

**MINUTES OF THE FOWLER CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 12, 2006**

Mayor Simonian called the meeting to order in the Council Chambers at 5:32 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Councilmembers present: Simonian, Shaw, Aguayo & Nagata
Councilmember Cardenas arrived at 5:38 p. m.

City staff present: City Manager Elias, City Clerk Davis, Finance Director Wong, Police Chief Jamgochian, Community Development Director Deaver, Senior/Recreation Director Monis, City Attorney Wolfe, Public Works Superintendent Weisser

Also present: Consultant Cindy Merzon, Ralph Garcia -Fresno County EDC- Director of Community Development, City Council Candidate Craig Mellon

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Councilmember Aguayo announced that the City received a California Integrated Waste Management Board Grant in the amount of \$175,000 for street improvements.

STRATEGIC VISIONING/GOAL SETTING

Consultant Cindy Merzon conducted a second Council visioning/goal setting session. She began with a draft shared vision statement for the future, based on discussion at the prior session. The statement painted a picture of what Fowler might look like in the year 2026, such as: *“The City and schools have all the services that meet the needs of the community, including ample jobs, a vibrant downtown, a strong recreation program meeting the needs of youth and seniors alike, large parks with sports fields,”* etc.

The Council discussed the statement and the role of the local schools in the City’s vision for the future. It was decided that the statement should be changed to state: *“The City works cooperatively with local schools to ensure quality educational opportunities for all residents.”* Also added to the statement was that community members would work together towards the success of their common goals.

Ms. Merzon presented a listing from the prior session of what the Council had voiced were the City’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The Council discussed the priority goals and projects, such as a new fire and police station, new parks/recreational facilities, developing a downtown revitalization plan, outreach in support of a new library, improvement of the Golden State Corridor, and updating the City’s zoning ordinance and emergency plan. They talked about the proposed timeline and specific efforts needed to attain these goals, and designated an

appropriate Councilmember or staff member to each of the tasks. Ms. Merzon stated that she would provide a summary of the discussion so that action plans for each assigned task could be formulated. Future progress reports on these goals would be given at specific time intervals.

DISCUSSION ON ISSUING WATER BILL REFUNDS

City Manager Elias explained that for several years the garbage utility rates have been adjusted annually by Waste Management (WM) according to changes to the Consumer Price Index. City staff then adds a \$2.00 per month franchise fee as allowed by the agreement with WM. It was recently discovered that WM had already included the \$2.00 franchise fee in last year's rate adjustment figure, and staff had unknowingly added the \$2.00 fee on top of this amount. Due to the over-collection of the fee, City Manager Elias asked for the Council's input on how to proceed with issuing refunds, perhaps as a credit to their water bill or other means.

Finance Director Wong recommended using a refund claim form. A notice would be sent to the customers in both English and Spanish notifying them of the over-collection and that they could apply for a refund by a certain date, such as December 31, 2006. They would then come in to City Hall to complete the claim form. Staff would verify what was owed, and a credit would be applied to the following month's bill, or a refund check would be issued if the customer was no longer at the service residence. After discussion, it was decided that the claim form should be mailed to customers along with the refund notice.

DISCUSSION REGARDING CITY NEWSLETTER/WRITTEN DEPARTMENTAL REPORT

City Manager Elias spoke to the Council about providing, in addition to oral departmental reports given at Council meetings, a written report about City activities. It could be in the form of a newsletter that would be issued periodically and prompted by activities that the Council would want to be informed about.

The Council discussed the matter. Comments were made that the newsletter should not be a report of day-to-day routine items, or used as an evaluation of staff activities and workload. The report should consist of matters of interest in the community, new developments and projects, new businesses, and so forth, so that the Council would be able to keep the public informed. It was expressed that the report should not take too much time away from staff's normal responsibilities. Ralph Garcia commented that the City of Selma provides a report that contains just highlights of community events and activities, and other key items. City Attorney Wolfe stated that it should be kept in mind that the reports would be a public record, and should not contain confidential or sensitive matter.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, Councilmember Cardenas made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilmember Aguayo. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:43 p. m.