

MEETING REPORT

WASTEWATER COMMITTEE
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2011
9:00 a.m.

Directors: Delbert Rotelli
Bob Behee

Public: Ron Ringen

Staff: Tom Scesa
Casey Prunchak

Information and Discussion Regarding the Dissolution of the Tuolumne City Sanitary District

Tom Scesa briefly summarized the LAFCO process and the dissolution of the Tuolumne City Sanitary District (TCSD). Mr. Scesa indicated that TCSD must prepare and submit an application to LAFCO for dissolution, a system transfer agreement and a resolution authoring submission of the application to LAFCO, noting that TUD can also approve and submit a resolution supporting their application, which simplifies the LAFCO approval process. Mr. Scesa indicated that the TCSD has provided a draft system transfer agreement to TUD, whereas District staff is currently reviewing.

Tom Scesa reported that District staff had one primary meeting with Tuolumne Economic Development Authority (TEDA) to discuss the proposed transfer process, noting that District staff indicated to TEDA that the settlement agreement between TCSD and TEDA needed to be revised prior to the TUD moving forward with the transfer.

Tom Scesa reported that District staff and staff from TCSD met with the state to discuss the operation of the plant and the operation of the reclamation system, noting that TCSD only has one customer on their reclamation system. Mr. Scesa explained that the representative from the state indicated that if TCSD does transfer to TUD, they will not put any violations on TUD that have been accessed to TCSD, TUD will not be responsible except for groundwater contamination.

Director Rotelli questioned whether TUD will be required to increase the customer rates if TCSD is consolidated with the District.

Tom Scesa indicated that he will be attending the TCSD Board meeting in order to stay informed on the process, noting that TCSD has requested that TUD lower their sewer rates as soon as possible. Mr. Scesa informed TCSD that TUD will operate their system completely for a one year period minimum prior to considering a rate reduction, along with looking at the capital recovery and what funds are available to invest into the collection system (I and I problems) and for plant improvements.

Tom Scesa reported that TCSD has stated that Summerville High School is currently receiving a sewer bill for approximately \$480 annually for their entire sewer account. Mr. Scesa indicated that TCSD is currently attempting to adjust the High Schools rate to be compatible with the rest of the TCSD service area.

Tom Scesa indicated that the staff at TCSD is compiling a list of their approximately 900 customers and recommended that TCSD send them a letter informing their customers of a sewer rate increase in order to cover the cost of service for TCSD.

Committee members strongly indicated that the sewer rates for Summerville High School must be adjusted and the rates for their customers must be increased by the TCSD Board of Directors prior to dissolution of their District and any consideration of a consolidation with TUD.

Tom Scesa explained that TUD staff is currently reviewing their financial statements, noting that there might be an issue with not enough funds being set aside for their capital recovery in order to invest in their collection system.

Tom Scesa indicated that TUD is under no obligation to take their current employees, however they have one office staff, one collection person, and two plant operators, noting that TUD will consider hiring all or none of their current employees on a truly needed basis for TUD.

Committee Recommendation: Sewer rates for Summerville High School must be adjusted and the rates for their customers must be increased to cover the cost of providing service by the TCSD Board of Directors prior to dissolution of their District and any consideration of a consolidation with TUD.

Status and Update on the Reclamation System

Tom Scesa reported on the following:

Quartz Reservoir

The 2010 irrigation season was shortened due to an early winter. The heavy rainfall, 50 inches, of last winter filled Quartz reservoir and delayed the start of the irrigation season. Jamestown Sanitary District removed its tree farm in 2009 which had utilized approximately 35 acre feet per year. These events, coupled with the current cool summer, leave the Quartz reservoir water level six feet above the water elevation at this time last year. This is approximately 180 acre feet of water.

Irrigation Systems

District staff has made efforts to increase the use of recycled water this season by developing the following projects and taking the following steps;

1. Installed fogger systems at and below Quartz Reservoir.
2. Reactivated the use of the reservoir at the Eagan ranch.
3. Reconstructed the temporary irrigation system at the Eagan ranch.
4. Installed a portable pump and irrigation system on the Rosasco ranch.
5. Rented and installed a temporary irrigation system on the Gardella ranch.
6. Installed a pump at the Larsen ranch.
7. Hired one temporary staff to assist ranchers in use of their irrigation systems and for the construction of system on TUD properties.
8. A letter has been sent to all recycled water users explaining the situation and requesting that all users use as much water at late in the season as possible.

Small Community Wastewater Grant

Two of the recommendations of this Board approved project were the addition of land and storage within the system. Staff has contacted users below Quartz to determine possible increased irrigation use. Staff has also contacted a real estate agent to look for potential property in the area of the reclamation system. No useable available land has been found to date. To address the need for additional storage, staff was preparing to construct a pump system to remove the reserve pool in Quartz, however, this was pulled from the budget when it became clear that Quartz would not be at an elevation that would make the project feasible and that the demand for the water was not available.

Discharge into Woods Creek

The District used the NPDES permit, to the maximum legal extent, in the winter of 2010-11 to reduce the amount of water in Quartz reservoir. The testing cost, for water quality, fish bio assay etc., for the use of the NPDES was in excess of \$30,000. We intend to use the NPDES again this year to keep Quartz from overflowing. This is the last year of the existing permit and the District will have to submit for a new permit or submit for discontinuing the use of a NPDES permit. The existing water quality, due to high ammonia, will not meet the terms of the existing permit for future years and therefore would not meet the terms of future permit requirements.

Future weather out look

Unfortunately, some of the current weather predictions for the upcoming winter indicate that the amount of precipitation could be similar as to last year. In November the County Office of Emergency Services sponsors a meeting as part of winter preparedness. Traditionally staff from the National Weather Service attend the meeting and predicts the upcoming winter weather.

Conclusions

Based on what staff understands and has learned in the operation of the reclamation system, we believe that;

1. Additional land for irrigation and additional storage are needed.
2. More water must be able to be delivered to irrigable land in a shortened irrigation season.
3. Staff should to continue to work with existing customers below Quartz to find new land application areas specifically with the Chicken Ranch Tribe, Gardella ranch and the Rosasco ranches.
4. Staff should to continue to work with land owners and real estate professionals to find land that the District can have control of the irrigation cycle. This could be through land ownership or long term lease.
5. Staff should perform a cost evaluation of the reclamation system to insure that rates and fees are adequate for the costs incurred.

Committee Recommendation: For District staff to pursue numbers 3 to 5 in the reports Conclusions.