

PRESCOTT CITY COUNCIL  
PUBLIC WORKSHOP  
JULY 18, 2006

A WORKSHOP OF THE PRESCOTT CITY COUNCIL WAS HELD ON TUESDAY, JULY 18, 2006, in the Prescott Municipal Building, 201 S. Cortez Street, Prescott, Arizona.

I. Call to Order

Mayor Simmons opened the workshop at 1:30 P.M.

II. Roll Call

Present:

Mayor Simmons  
Councilman Bell  
Councilman Blair  
Councilwoman Suttles  
Councilman Luzius  
Councilman Roecker  
Councilman Lamerson

Absent:

None

III. Presentation on water management and safe yield strategies.

Mayor Simmons stated that this is a presentation and there may be time at the end for limited comments.

Public Works Director Craig McConnell introduced Herb Dishlip, technical expert and advisor on water resource and management issues. Mr. Dishlip said that his April 2005 presentation had the same title as today's. He said he will present a refresher as City moves to import water from the Big Chino. He said they will be initiating and formulating a long term water management policy setting Council goals and objectives, and discussing how ADWR accounts for water the COP allocates and what the City's system is for doing that and how it's reconciled.

Mr. Dishlip said he will talk about how Prescott and how other cities in the State look at the long term water future and planning activities they undertake and how that interfaces with water management goals and objectives of the State. Prescott fits right in the middle of all these issues along with many other cities in the State.

He said that a key thing they need to ask is if they are going to develop a long term water management strategy, what the reasons are. He said that Prescott is a governing body, but is also the water provider, and that puts the City in the situation of being water utility and concerned about water quality and quality of service they provide.

At this time, Mr. Dishlip reviewed the Powerpoint presentation attached hereto and made a part hereof as Exhibit A. Following the presentation, Councilmembers asked the following questions.

Councilman Lamerson asked what was meant by “access to retired irrigation water.” Mr. Dishlip responded there were 3,000 acre feet of water in the Big Chino Water Ranch associated with the 1,200 acres of land and the City was originally going to import 8,717 acre feet of water from the Ranch; but there was the option of using other water for safe yield or mitigation purposes.

Councilman Lamerson asked why access the retired irrigation water for anything but safe yield or mitigation and Mr. Dishlip explained by substituting the overdraft with the other water it helped the AMA to get to safe yield. If the City turned off the Chino Valley wells and used the Big Chino water supply in lieu of, that would help get the City to AMA safe yield goal by reducing the overdraft inside the AMA and using an alternative water supply. Water conservation was an important part of the equation, and if the City could reduce demand by 10-15% that would reduce the total demand from the imported water supply.

Councilman Lamerson questioned the City telling people they couldn't use water to water their trees and plants when they kept issuing building permits and kept going into overdraft. He asked if Mr. Dishlip had any suggestions to increase the City's current conservation efforts and whether the City should be targeting a certain amount of the 8,000 acre feet that was going to be pumped out for conservation purposes. Mr. Dishlip replied they shouldn't tell people they couldn't water their trees or plants, but could suggest they put in a drip system; some conservation programs become very expensive in relation to what the end result is, but conservation has to be part of an overall strategy in water management.

Councilman Lamerson remarked the City would be taking out 8,000 acre feet of water a year and had the physical and artificial capability of returning about 3,000 acre feet back into the ground; he thought the definition of what safe yield meant was the City would try to put as much water back into the ground as was taken out; and thought that was the balance sheet.

Mr. Dishlip responded that nature provided some of the water as well; from rainfall and snow melt.

Councilman Lamerson said he was finding it difficult to figure out how to conserve 5,000 acre feet under current consumption levels and Mr. Dishlip indicated that would not be possible to take the demand from 8,000 acre feet to 3,000 acre feet; it had been shown that a water conservation program on people who hadn't moved here yet was easier to implement than it was on those already living here.

Councilman Blair noted that in a previous presentation Mr. Dishlip had discussed the importance of putting all septic systems on the sewer systems for recharge credits and asked if he still felt that way.

Mr. Dishlip said it was still a good idea in that it was a way of conserving water because treated water could be used more than once; water going into a septic tank was used once and then lost.

Councilman Blair said reaching safe yield sounded good, but it was only for the AMA and with 10,000 exempt wells in the Prescott AM he didn't see how safe yield could ever be achieved; Mr. Dishlip replied it couldn't be achieved.

Councilman Luzius questioned the statement of recharge water being turned into pristine water and Mr. Dishlip contended the water was up to drinking water standards.

Councilman Luzius disagreed with that statement saying Prescott's treatment system received a discharge level of B+ while other city's systems were receiving A+ ratings; Prescott's discharged water was not pristine.

Mr. Dishlip concluded that was a policy decision of whether to improve the treatment of discharged water which had a cost associated with it.

