

**MINUTES OF THE FOWLER CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
FEBRUARY 1, 2005**

Mayor Simonian called the meeting to order in the Council Chambers at 5:37 p.m.

Council members present: Simonian, Shaw, Cardenas, Aguayo, Nagata

City staff present: City Manager Elias, City Clerk Davis, Finance Director Wong, Police Chief Jamgochian, City Attorney Wolfe

**CONSIDER IMPLEMENTING CHANGE TO WATER DEPARTMENT BILLING METHOD**

City Manager Elias explained the City's water billing system, as discussed at the previous meeting, in greater detail. The Fowler Municipal Code calls for the water meters to be read beginning the first day of each month, and completed by the 10th of the month. The utility billing clerk will then enter the readings manually into the computer before the end of the month, with bills mailed out to customers on the first of the following month. The bill is due 20 days from that date, but if not paid, a 10 day notice is sent. If the bill still isn't paid, a 48 hour notice, per Public Utilities Commission (P.U.C.) regulations, is mailed before the water can be shut off. He said that the timing of the billing coupled with P.U.C. regulations can cause customers to be paying their bill for January water usage in April.

To help expedite the billing process, Mr. Elias suggested implementing a hand-held meter reading device that can automatically download readings into the computer. The billing can then be sent out to customers more quickly. A meeting will be scheduled with representatives from the computer software company, Pentamation, to take steps to implement the automated meter reading and billing system. City Manager Elias said that to inform the public about the change, he planned to have the Fowler Ensign run a series of articles providing an explanation about how the billing system works, along with a recommendation to conserve water. An informational letter could also be sent with the water bills.

The Council discussed the matter. Pursuant to the discussion, City Attorney Wolfe clarified that the action the Council would need to take is to direct staff to move up the water use billing cycle to occur as soon as reasonably feasible after the month the water is consumed. Direction would also be given to staff to provide a courtesy notice to all of the consumers providing an explanation for the change.

Councilmember Cardenas made a motion to proceed with the changes to the billing system, as stated in the description of the motion given by City Attorney Wolfe. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Aguayo and carried on a 3-2-0 roll call vote,

with Councilmembers Cardenas, Aguayo and Shaw voting yes and Nagata and Simonian voting no.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Having no further business, Councilmember Nagata made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilmember Cardenas. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p. m.