



City of St. Helena
Ad Hoc Water/Wastewater Exploratory
Committee
Regular Meeting
City Hall Main Conference Room, 1088
College Avenue, St. Helena
Thursday, January 18, 2024 @ 4:00 PM

PLEASE NOTE: Any person who wishes to speak regarding an item on the agenda or make a comment under the "Oral Communication" portion of the agenda may do so, but please observe the time limit of four minutes. Members of the public and other parties are welcome to email their comments to publiccomment@cityofstheleena.org.

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1. CALL TO ORDER
2. ROLL CALL
Chair: Paul Dohring, Mayor
Vice Chair: Lester Hardy, Vice Mayor
Members: Arlene Corsetti, Gary Matak and Garry Rose
Staff Liaison: April Mitts, Asst. City Manager
3. PUBLIC FORUM:
An opportunity for the public to directly address the Committee on items of interest to the public that are not listed on the agenda. Any person addressing the Committee should provide his or her name and address, and limit comments to four minutes. **Because of restrictions imposed by the Brown Act, the Committee may not engage in substantive discussion, nor take action on matters not described on the agenda.**
 - 3.1. [Public Comment.Gene Armstead](#)
4. REPORTS BY STAFF AND COMMITTEE:
Reports by staff and/or committee on items of general interest. ***Brief questions for clarification may be posed and answered, and Committee may request that items be placed on a future agenda. Except under certain circumstances, the Brown Act prohibits any other discussion or action by the Committee.***
5. CONSENT CALENDAR:
Members of the Committee or the public may ask that any items be considered individually for purposes of considering alternative action, for extended discussion, or for public comment. Unless that is done, on motion may be used to adopt all recommendation actions.
 - 5.1. Committee Meeting Minutes of January 10, 2024.
[01-10-2024 Minutes Ad Hoc Water_Wastewater Exploratory Committee](#)
6. SCHEDULED MATTERS:
 - 6.1. Review and Discussion of Why a W/WW Advisory Group
[WHYS AND WHAT FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER COMMISSION.Garry Rose and Arlene Corsetti](#)
[WHYS AND WHAT FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER](#)

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5 - 6

7 - 11

[COMMISSION.Gary Matak](#)

6.2. What are the next steps.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The next regular Committee meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2024 at 4:00 pm, City Hall Main Conference Room, 1088 College Avenue, St. Helena.

This agenda was posted at City Hall, 1088 College Avenue, St. Helena on January 12, 2024.

April Mitts, Asst. City Manager

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in the meeting, please contact City Hall at (707) 968-2742. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting (28 CFR35.102-35.104 ADA Title II). However, City staff will attempt to assist at any time with accessibility.

January 16, 2024

To: The *ad hoc* Water/Wastewater Committee

From: Gene Armstead, St. Helena, CA

I am interested in the workings of the City Council's *ad hoc* Water/Wastewater Committee, particularly focused on the effects the committee's deliberations or product might have on City staff and the efficient operation of the City functions.

As to my *bona fides*, I was Administrative Director for the City of Lincoln, Nebraska, for over six years before coming to St. Helena as City Administrator for over nine years. I have worked with numerous city department heads over those years, and my observation is that when they achieve that level of organizational responsibility within a governmental structure, they would consider it a significant demotion in their role in the city to have additional oversight imposed on them.

Among the concerns that I've heard mentioned leading up to the proposal to form an oversight committee is the amount of staff turnover over the past few years resulting in a loss of "institutional memory," or formerly planned projects being forgotten because of that turnover. To the extent that is true, it obviously needs to be addressed with some specificity.

It seems to be generally recognized that since City Manager Anil Comelo was hired, City staff have been very aggressive in resolving both acute and long-standing problems that have been identified. Mr. Comelo has essentially bragged that he got Joe Leach to come to St. Helena as Public Works Director, and he has had similar success with other City staff functions. In particular, he has mentioned Mr. Leach's commitment to stay with the city for at least several years.

I have heard it described the city needs to have a group of citizens looking over the shoulder of the City Manager and department heads. I think we already do; they're called City Council members. It's their job to see that the city is running efficiently, and they do that by hiring staff in whom they have confidence. It's true that they have a lot of other things to do besides checking up on water and wastewater, but they are always open (or one might say, subject) to comments from their constituents. And, of course, they also personally turn on the tap, flush the toilet, and pay their utility bills just like the rest of us.

From suggestions I've heard or seen of a proposed oversight committee for the water and wastewater operations, I'm concerned what impact the formation of an oversight committee might have on staff. Using Mr. Leach as a hypothetical case (I have not talked with him, so I don't actually know his thoughts), he was hired to come to St. Helena to be in charge of, among other functions, the water and wastewater divisions. For a committee to be appointed with some as-yet-defined duties or authorities over him and his operations could have a serious

impact on his devotion to St. Helena and result in the very thing that some are concerned about: turnover.

I hope that before the Committee gets too far long in your considerations of the form for a proposed standing committee, the reasons for such a committee as articulated. My impression is that although many people are concerned, they are not always concerned about the same things. Many people are frustrated by some situation or other, but unless and until the problems to be addressed are defined, I don't see how the parameters for any oversight can be established.

The "Whys" needs to be established by more than the feeling on the parts of some individuals that *something needs to be done*. When the "Whys" have been established, then the need for an oversight committee can be defined.