Speakers comments:

Howard Mechanic, 309 Bloom Place –

- Exempt wells was a major issue.
- Safe Yield Subcommittee of the Groundwater Users Advisory Committee was presented with information that showed the number of exempt wells in the AMA had increased by 50% in the last 3 years, which was an increase of about 14-1/2% per year.
- There were no regulations on existing exempt wells. New laws should apply to exempt wells.
- If existing exempt wells weren't required to cut back or provide a fee, the only way to reach safe yield as an AMA was if a district was set up by the Legislature that allowed the enactment of fees based on the withdrawal of groundwater and those fees were used to bring in new water to the AMA to counterbalance the water that was being extracted.
- If exempt well owners couldn't be charged a fee to cover their share of the overdraft, basically everyone else had to cover the bill.

Mr. Dishlip explained the Legislature was reluctant to do anything about exempt wells.

Howard Mechanic added:

- The Safe Yield Committee was trying to get consensus from all parties in the AMA and hopefully that would happen.
- Population projections – if the City stayed with the policy to only allocate 200 acre feet per year for new development it would be a straight line growth scenario, but it ignored the land rush lots that could come in for development.
- Phasing out groundwater – Mr. Dishlip wasn't talking about phasing groundwater out totally but phasing out the use of groundwater in excess of what he called safe yield groundwater quantity.

Councilman Lamerson asked about the safe yield equation and exempt wells and said the State was in competition with municipalities that were subject to the water management policies that the State put out itself, when it continued to issue exempt wells at 35 gpm (or 57 acre feet a year for one exempt well), while the City was charged with keeping residents at 150 gallons per day. He asked if there was any resolution Prescott could forward to ADWR, the Legislature or Governor stating that properties with exempt wells were making the City's job impossible.

Mr. Dishlip responded the State had set up the goal of managing the water supply, and this was a large problem in the Prescott AMA.

Councilman Roecker wondered what the Legislature would say about how much arsenic people with exempt wells were consuming; there was no regulation on that yet the City was required to do something about it to the tune of \$25 million and at some point it would have to be addressed.

Mr. Dishlip explained Arizona had been a rural State and not many people lived here; that changed in the 1950's, but people had lived out on the range and they all had wells; it was an historical philosophy that had carried over into the 1948 Groundwater Code, the 1960 revisions and again into the 1980s. He believed ADWR shared Prescott's concerns and this wasn't a good situation; but it was the Legislature that passed the laws.

John Zembretto, 2910 West Crestview Drive:

- Arsenic – it was hard to regulate individual homeowners for any particular pollutant which was why EPA didn't do it.
- Septic system and leach fields – ADWR didn't give any credit for recharge from septic systems when water budgets were drawn up; but that might be changing. The last hydrologic monitoring report in 2004 indicated they would look into the issue and find out how much effluent was being recharged through those systems. Septic systems were designed to percolate, not evaporate and more research should be conducted on how much water is put back into the ground.

Ethan Edwards, Yavapai County Contractors Association, asked for clarification on the relationship with SRP as far as the collection of groundwater and the times of year the City was able to do effluent recharge.

Mr. Dishlip pointed out the issue with SRP didn't have to do with groundwater or effluent, but had to do with water rights in Granite Creek and Willow Creek. He explained that when Prescott purchased the rights from CVID, the City also inherited an agreement that stipulated in an out-of-court settlement that CVID made with SRP. Under that Stipulation there were certain times of year that CVID was allowed to divert water at their headgate which was during their irrigation season and they were not allowed to divert water during winter months. The City inherited that agreement.

Mr. Dishlip continued there was a State Law limitation that if the City recharged surface water it had to be used within the next 60 days. Other kinds of water that are recharged can be left in the ground for years. The conflict with SRP was over surface water, not groundwater rights. It might be possible to enter into negotiations in the future with SRP to modernize the agreement, but they would want something in return. The agreement (stipulation) was based on agricultural practices. SRP was looking for the runoff that would spill over the Granite Creek Dam and find its way to the Verde River to their dam.

SRP attended all the meetings that were going on in rural Arizona, including the mitigation meetings and they seemed to have an interest in having those in the AMA use the renewable resources as best they could.

Jack Wilson, 1514 Eagle Ridge Road:

- Exempt wells – the City should consider the number of exempt wells within the City limits—there were about 2,000 of them; some of the problem was here and Prescott should be addressing that issue as well.

Leslie Hoy, 1880 Coyote Road:

- Use of effluent - effluent made up a fair amount of the City's water resources; a July 8 presentation by the USGS at the Central Yavapai Water Advisory Group related to studies being done on the effluent discharged in Tucson and how the discharge from the treatment plant was causing a change in the sexual characteristics of fish. It possibly could be a solution to the world's human population problem. As planning for future took place, and effluent was used more that there was going to have to be a dramatic increase in the ability of the City's sewage treatment systems to make sure enough financing is included in budgets to improve the quality of the effluent, especially when thinking of using it for drinking water.

IV. Adjournment

Mayor Simmons ADJOURNED the Workshop at 2:53 P.M.

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ROWLE P. SIMMONS, Mayor

ATTEST:

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ELIZABETH A. BURKE, City Clerk