

Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion and Disaster Response Town Hall Feedback Summary

Townhall Format

- Overall, feedback on the format of the town hall was positive.
- Residents particularly enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the expansion of the wastewater treatment plant.
- Residents felt the information presented was of value and want more Town Halls in the future.
- Residents thought the breakout stations were the most informative part of the town hall.
- Some feedback indicated that having to sign up beforehand made residents hesitant to speak.

Recommendations from Attendees

- Feedback showed there was interest in learning how the expansion of the treatment plant would be funded.
- Other attendees showed interest in the environmental impact of the treatment plant, particularly if the waste from the plant would be recycled.
- There was great interest in continuing the Town Halls. Attendees offered the suggestion of street maintenance as the next topic.

Communication Channels

- The most common way many heard of the Town Hall was through the City website and social media.
- Second most common were the electronic signs.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion

The meeting discussed the expansion of the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). Residents in attendance had various concerns, including odors from the bar screen, where the growth in wastewater was coming from, and how the expansion would be paid for. The primary source of growth was identified as the undeveloped east and northeast parts of the city. The preliminary estimates for the bill impact of the expansion were presented, and residents seemed supportive. The reduction in truck traffic was also discussed with the implementation of the sludge press as part of an ongoing project. The expansion will occur in two phases, with Phase 1 addressing immediate needs and Phase 2 addressing future needs depending on the growth of the City's system. Residents in attendance supported improving the existing facility over constructing a greenfield facility, citing the high cost and reduced control over wastewater treatment. The treated water storage at the Golf Course was also discussed, with the understanding that discussions would occur between the city and the Golf Course regarding improvements.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Operation

A resident asked the same question about odors from the bar screen as in a previous meeting. It was confirmed that all stations would continue to operate normally during the planned upgrade construction, and bypassing stations was possible, if necessary. The partnership between the WWTP and the Golf Course, where the effluent is used for irrigation, was discussed. It was noted that the Golf Course currently pays nothing, but both parties benefit from the arrangement. The destination of the sludge was also discussed, with wet sludge being hauled by Southwaste to a treatment plant in San Antonio. There were general questions about the wastewater treatment process and interest in learning more about the water utility.

Disaster Response

One resident expressed disagreement with the City picking up brush, but it was clarified that all residents were offered the same opportunity. Another resident asked if the City had plans to mitigate downed trees and if a list of more resistant trees could be provided. It was explained that residents are responsible for removing downed trees on their private property, and the City has a tree list in the UDC for reference.

A few residents asked for further explanation of the water system issues and the conservation notice issued. It was explained that the power outage resulted in the GBRA plant and all city's water wells shutting down, leading to low water levels and the need for a conservation notice. The City is exploring ways to make the system more resilient, such as installing generators or an elevated storage tank. Finally, residents expressed appreciation for the field staff's work during the winter storms.

Overall

Overall, the second Town Hall appeared to be very well received with an average overall rating of 4.57/5. Survey responses were limited but most attendees indicated the town hall was informative and the topic was important. Based on limited survey feedback, future town halls may benefit from a mention that signup to speak may not be necessary for those with comments or by moving the resident comment portion to later in the town hall.