Minutes
City of St. Helena
Ad Hoc Water/Wastewater Exploratory
Committee Regular Meeting
City Hall Executive Conference Room, 1088
College Avenue, St. Helena
Wednesday, January 10, 2024 @ 3:00 PM

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. PRESENT:

Chair: Paul Dohring, Mayor

Vice Chair: Lester Hardy, Vice Mayor

Members: Arlene Corsetti, Gary Matak and Garry Rose

Staff Liaison: April Mitts, Asst. City Manager

3. PUBLIC FORUM:

An opportunity for the public to directly address the Committee on items of interest to the public that are not listed on the agenda. Any person addressing the Committee should provide his or her name and address, and limit comments to four minutes. **Because of restrictions imposed by the Brown Act, the Committee may not engage in substantive discussion, nor take action on matters not described on the agenda.**

No public comment was received.

4. REPORTS BY STAFF AND COMMITTEE:

Reports by staff and/or committee on items of general interest. ***Brief questions for clarification may be posed and answered, and Committee may request that items be placed on a future agenda. Except under certain circumstances, the Brown Act prohibits any other discussion or action by the Committee.***

Reports were made by staff and the committee.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR:

Members of the Committee or the public may ask that any items be considered individually for purposes of considering alternative action, for extended discussion, or for public comment. Unless that is done, on motion may be used to adopt all recommendation actions.

None

6. SCHEDULED MATTERS:

6.1. Discussion and Setting of Future Dates/Times of Meetings

The Committee provided direction for staff to schedule the next regular meeting to be Thursday, January 18, 2024, from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm in the City Hall main conference room. Regular meetings will occur every other Thursday until the Committee dissolves.

6.2. Review of City Council, Boards, Committees, & Commissions Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Meetings and Standards of Conduct

April Mitts, Asst. City Manager provided a presentation.

No public comment was received.

6.3. Review of Water and Wastewater Exploratory Committee Purpose and Objectives

Chair Dohring reviewed the purpose and objectives of the exploratory committee.

No public comment was received.

It was the consensus of the Committee to individually prepare a report that details their thoughts on why they would want a permanent advisory group and next steps.

7 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:09 pm.

Paul Jamison Dohring

April Mitts, Asst. City Manager

Arlene Corsetti

WHYS AND WHAT FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER COMMISSION

1. Why a permanent Water and Wastewater Commission

- To give a voice to Ratepayers questions and issues
- To provide continuity to the running of the Water and Wastewater Enterprise
- Provide consistent oversight to the Water and Wastewater Enterprise financials, CIP, rates and operational adequacies
- Provide a necessary group to look into the future water issues such as recapture and conservation

2. What will a permanent Water and Wastewater Commission do on a regular basis

- Provide a monthly forum for Rate payer to ask questions and voice issues
- Pursue, along with staff opportunities for grants and funding of the Enterprise
- Oversight of Enterprise operations including financials, CIP, rates and operational issues
- Work with other Napa County and City organizations to look at best practices for the conservation of water
- Provide continuity of historical information
- Advisory Board to City Council on all matters pertaining to the Water and Wastewater Enterprise
- On a five year basis advise on Water and Wastewater rates and during the intervening years make sure that the Enterprise is following that rate plan

Garry Rose

WHY the St. Helena City Council wants a Water and Wastewater Commission?

- Provides additional resources for technical and financial advice to the city council and city staff.
- Accesses potential talent of local citizens to supplement city staff expertise.
- Provides a formal interface between the citizens of St. Helena and the City Council for all aspects of the St. Helena Water and Wastewater Enterprises.
- Allows for more in-depth analysis of issues associated with Water and Wastewater.
- Potential for building public trust in city council decisions that are advised by a formal citizen's commission.
- An on-going commission will potentially attract members with expertise in Water and Wastewater issues. This adds substantial and important local knowledge when working with any necessary consultants.
- Provides suggested solutions to Water and Wastewater issues in lieu of the present system of only listening to complaints of poor decisions.
- Increases institutional knowledge when changing city council members or changing city staff.
- Potential for increased interface and communications with other water/wastewater organizations and boards. (Napa LAFCO, Napa County Groundwater Sustainability Agency, etc.)

AD Hoc Water Committee Notes

Gary Matak

01/17/24

Requirements – why have a permanent water/waste water commission

Water/Waste Water Mission:

- City water/waste water requirements, while being met, are in need of improvement.
 - Poor water availability during dry conditions requiring extreme rationing
 - Insufficient water storage with city assets
 - Emergency fire requirements being met by critical city water (Bell Canyon)
 - Provision of outside water sources not under city management
 - Poor water quality (high sediment content, poor taste, etc.)
 - Expensive delivery when compared to other nearby jurisdictions
 - Pump station, effluent management, processing and recover challenges
- Provides collaborative technical guidance, continuity and understanding regarding all water projects to city staff.
 - This is a collaborative effort where at times tasks may be performed supporting the staff
 - As in calling a company for financial technical details for city staff evaluation
 - Or getting technical inputs from suppliers regarding proposed solutions (as in Concrete Water Tank/Epoxy repair).
- Provide technical evaluation for merit, that projects and proposals meet their intended performance targets; financially and technically.

General Functions (what's to be done)

Advise the City Council regarding the following:

- **Advise** the City Council regarding management, extension and operation of the Water Resources Division and water and wastewater facilities of the City, including the development, production, distribution and use and reuse of water, the construction, improvement, installation, maintenance and operation of all reservoirs, wastewater collection system, wastewater treatment plant, structures, equipment, utilities, appliances and facilities relating to the Water Resources Division.
- **Recommend** to City Council plans, rules and regulations pertaining to the above, including fixing rates, charges or other payments.
- Consider the annual Water Resources budget and **make recommendations** to the City Council and City Administrator.
- **Recommend** to City Council regarding acquisition, disposition or repair of facilities, equipment and supplies relating to the water system and wastewater systems.
- At the direction of the City Council, **makes studies** of long-range plans for securing sources of domestic water supply for the city reporting its recommendations to the City Council This to include all water sources; desalination, reclamation, storage and conservation.