I. Call to Order

PRESENT: Crowley, Quick, Gravatt, Hilton, Thorne, Reading, Nink
ABSENT:

II. Minutes Approval

1. Public Works Commission Minutes - Regular Meeting - Mar 4, 2020 4:00 PM

RESULT: ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Renee Quick, Commissioner
SECONDER: Crispin Gravatt, Commissioner
AYES: Crowley, Quick, Gravatt, Hilton, Thorne, Reading, Nink

III. PWC Agenda Requests

1. Water Renewal Utility Plan Recommended Approach

Steve Burgos, Public Works Director, reviewed the information that was presented at the June 23rd and June 25th Water Renewal Utility Plan (WRUP) Commission Work Sessions.

Mr. Burgos read the policy questions that were presented at the WRUP Commission Work Sessions with the revisions proposed by the Commissioners:

1. Should Boise pursue this significant advancement in the management of resources?

2. Should the city proactively and prudently invest in infrastructure to address capacity needs, system degradation and growing regulatory requirements to prevent system failures?

3. Should the utility continue to explore new methods of financing projects and consider changes to our business model and rate structure?
Mr. Burgos asked the Commissioners if the WRUP recommended approach addresses the policy questions adequately.

- Commissioner Thorne stated she felt the changes to the questions reflect the discussion at the meetings and the requests for changes made by the Commission.

Mr. Burgos asked specifically if the Commissioners feel the recommended approach is meeting the intent of the policy questions.

- Commissioners Quick and Gravatt answered yes, and Commissioner Gravatt added the questions are, as the work of the Public Works Department is, focused on the end user with a mind toward external benefits for the end user.

Mr. Burgos asked the Commissioners if they agree that public input was effectively integrated into the decision-making process, and into the final recommended approach.

- Commissioner Gravatt answered that he is satisfied with the level of outreach the city did in developing the plan but it’s important that public education and outreach continue to be an integral part of the plan in the future.

- Commissioner Crowley added the team did a great job of meeting the community’s expectations and priorities and melding them into the plan.

- Commissioner Quick commented public participation and involvement will be more important than ever given climate change, growth and other factors.

Mr. Burgos presented a suggested motion for the Commissioner’s consideration:

_I move that we endorse staff’s recommended approach for the future of water renewal services to include pursuit of a shift in the management of resources to include recycled water, proactive and proven investment in infrastructure to address capacity needs, system degradation and growing regulatory requirements to prevent system failures, continued investigation of innovative ways to finance projects and changes to our business model and rate structure, and recommend it be presented to Boise City Council for their consideration/approval._

- Commissioner Gravatt asked if the material presented at the WRUP Commission Work Sessions will be given to Council in its entirety. Mr. Burgos answered they will receive all the information in a different format to address time constraints, i.e., instead of topical presentations, Council will receive the information via multiple memorandums. Regarding the fees that are imposed, Commissioner Gravatt asked if those proposals will be presented
with context of competitive rates from other areas of town. Mr. Burgos replied that when we begin to move forward with the specifics on a cost of service study, we’ll bring the details to the Commission. The information would include an analysis of benchmarking of what other utilities are charging for their services, today and potentially in the future.

- Commissioner Thorne expressed concern about the wording regarding rate structure in Policy Question 3. Mr. Burgos clarified our intention is to continue to investigate potential changes to funding approaches and the wording in the policy question might not reflect that accurately.

- Commissioner Crowley suggested the wording be changed to, “Should the utility continue to explore new methods of financing projects and consider changes to our business model and cost structure”. Mr. Burgos agreed the cost of service study is in effect getting into cost structure and how you’re allocating costs.

- Commissioner Crowley suggested a change in the order of the policy questions would better represent the priorities of the WRUP. He also felt that using the word “shift” in in the suggested motion doesn’t accurately reflect the intention of the plan.

- Commissioner Quick suggested a statement similar to, “To better manage our resources to include recycled water”, instead of, “…to include pursuit of a shift in the management of resources” would be more representative of the intent.

- Mr. Burgos agreed with the suggestion to reorder the policy statements and the rewording of the suggested motion changing “shift” to “manage or optimization of the resource”.

Commissioner Thorne made a motion incorporating the suggested changes:

I move that we endorse staff’s recommended approach for the future of water Renewal Services to include proactive and prudent investment in infrastructure to address capacity needs, system degradation and growing regulatory requirements to prevent system failures, optimize the management of resources to include recycled water, continued investigation of innovative ways to finance projects and changes to our business model and cost structure and recommend it be presented to Boise City Council for their consideration/approval.

