

**City of Olympia**  
**Utility Advisory Committee Summary Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, December 4, 2008**  
**5:30 p.m. to 6:55 p.m.**

**A. Meeting began at 5:46 p.m.**

*1. Roll Call*

Members Present: Tim Rogers, Kip Summers, Mary Groebner, Rob Lowe, Carol Law, Tom Connor, Karen Rogers, Lana Hamilton, Emily Lardner, and Dave Gordon

Members Absent: Michael Young

Staff Present: Rich Hoey, Bonnie Herrington, and Andrea Sanchez-Turner

*2. Approval of Meeting Minutes*

- Approved the November 6, 2008, summary meeting minutes.

*3. Acceptance of Agenda*

- Approved the December 4, 2008, agenda.

**B. Comments from the Public in Attendance**

No members of the public were in attendance this evening.

**C. Information Sharing**

*1. Announcements from Members and Staff*

- Rich said Water Resources sent a package out to septic owners. The package included details on the incentive program to get them to convert to City sewer. The package also included a survey asking citizens their opinion on the incentive and what their interest is concerning the conversion as the cost of the conversion may be shocking to a lot of the citizens. Water Resources is conducting six meetings with citizens to answer questions and provide more details on the conversion incentives. UAC will play a role next year to assist staff with prioritizing projects because of limited funds. The Urban Growth Area did not receive notification of the scheduled meetings, however, they may attend. The City is focusing on citizens within the city limits at this time.
- Council directed staff to go forward with the following final rate recommendations:
  - Drinking Water is a 4% increase with an 18% increase in GFC, which is half of what UAC proposed.
  - Wastewater is a 5% increase.
  - No increase in Storm and Surface Water.
  - No increase in residential organics.
- There was a suggestion to possibly add utility shut-offs to a future UAC agenda.
- Tim announced the resignation of Tom Connor from the UAC. Tom is a valued member of the committee. He provided a unique and informed perspective on the issues covered by UAC. The UAC will miss Tom greatly.
- Karen attended the Finance Committee meeting on November 12, 2008. During the discussion Karen discovered the utility tax is a business and operations tax. The

process assesses the tax directly to the utilities and not the customer. The concern is how transparent the tax is to our customers.

- Kip attended the City Council meeting on November 18, 2008, and testified concerning the transfer of Storm and Surface Water funds to Transportation for transportation projects. Councilmember Hyer felt this was not a policy change, just overlaying of a fund from where it has been for the last eight years to a more modern number. There needs to be a review of this process. The concern is that this may not be a temporary solution.
- The Public Hearing concerning the Water System Plan did not go well. Mary appreciated the fact that Rich took full responsibility for the confusion of the letter sent out to customers. Donna and Rich spoke with all citizens that testified or attended the Council meeting about the letter addressing their concerns and fears.
- In honor of the City's sesquicentennial celebration UAC decided to compile a list of 150 ways to put sustainability into action. At the January meeting UAC members will each submit 10 tips/ideas for the list. Please remember your tips/ideas!
- There was a question posed on water pressure as a result of an article that appeared in The Olympian. City staff will check customers' water pressure for free. This will determine if the customer is eligible for a rebate on the valve and installation. There is a desire for the City to be proactive and send out postcards to residents who live in an area known to have high water pressure. Newer homes in high pressure areas have the pressure reducing valves installed. Bonnie is still conducting research on this issue and will create a fact sheet. She will send a copy of the fact sheet to UAC for their information once it is completed.

## 2. *Planning Commission Update*

- No update due to no Planning Commission meeting since the last UAC meeting.

## **D. Business of the Evening**

### 1. *Rate Communications*

- Bonnie provided fact sheets and the utility insert for review. The utility insert is included in utility bills starting the first Friday in January and continuing with an eight week cycle. The insert will be on the City website starting January 1, 2009.
- This year the City, in keeping with our zero waste goals, will not print out the utility fact sheets. They will be available online at the City's website and will be interactive with links to other information and websites. People may request printed copies by calling Public Works.
- The tiered-structure numbers changed. We rounded up the numbers to accommodate the formula used by Utility Billing for calculations.
- UAC members made suggestions to Bonnie about the fact sheets:
  - Identify all flat rate fees, including "Ready to Serve" and Storm and Surface Water. Bonnie will make this change.
  - Add an explanation that customers get a discount for signing up for recycling. If they do not request a recycling cart, they pay a higher rate. This will encourage people to recycle.

- Last year staff conducted a survey asking citizens what they thought of the City's communication efforts. Twelve people responded with positive feedback.
- The high usage graph used last year was confusing according to feedback from our customers. We removed it this year.
- Bonnie and her staff stay in close communication with Utility Billing staff to make sure everyone is up to speed on customer communications. Bonnie provides a training session with Utility Billing staff on the information in our fact sheets and utility insert. She also checks in with Utility Billing staff to review any customer feedback they've received. Last year there was no contact from customers.

2. *Officer Elections*

- There was a motion nominating Mary as the new Chair for UAC. With one "no" vote, the motion passed.
- There was a motion nominating Emily as the new Vice Chair for UAC. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.