Austin Water Utility  
Public Involvement Committee  
Utility Responses to Member Questions and Comments  
November 27, 2007

1. The wholesale representative stated that they would like the City’s commitment to providing additional meetings if the topics cannot be adequately explored in the allotted time.

   Response: The Utility has set up six meetings of the public involvement committee with various issues addressed at each meeting. If the entire issue paper subject cannot be addressed at one meeting, then that subject will be continued at the following meeting. The Utility and Red Oak Consulting have made provisions to include additional meeting dates if needed.

2. The wholesale representatives requested that the final model be released to the PIC members; however, this model may be protected by the consultant so that the data fields may not be changed or altered.

   Response: The Utility has decided not to release the model to any members or the general public. However, the Utility has committed Red Oak Consulting to provide a comprehensive overview of the model as part of a future PIC meeting. We would anticipate having the model onscreen for everyone to see and the consultants to walk through all of the components of the model. Additionally, the Utility has committed to run “what if” scenarios for the PIC members to compare impacts of various changes in model inputs. Also, full hardcopy printouts of the model components will be provided.

3. The wholesale representatives requested that any entity that has daily meter data available, make this information available to the City and its consultant for further evaluation.

   Response: The Utility will only consider data collected by the City and will not consider any data or information provided by other entities. Any data produced by any customer or class can’t be controlled or verified by the City. Also, more specific data for one customer or class as compared to the other classes makes any calculations based on inconsistent sets of data.

4. The residential representative felt that the makeup of the PIC should be adjusted to reflect the proportionality of the total customer and revenue base more closely.

   Response: The Utility believes the current makeup of the PIC is appropriate. The purpose of the PIC is to provide advisory comments and concerns, not vote on issues. Equal representation of the customer classes is appropriate to providing this advisory role.
5. The residential representative urged the city staff to continue to pursue additional commercial customer representative from the smaller customers in that class.

Response: The Utility continued to search for a member of the small business community and was able to fill the final member vacancy with a small business representative.

6. The residential representative recommended that the consultants and staff make the model available to those who are able to use it effectively and/or agree upfront to make a reasonable number of COS runs for others who are not able to.

Response: The Utility has decided not to release the model to any members or the general public. However, the Utility has committed Red Oak Consulting to provide a comprehensive overview of the model as part of a future PIC meeting. We would anticipate having the model onscreen for everyone to see and the consultants to walk through all of the components of the model. Additionally, the Utility has committed to run “what if” scenarios for the PIC members to compare impacts of various changes in model inputs. Also, full hardcopy printouts of the model components will be provided.

7. The residential representative expressed concerns that the 5 day turnaround time for written comments is not working well. Perhaps the time frame could be extended to target 5 days but no longer than 8 days.

Response: The Utility would still like to have all written comments in by 5 working days. This allows the written comments to be considered by the Executive Team when making decisions on the issues. If additional time is needed, please contact City staff to let them know that the comments would be forthcoming.

8. The residential representative felt that it would be beneficial for the utility staff to have operations and planning personnel of the utility give the PIC a brief overview how the water and wastewater systems work. That overview would include a map and/or listing of the facilities.

Response: The Utility will have the Division Manager of the Systems Planning division make a presentation to the committee on the water and on the wastewater systems at future meetings.
9. The industrial representative expressed concerns that major decreases in water usage (conservation efforts) have resulted in yearly rate increases experienced by the industrial class and they are seeing diminishing returns for its water conservation efforts and would like to see that water conservation efforts be considered in the rate model and that meaningful incentives be provided to promote further water conservation, reuse, and recycling efforts.

Response: These issues will be addressed at a future meeting on the issue paper regarding customer classification.

10. The industrial representative strongly encouraged the Executive Team to consider peaking factors as an issue paper so the Industrial customers can justify what it believes to be realistic peak factors for its class.

Response: These issues will be addressed at a future meeting on the issue paper regarding customer classification.

11. The industrial representative also encouraged the Executive Team to consider sewage strengths as an issue paper.

Response: These issues will be addressed at a future meeting on the issue paper regarding customer classification.

12. The industrial representative recommended that the applicability or definition of the various customer classes be based on customer demand characteristics instead of or in addition to usage levels with the presumption that this would eliminate another disincentive for water conservation came from the industrial representative.

Response: These issues will be addressed at a future meeting on the issue paper regarding customer classification.