Commissioner Quick seconded and the motion carried.
2. FY 2021 Budget Summary

Heather Buchanan, Public Works' Chief Administrative Officer, briefed the Commission on the estimated impacts COVID-19 has had on the current FY 20 budget and the projected FY 21 budget and the changes that were made to the Water Renewal, Solid Waste and Geothermal Enterprise Funds since the budget presentations to the Commission earlier this year.

- Commissioner Reading asked if the adjustments requested from the Water Renewal Fund have been mostly from large or small commercial customers. Ms. Buchanan answered the school district has been the largest commercial account requesting an adjustment so far. Other requests have been from businesses that were closed for a while, such as bars and restaurants downtown.

- Commissioner Gravatt asked if the money that may be available from FEMA for costs related to COVID-19 is related to the Federal Care Act funding that could be disbursed to municipalities in response to COVID-19. Ms. Buchanan explained the funds would be related to the purchase of supplies, masks, cleaning supplies, etc., and the trailers we’ve purchased to use at our water renewal facilities to help with social distancing. Any funds we would be reimbursed are not factored into the budget estimates.

- Commissioner Quick asked if we know when the City could receive any reimbursements. Ms. Buchanan explained we haven’t applied for any funds yet, but she suspects any reimbursements we receive would be at the end of the fiscal year.

- Commissioner Thorne asked if we plan to communicate information on our planning and decision-making process to the public, possibly as a bill insert. Ms. Buchanan answered we are working with Community Engagement to communicate that information. Information on rate increases is always sent as a utility bill insert and we can educate the public on the impact COVID-19 has had on rates with that information.

- Commissioner Gravatt asked if there have been issues around trash collection due to the increase in residential volume and decrease in commercial volume. Ms. Buchanan replied that Republic Services has been able to adjust their routes and has not encountered any issues with collection.

- Commissioner Quick asked if we’ve considered the possibility that people will
continue to work from home which would impact each of the fund’s recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. Ms. Buchanan answered we’ll need to be flexible and adjust as conditions warrant. Ultimately, we may have to charge for the services we provide. Mr. Burgos added right now we don’t have data showing the amount of increases in service demands we’ve experienced. As that data becomes available, we’ll know how services have been impacted and we can start making decisions and consider changes to our services.

- Commissioner Thorne asked if we have contacted any of our larger customers to find out how they plan to deal with the impacts of COVID-19. Ms. Buchanan answered, with the exception of geothermal customers, we have not started that dialogue yet. At present we don’t have enough data to identify trends and have a meaningful discussion.

- Commissioner Gravatt commented that it’s important to ensure the budget recommendations include adequate funds to protect or compensate employees whose scope of work has changed and are at an increased risk for contracting COVID-19. Mr. Burgos answered we are asking employees who are at high risk of contracting the virus to self-identify and the City is accommodating them whenever possible. Ms. Buchanan added employees who are required to be at work are being paid appreciation pay for being on the front lines and continuing to provide essential services.

IV. Director’s Reports

1. Billing Collection Status
2. Education Programs
3. General Fund Capital Projects
4. Geothermal Irrigation Projects
5. Water Renewal Fund Capital Projects
6. Water Quality Regulatory
7. Materials Management Program
8. Stormwater Regulatory Program
9. Sustainability Air Quality Program

V. Director’s Announcements

Mr. Burgos briefed the Commissioners on the closure of City facilities and employees working from home. He praised Public Works employees for adjusting
to the situation and continuing to get the work done. The Lander Street project is proceeding as planned with very specific safety measures in place and constant monitoring of the COVID-19 situation.

- Commissioner Gravatt asked how the Commissioners will be kept informed of developments and issues requiring their attention before they are passed on to Council. Mr. Burgos answered that is still being discussed but with the use of technology the hope is that more meetings similar to the Water Renewal Utility Plan Commission Work Sessions can be held. Abigail Germaine, Civil Deputy City Attorney, added that the requirement to have one person onsite is a requirement by state code. The Governor suspended those requirements for a period and that suspension has ended requiring us to use the hybrid meeting format. If we return to more restrictive stages, it’s possible the Governor would consider reissuing a suspension of those onsite meeting requirements.

- Commissioner Crowley asked for an update on the testing for COVID-19 at the water renewal facilities. Mr. Burgos answered the testing is continuing and the data are showing correlation with the recent increase in COVID-19 cases. We have started daily testing and are working with the University of Missouri, where we send the samples for processing. We are investigating the possibility of testing our own samples to give us more timely data. Hopefully, we will have more information for the Commission at the August meeting.

VI. Motion to adjourn the Public Works Commission meeting.

Commissioner Gravatt made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Quick seconded, and the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

**RESULT:** APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]

**MOVER:** Crispin Gravatt, Commissioner

**SECONDER:** Renee Quick, Commissioner

**AYES:** Crowley, Quick, Gravatt, Hilton, Thorne, Reading, Nink