



## City of Colusa California

### STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024,  
**TO:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**FROM:** David Swartz, City Engineer, and Jesse Cain, City Manager

#### **AGENDA ITEM: South 5<sup>th</sup> Street Well Progress Update**

**Recommendation:** N/A

#### **BACKGROUND ANALYSIS:**

The City of Colusa in 2012 and 2013 sent out a Prop 218 to ask the voters if they would like the City's water problems resolved and fixed and both times the voters overwhelmingly voted it down.

The City's water issues are not a public safety issue, it is an aesthetic issue. No one likes smelly or tea colored water. If we were not to chlorinate, we would never have brown water, but the water would smell bad due to high hydrogen sulfide, so the city went for grants to try and fix our water.

The city submitted a grant application for the design of a new well project in March of 2014. This design project examined several locations and drilled test wells in three locations to find the best quality and quantity of water for a new city well.

About 14 months after the grant submittal the City received notification that state contracts would be forthcoming, and signed contracts were executed with the State on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, which then allowed the design process to begin, approximately 22 months after the application.

Design work commenced which included the design of three test wells that were placed out for bidding and drilled. All three test wells were completed by September 2016. Following the test drilling the remainder of the design was completed and went through a review with the State Department of Health Services (not consolidated with the water board at that time). The final design was approved by the State in June of 2017, and we then began the application for construction funding. It's important to keep in mind that through the design process several

interim milestone submittals were required by the state, each submittal was approximately 60-day review time by the State.

Staff commenced work on the construction grant application, again with several submittals involved, and several work scope modifications. At this time the state consolidated and eliminated the Department of Health Services and brought all applications through the State Water Board. This transition stalled all submittals to the State for over 1 year. The construction grant was submitted to the State "WATER BOARD" on March 2018, and then resubmitted due to the consolidation of departments in July 2019. Since 2019 we have had a few series of questions, and some additions and approvals but nothing material to the project. It was not uncommon for us to receive any correspondence from the state without prompting from either Jesse or myself at 6-month intervals or less. Throughout this time the state has assigned 3 different project managers to the project, with the most recent being assigned in October of this year.

Over the past 5 years we have submitted a cultural report, biological report and a new environmental report which were not requested until 2022. The final environmental documents were submitted on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and approved in August of this year. None of these reports were large and complex, but the submittal review times often exceeded 6 months.

There are three key components to examine when assessing the timeline for state funded projects. 1) Consolidation of the Department of Public Health to the Water Board. This consolidation took over a year, and during this time all projects' progress was at a standstill. The water board processes are quite onerous, and the management of the projects is really a "micromangement" of our work and submittals. There is a noticeable increase in involvement of the state's attorneys and environmental staff, which takes a lot of time to receive comments and directions. 2.) It appears prior to COVID and work from home policies, our timelines with State staff were more efficient, being able to navigate the entire grant process in about 24-36 months. My observation is that the work from home policies does not have state staff focused, and they often request the same submittals several times that have previously been submitted, coupled with now all submittals go through a portal process, which is quite cumbersome. 3.) The state waterboard funding agency shuts down all processing of work and payments to contracts during the entire month of June. Therefore, they are way behind the following months and this, in my opinion, has caused a lot of delays carrying into the fall months.

Our strategy has been to turn around and fulfill requests as received right away, rarely more than 5 days after requested, unless it involved a study or report, and keep our project status up to date.

The project has been in existence since 2014 or 10 years, with the actual project documents being in the Cities control for about 30 months including the well drilling, design applications and all reporting.

**BUDGET IMPACT: Grant Amount 3,495,624.00**

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Update only

**ATTACHMENT: Project application report from the States project manager for the project**

**Recap report**