

City of Amarillo
Environmental Task Force

On December 17, 2020, the Environmental Task Force met remotely via Zoom at 12:00 P.M., with the following members present:

MEMBERS	PRESENT	NO. MEETINGS HELD	NO. MEETINGS ATTENDED
Tim Dillon	Y	7	7
Roger Gloe	Y	12	11
David Moody	Y	7	7
Adam Schaer	Y	7	3
Howard Smith	Y	20	17
Ryan Zimmer	Y	12	11
EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS/STAFF			
Blair Snow	N		
Donny Hooper	Y		

The following guests were also present:

Julie Allegretti, Utilities Program Manager
Julie Herman, Public Works Program Coordinator
Damen Ratliff, Assistant Director of Utilities
Courtney White - City Attorney I

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 P.M. by Ryan Zimmer, Chairman. The following items of business were conducted:

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

2. MINUTES

Motion to approve the November 19, 2020 minutes as written was made by David Moody, seconded by Roger Gloe and passed with a 6-0 vote.

3. STAFF REPORT ON PROGRESS WITH ALLEY CLEANUP

Donny Hooper reported that illegal dumping is a problem the City is addressing with an Illegal Dumping Task force comprised of City management that meets weekly to brainstorm cleanup, prevention, education and enforcement. Big and Bulky Item pickup is a service that is highly utilized and is successfully preventing dumping. An illegal dumping hotspot map has been created reflecting call-ins and driver reported sites. There is an illegal dumping camera program with 2 cameras in the field and 2 cameras at the brush sites. The City has applied for a grant from the PRPC Solid Waste Advisory Committee to add 5 cameras and has reached out to surveillance companies to contract services. Code Enforcement is working through the process of dealing with illegal dumpers. Due to COVID-19, illegal dumping (alley cleanup) requests have increased dramatically in the past 6 to 8 weeks. Boom trucks are unable to maneuver in alleys due to limited space. The task force is making good progress.

4. DISCUSS WATER CONSERVATION INCENTIVES

Julie Allegretti worked with Roger Gloe to update the rain sensor incentive. The old rebate was limited to \$50 credit toward the utility bill for up to 400 customers. Guidelines will be updated and measures taken to make it easy for residents to participate in the incentive program (including online submissions). This is on track to be rolled out in the spring.

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5. DISCUSS WATER CONSERVATION REQUIREMENTS

Damen Ratliff discussed water usage vs. waste water treatment. Water consumed is 6 to 7 times higher than water treated. Ryan Zimmer stated that the goal is to curb the high spike shown in the water usage curve, get people to understand and stop wasting water. 75% of water use is going through irrigation meters. Julie Allegretti discussed deterrence utilizing a tiered rates with tier 1 being everyday users and high users paying more. Compared to Abilene, Lubbock and Midland, Amarillo has good rates. The increased price for higher tiers will not affect everyday users but will encourage conservation. Task force members agreed that the tiered system is good. Julie Allegretti also discussed waste vs. conservation and said “waste” must be defined and self conservation is a good approach that other cities have experienced success with. Julie Allegretti also discussed the effectiveness of an educational program with watering tips to establish better habits and fines for waste utilized by other cities. Damen Ratliff discussed the budget and city council approval processes required for water rate changes. Incentives can be approved anytime (if funding is available). Tiered rate changes would have to go through the budget process beginning in April, with a presentation to City Council in June and City Council vote and approval in September. Roger Gloe voiced a concern that a tiered rate change may not be fair or penalize people who have a lot of land to water and water efficiently. It was recommended that tiers be kept based on costs and not factor in a penalty. Damen Ratliff stated that it is not a penalty but a pay for usage. The tiered system self-regulates use.

Julie Allegretti reported that agreement must be reached between Utilities and the task force on definitions, restrictions and ordinance changes to prepare for Legal review.

Action Item: Utilities (Julie Allegretti and Damen Ratliff) research and define the tiered rate structure changes and discuss them at the next task force meeting. The goal is for the task force and Utilities to come to an agreement.

6. DISCUSS WIFI SMART WATER CONTROLLERS

Due to time constraints, this topic was tabled until the next task force meeting.

7. CONSIDER RECOMMENDATION REGARDING COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL COMPOSTING

Due to time constraints, this topic was tabled until the next task force meeting.

8. SET DATE AND AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Environmental Task Force will be held remotely via Zoom on Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 12:00 PM. Agenda items will include: Discuss water conservation incentives and requirements; Discuss and consider a recommendation for City staff to pursue implementation of a tiered rate structure; Discuss WiFi controllers (Ryan Zimmer); and consider recommendation regarding commercial and residential composting (Will Smith, Solid Waste Superintendent).

The meeting was adjourned at 1:03 PM.