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Late Backup



TODAY -- COME JOIN THE FUN AT CITY HALL!!

Come join us just after 4:00 p.m. TODAY at the Austin City Council public hearing on the Water Utility's proposal to divert an acre of Upper Bull Creek park land for the construction site for a 6.2 mile long water transmission tunnel for Water Treatment Plant No. 4.

State law requires that the City Council make a formal finding that there is "no feasible and prudent alternative" to the taking of the park land for the non-park purpose.

So what "feasible and prudent alternatives exist"? There are many:

1. **Recognize we already replaced WTP4 for essentially FREE with our Stage 2 "one-day per week" watering schedule.** The Water Utility has written that the Stage 2 watering restrictions, implemented during the highest "peak day" demand conditions during the 2009 drought, reduced peak day demand by 20 percent, or 44 million gallons per day. WTP4 will only provide 50 MGD of additional peak day treating capacity at a cost of \$600 million (plus \$500 to \$700 million in interest payments).
2. Austin Water Utility staff has estimated the cost for seven different versions of building a new 50 MGD water treatment plant on Lady Bird Lake. The estimated costs range from \$216 million to \$330 million.
3. We recently added 67 MGD capacity to our "Ulrich" water plant for less than \$80 million. We can add additional capacity to both Ulrich and Davis for similar rates of \$\$ per MGD treatment capacity.
4. Austin Water Utility staff have stated repeatedly that investing in water conservation is the cheapest way to extend our water resources. Water conservation investments, combined with repairing old, failing pipes and expanding our reclaimed (nonpotable) water system can more than replace the 50 MGD capacity for a small fraction of the cost.
5. Austin Water Utility staff have written that we save \$14.3 million every year that WTP4 is postponed. Staff has also represented to council that current construction work on the water plant can be shelved for \$6 million. Thus, a feasible and prudent alternative to taking the park land at this time for the water plant, is to postpone the taking and construction, while we take 2 or more years to

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study our alternatives and invest in conservation and repairing our old broken pipes.

Rate Backlog

6. There are other “feasible and prudent” alternatives, but the above should be sufficient.

City staff must also show that “all reasonable planning” has been undertaken to minimize the taking of park land for the non-park use.

To date, the City has done nothing to analyze the proposed water plant (and the resulting park land taking) in the context of the current and ongoing comprehensive planning process. This despite the mandate in the Austin City Charter that our comprehensive plan include water, major CIP projects, and resource management elements in the plan.

Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, SOS Alliance, PODER, Clean Water Action, Austin Neighborhoods Council, Environment Texas, Environmental Defense Fund, and Hill Country Alliance have all joined in asking that WTP4 be put on hold for at least two years while we continue the “Imagine Austin” comprehensive plan process, including a meaningful water planning element, with the goal of seeking a community consensus for meeting our future water needs.