payment options:
 - A. Being able to accept credit card payments over the counter
 - B. Adding an online payment solution where customers could go to the TUD website and log into their TUD account to vie payments and make a payment. Currently customers are directed to Official Payments and are charged a \$3.95 processing fee
 - C. TUD is also looking into e-bill payments where customers are sent a bill electronically
2. Change bi-monthly billing to monthly billing to make payments more affordable for customers.
3. Meter reading efficiency-TUD has also looked at the meter reading process. To save the District time and money , TUD has consolidated the meter reading areas by geographical location

Lisa Westbrook stated TUD staff has been meeting with Union Bank, which has a great online service program. The bank offers some benefits like credit card swiping and this would be available for TUD customers at the front counter. Currently if a TUD customer comes in to pay by credit card, the customer is given a phone and a number to call to process their payment. The customer is also charged a fee of \$3.95 for this process. Mrs. Westbrook stated that this is very frustrating for customers and feels that more payment options will make it financially easier for customers. Mrs. Westbrook feels more customers will pay their accounts instead of letting them go delinquent, saving TUD staff time and money in not having to process the delinquent accounts and turnoffs.

Director Rotelli inquired if there would be a charge to TUD for accepting payment by credit card. Lisa Westbrook responded that TUD would be charged a fee, which is approximately fifteen cents, depending on the type of card the customer used. Pete Kampa stated that this fee would become a budgeted line item, and that TUD is not proposing a fee to pay your bill by credit card.

Lisa Westbrook stated when speaking with other Districts almost every other District accepts payment by credit card. Groveland Community Service District (GCSD) started accepting credit card payments approximately two years ago and their credit card processing increased 60-75%. GCSD absorbs all fees because they stated it outweighs the processes of turning off customers.

Lisa Westbrook distributed information from Union Bank concerning the credit card payment process.

Lisa Westbrook stated TUD is proposing to change from bi-monthly to monthly billing. Director Rotelli inquired why the billing process is being changed. Mrs. Westbrook responded that it is to make payments more affordable for customers by paying each month instead of a larger amount every other month.

Ron Ringen suggested that if TUD begins distributing its billing electronically, to make each bill only one page so that it is easier and more affordable for customers to print.

PUBLIC OUTREACH COMMITTEE
MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2011

Lisa Westbrook stated the meter reading process has been reviewed and revised in order to save the District time and money the meter reading areas have been consolidated by geographical areas. Mrs. Westbrook distributed a spreadsheet showing areas and which months the meters will be read in that area, also, whether the meters are manually read or auto read meters, and the billing dates.

Pete Kampa stated that the investments in auto read meters and the technology is the reason TUD is able to eliminate a position, which helps to cut cost. TUD does not cut cost by arbitrarily cutting employee's positions or laying employees off. Mr. Kampa stated the positions are eliminated because of improvements to the system.

Pete Kampa inquired from a public outreach perspective, what is the Committee's opinion on the protest letters concerning the water rate increase. Mr. Kampa stated some people are writing the letters in such a manner that a response is expected. Mr. Kampa stated that due to the large amount of letters received it would encompass a large amount of staff time to respond to each letter.

Director Behee suggested to publically address the letters so as to be able to direct public to view the website which contains the information needed to answer most of the questions asked.

Director Rotelli suggested responding to general questions in the protest letters by posting information on the TUD website.

Pete Kampa clarified that the feedback he is receiving from the Committee is to work with Lisa Westbrook in getting a summary from Casey Prunchak on what the most common questions are being asked in the protest letters and to make sure those general documents are available on the website. TUD staff will not be responding to the protest letters individually.

Director Rotelli stated that he did not want a copy of all protest letters, but would like a count of letters received.

Director Behee stated if there are recommendations in some of the protest letters that are valuable recommendations he would be interested in viewing those letters. Pete Kampa stated that it would be unfair for TUD staff to choose from the letters which recommendations are considered valuable. Mr. Kampa stated either the Board will receive a copy of all letters or just a count of letters received.

Director Behee stated while attending the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) conference, there was a suggestion by a speaker to add to customer billing what the cost of their water is actually buying them. For an example you could say \$30 a month buys you 58 toilet flushes, 2000 showers, or 50 loads of laundry. Director Behee stated by doing this you can show each customer what their actually receiving for the cost.

Ron Ringen suggested that if TUD is not going to respond to each protest letter individually, but instead respond by posting the information on the website this may be an issue for some customers who do not have internet access, but if the information is going to be posted to the website it needs to be in a separate area that is easy to access and understand. Mr. Ringen suggested that TUD place an informational notice in the local newspaper thanking everyone for their comments and suggestions and that they are being read and evaluated. Also, that each letter has been made available to the Board. Mr. Ringen suggested listing at the bottom of the notice a statement that each letter will not be responded to due to lack of staff.

Committee Recommendation: To Proceed with the development of partnering with Union Bank to add more customer service payment options and develop a plan for responding to protest letters.