



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: April 14, 2020

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Water Resources Division, Public Works Department

SUBJECT: Enhanced Urban Water Management Plan Update, And Stakeholder Communication And Engagement Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receive an update on the planning and proposed stakeholder engagement process for the Enhanced Urban Water Management Plan.

DISCUSSION:

Background

For over 25 years, the City's primary water supply management tool has been its Long Term Water Supply Plan (LTWSP). The goal of the LTWSP is to evaluate the adequacy and reliability of the City's water supply and provide a long-term view of how the City's water supplies would be managed. Since the last LTWSP update in 2011, several key changes have arisen that have the potential to affect the availability of the City's current water supplies moving forward. These changes include changes to Lake Cachuma and Gibraltar supplies and operations, the role of desalination, groundwater management, expanded use of recycled water, and the impacts of climate change, which include the need to define a new critical drought period and average annual rainfall. City staff, in partnership with the firm Water Systems Consulting (WSC), have begun the process of reassessing the adequacy, reliability, and cost of the City's water supplies with respect to these issues.

In the past, the City also developed and submitted an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) every five years as required by the California Water Code, with the basis of supply planning for the UWMP being the LTWSP. Over time, UWMP-mandated requirements have increased, which has given cause to having only one water supply planning tool to reference for City-wide planning efforts. Therefore, the City is working to meld the supply planning efforts of the LTWSP into the development of its 2020 UWMP. The result will be an Enhanced Urban Water Management Plan (EUWMP). WSC's agreement for the development of the EUWMP was approved by Council on February 11, 2020. The Council-adopted EUWMP is due to the DWR by July 1, 2021.

EUWMP Process – Water Vision Santa Barbara

Water Vision Santa Barbara, the branded name for the EUWMP Process, intends to define an equitable, resilient, cost-effective water supply portfolio (the mix of water sources that supply the City's needs) that supports the community's economic vitality, livability, and environmental health for the next 30 years. The process moves through several steps designed to objectively weigh the risks, uncertainties, and benefits of various water supply portfolios. The first step is to confirm project objectives and develop the City's portfolio evaluation criteria based on these objectives.

Once the portfolio evaluation criteria is established, the team will evaluate the performance of the City's existing water supply portfolio under various conditions, such as drought or natural disaster, to identify the risks and uncertainties surrounding our current water supply. This analysis will inform the development of alternate portfolios for the future. Each portfolio will be evaluated with a "triple bottom line" lens to understand its economic, social, and environmental costs and benefits. In addition, each portfolio will consider a range of future conditions (e.g. extended drought, seawater intrusion, natural disaster, etc.) to assess its unique risk level. As a result of this robust evaluation and input solicited from stakeholders throughout the process, a recommended future portfolio and implementation plan will be developed. The implementation plan will define future funding needs and identify triggers for implementing projects. Finally, the EUWMP will be prepared and submitted to the DWR.

Stakeholder engagement throughout the planning process will be critical for development of a successful plan. To accomplish this, a Communication and Engagement Plan (C&E Plan) was developed (described below and presented in more detail in the attachment) and will be used to consider the public perspective, instill ownership and advocacy, and inform the resulting policy decisions to directly reflect the values and long-term needs of our community.

Stakeholder Engagement

The project integrates an efficient, yet open and transparent, stakeholder engagement process to consider the broad perspectives of the City's customers, build public trust, keep the public informed of project progress, and inform defensible policy decisions that align with the community's values and achieve the project objectives. Four groups will be engaged. The level and method of engagement are based on each group's role in the process. The team is adapting in real time to the COVID-19 pandemic, including integrating webinar and virtual meeting technology to practice social distancing and protect the health and safety of participants.

- *Water Vision Santa Barbara Stakeholder Group*: A group of community leaders representing the diverse issues, challenges, uses, and users of water within the City including: economic development and tourism, environmental and conservation groups, citizen groups, residents, human rights to water, land use,

trades, large water users, and agriculture. This group will participate in one educational webinar in April and four educational and interactive workshops (May-December 2020) at key project milestones. They will also help educate their constituency using content provided throughout the planning process.

- *General Public:* In addition to engagement at four Water Commission meetings and four City Council meetings, the public will be invited to participate in two educational workshops. In addition, a designated project website will be created to keep the public informed and provide notifications of upcoming opportunities for engagement.
- *Water Commission:* The Water Commission is an advisory group appointed by City Council to provide feedback and policy recommendations on water supply decisions and processes. It is anticipated that Water Vision Santa Barbara will engage the Water Commission at four separate meetings throughout the process.
- *City Council:* The City Council makes and implements water policy decisions and will ultimately adopt the EUWMP. It is anticipated that development of the EUWMP will be presented to City Council at four separate City Council meetings throughout the planning process.

From the workshops and public meetings, the team will create an actionable chart of the comparative perceptions, values, and preferences of each stakeholder segment, as well as the Water Commission and City Council. This chart will be shared publicly and used by the Water Commission and Council to inform key project recommendations and decisions. Furthermore, the stakeholder group and public workshops will be used to support open conversations regarding discrepancies between the perceptions, values, and preferences raised by these groups. For more details, including a timeline of key milestones, please see the attached C&E Plan.

SUSTAINABILTY IMPACT AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Creating an EUWMP for the City will enable better management of the City's water supplies, providing a significant sustainability impact for the community. Such studies are exempt from CEQA review.

ATTACHMENT: Communication and Engagement Plan

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SUBMITTED BY: Rebecca J. Bjork, Public Works Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office