

City of La Quinta

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING: SEPTEMBER 14, 2015

STAFF REPORT

AGENDA TITLE: WATER USE STRATEGIES UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

Staff is updating the Commission on the water use strategies for FY 2015-2016.

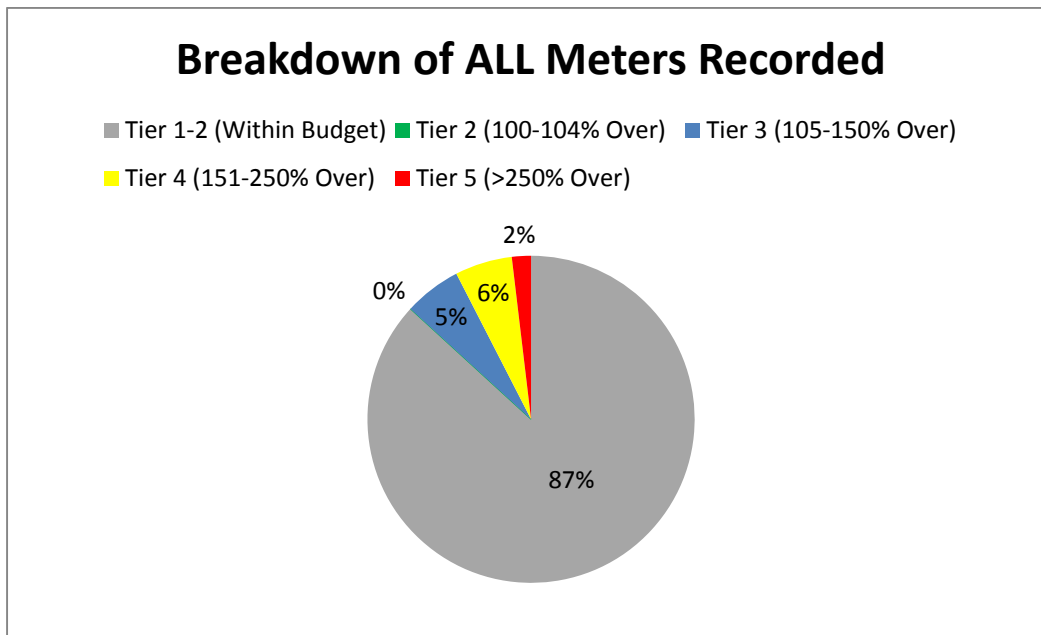
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Governor has declared that the State of California in a serious drought condition. The Coachella Valley Water District is required to reduce potable water use by 36%.
- The City's 2015-2016 Capital Improvement has identified turf removal and replacement with desert landscaping throughout the City of La Quinta at a cost of \$2,247,000.
- A Water Use Strategies report was presented to the Community Services Commission on June 8, 2015.
- On June 16, 2015 City Council meeting, staff presented four possible strategies to reduce potable water consumption by 36 percent by February 2016.
- In order to bring the City in full compliance with the Governor's mandate, staff will be presenting to City Council on September 15, 2015 a phasing plan for retrofitting all turf parkways and retention basins within the City's Lighting and Landscape (L&L) Maintenance District over the next few years, which can be incorporated in future Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs) as appropriate.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

On June 16, 2015, City Council reviewed four strategies for meeting the Governor's 36 percent water reduction mandate, which included reduced watering of parks and public rights-of-way landscaping; increasing non-potable water use for irrigation; converting turf to more water efficient desert scape in north La Quinta; and revising development standards for future projects to limit potable water use for water features and landscaping. Because staff has been taking steps to reduce water consumption since early 2014, the majority of City facilities have been able to meet this goal; however, based on recent water data from CVWD, staff determined that a number of parks and street landscape areas will have difficulty staying under the reduced budget in the future.

Given water data collected as of August 18, 2015, the pie chart below indicates the percentage of City water meters operating within budget and those operating over budget (the data collected was for 106 meters). Currently, 87 percent of meters are operating within budget.



In order to meet CVWD's goal and reduce potential penalties, City Council approved turf conversion projects for the Jefferson Street/Avenue 54 Fire Station, the Fritz Burns Park Parkway, the Avenida Bermudas landscape medians, the Madison Street landscape median, and the Civic Center Campus Parkways as part of the Fiscal Year 2015/16 CIP. Staff estimates these conversion projects will reduce water consumption by over 60 percent for a total savings of 6.9 million gallons per year for all projects. These projects are expected to be installed by spring 2016.

Additional water conservation projects that will require City Council decision:

1) Convert turf to desert scape in L&L district parkways and retention basins.

There is approximately 595,000 square feet (14 acres) of turf in the parkways and retention basins in the L&L District that staff anticipates will make up the majority of the City's water budget once the current CIP turf conversion projects are complete. At an anticipated construction cost of \$7 to \$12 per square foot to convert to desert scape, staff included up to \$500,000 per year in future fiscal years in the current CIP for turf conversion.

2) Convert Civic Center Campus to Colorado River Water.

Another potential project discussed on June 16, 2015 was converting the Civic Center Campus Lake to an irrigation lake by tapping into the proposed CVWD irrigation main line in Calle Tampico. The preliminary cost for this project is estimated to be between \$250,000 and \$300,000, which could be included in a future CIP. The Civic Center Campus

uses approximately 13,357,000 gallons of potable water annually, which costs about \$20,000 at current water rates. Thus, the City's potential savings in potable water costs is about \$20,000 per year.

Currently

- Most fountains and misters on City owned property have been turned off. These fountains are located throughout the City and include; the Entry Monuments on Highway111, public artwork, Old Town, City Hall, the Museum, and the Wellness Center.
- The aeration fountain at the Civic Center Campus, the entry feature at SilverRock Resort, and the La Quinta Park interactive water feature will be on reduced hours.
- No over seeding will occur except at the Civic Center Campus and no extra water will be used.
- The turf in medians throughout the City will not be watered and removed.
- The current Park Landscapes Maintenance Contract requires that the Contractor be Certified in Maxicom operations as well as have a Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor on staff. Furthermore, the current contract states that the contractor will be responsible to pay the difference in water costs for park landscapes that are not rated as either "Efficient" or "Excellent."
- Staff has approved the additional water for La Quinta Park so as to provide safer playing conditions. City will pay the penalty rates.
- Desert Sands Unified School District is also committed to provide safe fields by paying the penalties for their maintenance.

Community Education

Staff is committed to working with CVWD to educate residents about the current water restrictions and measures people can take to save water. Currently, CVWD information flyers are available at City facilities as well as being posted on the City's electronic media. Code enforcement will play an important role in working directly with homeowners.

Staff will keep residents posted on meetings, workshops, outreach programs, and information as it becomes available from CVWD.

ALTERNATIVES

None. This is a Study Session Item

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