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October 11, 2022 Townhall Meeting Questions

1. Will we ever anticipate a cap on the increasing water fees? Will there be a consideration for a cap at retirement age, so we are not adding to the burden of maintaining a home while aging gracefully?

It is difficult to say whether the rates will go down after the bonds have been paid off. That may be possible, however the system infrastructure will be many years older and will require continued maintenance and repair. This will be closely watched and analyzed year to year with the goal of keeping the fees as low as possible for as long as possible.

Capping of water rates would be a decision for the districts to make as it is the district that bills individual homeowners for their water usage.

2. What research and considerations were taken when determining the need for an extensive education platform at the expense of the public money? Was TEA included in the decision since their role is developing the scope and sequence regarding curriculum?

The Authority has a goal of providing as much education about the surface water conversion and water conservation measures as possible. We feel very strongly that a good program that educates the public on what to expect and how to conserve is very necessary and beneficial to the entire community. The programs were developed by competent and knowledgeable experts in the field of water and conservation.

TEA was not consulted on the Authority's education programs.

3. Houston is currently taking money from the county through agreements with the MUDs. Has it ever been considered to mandate that those dollars received from the limited purpose annex agreements be utilized in supporting this transition from ground to surface water?

The Authority is not involved in any way with Special Purpose Annexation agreements signed between the Utility Districts and the COH. We do not benefit in any way from these agreements.

4. Are we working through Houston, or collaborating with them? It seems like they are taking in money for administration that could be utilized for infrastructure.

The City of Houston and the North, West, Central and North Ft Bend authorities are working as partners in the Luce Bayou project, the Northeast Water Purification Plant and some portions of the transmission lines. As such, each of the partners has a proportionate vote on any matters concerning any of these projects. The COH does not take special monies from the Authority for administration. Those duties are shared by all, again on a proportionate basis.

5. Do you anticipate dissolving the multiple area MUDs since we are now moving towards Houston's system? Ex., from the outside, it appears to have a sense of double dipping or paying twice.

The Authority does not have any control over the Utility Districts other than requiring them to take the surface water we provide. We are only the providers of wholesale water to the districts. As the Authority obtains greater surface water capacity, some of the utility district wells may be able to be shut down; however, we are encouraging utility districts to keep good wells operable in the event of emergencies. The utility districts will not be going away as they are the entity that delivers water to your home, provides for sewer services and does all the homeowner billing.

6. Will the new surface water negatively affect our household pipes?

There is a possibility that the softer surface water may tend to dissolve some of the mineral scale that has built up on the interior walls of the pipes. This is particularly true for very old, galvanized pipes. The softer surface water will not have a negative effect on the pipe itself, only the scale that has built up over the years. This also depends greatly on how hard the groundwater is in your area and has been.

7. Will the surface water require filtration for diabetic health conditions?

By law customers are notified that anyone on kidney dialysis machines should check to see that the filter being used is compatible with Chloramine. The same is true for aquarium filters. The Authority has been told that medical supply stores and pet stores have been providing the proper filters for many years, but it is always best to check.

8. Chlorine to chlorine to ammonia – what does it do to swimming pool? House – wall galvanized pipe – what effect will this have on pipes in house? Water filter – will we need one?

The Authority has not heard of any problems with pools as your pool maintenance companies or individuals check the disinfectant levels on a regular basis. Galvanized pipes which have been subjected to very hard water for many years may see some of the mineral buildup dissolve with the softer water. Your utility district may be adding phosphates to the water to coat the mineral build up and prevent some of the minerals from dissolving. Water softeners could have a negative effect on the phosphates and for that reason we suggest that homeowners should consider turning off their softeners. This is not a mandatory requirement, only a suggestion.

9. Does this impact pool pipes and water treatment?

There should not be any different reaction to pool pipes or treatment.

10. It's estimated that projects will complete in 2025. Will we continue to pay increased rates after the infrastructure build has completed (i.e., maintenance)?

The conversion projects will not be completed until 2035 when we will have an 80% conversion mandate in effect. Once the 30-year bonds are paid off, the Authority will analyze what its financial requirements will be for continued maintenance and repair on an ageing system and set rates to cover the then current expense projections. So, it is impossible to know how the rates will look years from now.

11. After the 2025 project, will we still continue to see high water bills and NHCRWA charges?

Yes, because the Authority will still be providing water to the Utility Districts and paying the debt on the infrastructure that has been built to deliver that water and the charges to the Districts will be reflected in your water bill.

12. Can I drink water from the tap?

The surface water the Authority provides to the utility districts is perfectly safe to drink right from the tap.

13. After we are converted to surface water, what will be our main water source and what will be our backup?

The Authority's main water source for the surface water will continue to be Lake Houston, supplemented with water from the Trinity River. We plan on keeping a network of good wells operable to supplement our water supply in the event of an emergency in the future.

14. Why is there such a large increase (\$.35 cents to \$4.25 this year)? Water bills fees are double the water bill.

The water rates did not increase in 2022. They are the same as the Authority had to charge in 2021. Water bills have been higher this year because of the drought and the fact that we are using more water to irrigate our yards, etc. The Authority promised to keep the rates as low as possible for as long as possible, and we are doing just that.

15. Has the difference in treatment chemicals for surface water been evaluated for interactions with pipes in old (+50-year-old) neighborhoods and lead contamination?

The Authority does not have a choice in what kinds of treatment chemicals we have to use for surface water. Any interactions with old pipes will be determined by how hard the ground water has been and how much mineral buildup has occurred in your pipes. This is something that will vary with each utility district as the minerals in the ground water are not the same from location to location.

16. Your website says voters voted for this organization – when will we be able to vote again?

The vote to create the Authority was held in January of 2000. There will not be another vote.

17. After the conversion will your fee go away? How long until conversion?

It is expected that the fee will not go away in the future. It will change from time to time depending on our financial needs from year to year. The Authority is converting utility districts as fast as possible, and you will continue to see conversions occurring into 2035 and beyond.

18. Why are we changing from groundwater to surface water when we know that surface water contains pesticides, herbicides, pharmaceuticals and is highly prone to different types of pollution?

The Authority is converting from groundwater to surface water because it is the law. We do not have a choice in the matter. Failure to meet the Subsidence District mandates, which are also Legislatively mandated laws, would mean we would be paying a very high penalty which currently stands at \$9.80 per 1000 gallons (this fee will increase in 2023). This is more than double the current rate for ground water pumped.

Surface water is purified to very exacting standards. All harmful chemicals, etc. are filtered out before being delivered to your home.

19. Since City of Houston has for 30+ years used annexations of strips along roadways to create a spider web of pumping locations to WAY out into N & W Harris County, will they be required to reduce their pumping?

The City of Houston has exactly the same requirements to convert from groundwater to surface water. They have in fact shut down many of their groundwater wells.