



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: 02/06/2025

AGENDA OF: 02/11/2025

DEPARTMENT: Public Works

SUBJECT: Water Issues

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Please provide a recommended motion for the related item.

I move to instruct city staff to prepare an amendment to the drought contingency policy as discussed.

BACKGROUND:

At the October 22, 2024 council meeting, council instructed staff to provide potential solutions and pertinent information related to the following five areas of concern: (1) which fund/budget would the excess fees collected by the new surcharge be placed in (2) Any exemptions (3) in field connections (4) stipulations (if any) on those bringing water rights (5) design guidelines on car wash water recycle systems for possible placement in the UDO. The information below has been categorized into these 5 areas – staff is seeking council’s guidance regarding how they want us to handle the following issues:

1. Where do we allocate the funds collected from the drought surcharge:
 - a. Amount billed
 - i. November usage/December bill
 1. Residential = \$8,639.55
 2. Commercial = \$15,314.49
 - ii. December usage/January bill
 1. Residential = \$6,454.02
 2. Commercial = \$11,574.63
 - b. Options for consideration where to use the funds
 - i. Capital plan for water line improvements – will help reduce leaks and lower water consumption
 - ii. Water Acquisition fund – will help ensure enough pumping capacity for continues growth and greater water security.
*Staff recommends using one of these two funds.
2. Exemptions for excessive water use.

We have a development agreement. We have the following within the agreement. How do we refuse them water to establish this?

- Minimum. Each 50' and 60' Lot shall be landscaped, at a minimum, with the following: full sodded front and side yards (in front of fences), with backyards to be fully sodded by the Owner within thirty (30) days after acquiring the Lot. Each 50' Lot shall also have a minimum of two (2) trees and two (2) rows of shrubs. Each 60' Lot shall also have a minimum of three (3) trees and two (2) rows of shrubs. The minimum acceptable size of the trees required in this Section shall be two hundred (200) gallons.

- Option 1 – grant waivers to each property to establish based on A&M Agrilife or other entity's recommendations for establishing new trees and sod with a time limitation (10-14 days) then they fall under the watering restrictions
 - Option 2 – restrict the amount of water they can use for a specified period of time per lot
 - Recommendation– consider adding a xeriscape option for residential and commercial landscaping. Don't make traditional yard requirement but instead go with a hybrid of traditional and xeriscape yards.
 - May want to consider adding a requirement that when existing homes or businesses want to plant new grass or other water-dependent vegetation, they seek a permit and/or waiver PRIOR to planting. We have had a number of residents plant new lawns during this drought of record.
 - Staff recommends that water surcharge exemptions be given to any water utility accounts associated with life safety, critical care, or care for elderly or disabled. These would include, hospitals, emergency services, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and doctors or dentist offices.
- In field connections – Whether to require property owners of undeveloped lots within the City limits to bring individual water rights to the City
 - Estimated cost to purchase one acre-feet of water = \$10,000
 - Water and sewer mains in place at most city lots
 - Water tap fee -\$2,500
 - Sewer tap fee - \$2,500
 - Impact fees based on water meter size and typical residential size is 3/4 inch
 - Water impact - \$4,981.94 [simple 5/8 x 3/4 inch]
 - Water impact – \$7,472.91 (simple 3/4 inch)
 - Sewer impact - \$5,985.63
 - Sewer impact - \$8,978.44
 - Cost to install water and sewer (tap to existing main)
 - Water (main on same side of street as new build) = \$2,297
 - 3 hours minimum, 3 employees - \$411
 - Equipment used – backhoe and dump truck = \$130
 - Parts = \$1756
 - Water (main on opposite side of street) = \$3,242
 - 8 hours minimum, 3 employees = \$1096
 - Equipment used - \$390
 - Parts = \$1756
 - Sewer (mostly located in the middle of the street) = \$3,878
 - 8 hours minimum, 4 employees = \$1,488
 - Equipment used = backhoe and dump truck = \$390
 - Parts = \$2,000

Staff does NOT recommend requiring water rights for in-fill lots. Acquiring a single acre foot of water (finding a seller willing to sell just the one acre foot), may not be feasible. Council may consider a separate water acquisition fee.

4. Stipulations (if any) on those bringing Water Rights

The current drought contingency plan does not allow new water connections to be granted when the city is in a Stage 4 or greater drought:

“Stage 4 Response—Extreme water shortage conditions. a. Target: Achieve a 40 percent reduction in total water use. b. Water use restrictions for reducing demand: All requirements of Stage 1, 2 and 3 shall remain in effect during Stage 4 with the following additional restrictions: 1. No application for new, additional, expanded, or increased-in-size water service connections, meters, service lines, pipeline extensions, mains, or water service facilities of any kind shall be approved for immediate usage. Approval of such applications will be reviewed on an individual basis, but the city shall not be required to approve such application during such time as the drought response stage or higher-numbered stage shall be in effect. Any time limits for approval of such applications are hereby suspended for such time as this drought response stage or higher-numbered stage shall be in effect. 2. The filling, refilling, or adding of water to swimming pools, wading pools, and Jacuzzi-type pools is prohibited, unless such pool is equipped with a filtration system which requires such pool to maintain a constant level for proper operation. 3. 4. (6) Reserved. Use of grey water is allowed at any time.”

Staff recommends that an exception be made for developers or others who have delivered the requisite water rights as part of the city’s plat requirement or anyone else who chooses of their own volition to transfer water rights that meet the city’s requirement for their respective use. These parties would still be subject to whatever restrictions may be in effect for current water customers.

If the city council chooses NOT to require water rights for in-fill developments, these builders and/or landowners will continue to be prohibited from being granted a new water connection during stage 4 or 5 drought.

5. Car Wash

- a. Two car washes operating within the city – one has approved permit to expand
- b. One averaged 382,000 gallons per month over the past two years and the other averaged 66,000 gallons.
- c. Some cities, such as Edinburg, restrict the distances between car wash facilities to control the number of systems within their city. They also require any *new* car wash to adopt water-saving technologies, e.g. recycle programs
- d. Most of the conservation policies we reviewed do not have a specific policy

FISCAL IMPACT/SOURCE OF FUNDING:

☐ Budgeted ☐ Requires Budget Amendment

ATTACHMENTS:

- Information on SAWS Car Wash program
- Information on City of Austin’s Car Wash program
- Information on Different Types of Car Wash Water Reclamation Systems

Urgency (0-5 = Low Urgency to High Urgency): _____

Impact (0-5 = Low Impact to High Impact): _____

Submitted by: John Gomez