

Water utility poised on the brink of major investments

SPRWS staff has proposed major improvements to the above-ground water facilities, \$117 million of which could be coming in the next decade.

The Board of Water Commissioners heard the proposal at its January and February meetings. The proposal comes in response to a recent consulting study that analyzed the condition of the water utility's assets and recommended SPRWS anticipate investing in new facilities to the tune of more than \$237 million over the next 40 years.

One of the prime features of the investment will be the complete overhaul of the water treatment process from rapid mix to clarification. Many parts of the existing processes are currently more than 90 years old. This work will include the addition of ozone to the treatment train and construction of a redundant recarbonation basin.

The project plan for the \$117 million in improvements slated for the next 10 years include:

- An elevated water tank replacement or addition in West St. Paul
- Raw water conduit rehabilitation
- Electrical switchgear replacement
- Slaker and sludge press replacements
- Pump replacements
- Carbon dioxide feed design and system construction
- Treatment process design and construction
- Low service reservoir design and replacement



Steve Schneider, general manager, addresses staff during one of two meetings on the future of the water utility held on Feb. 24 in the cafeteria. The other meeting was held on Feb. 26.

- Piping improvements
- Finished water reservoir rehabilitation

Those improvements would be financed through debt service such as revenue bonds and the state's revolving loan fund.

At the same time, the recent addition of the water main replacement surcharge will allow us to more aggressively replace water main and other buried infrastructure on a pay-as-you-go basis. Those improvements over the same time frame could be an investment of \$180 million and include:

- Replacement of up to 1.5 percent of water mains a year
- Replacement of hydrants and water services

The combination of the above ground and buried infrastructure replacement program will require

annual rate increases that will average around 5.7 percent during that 10-year time frame.

Staff will ask the Board to pass a resolution incorporating the investments into the water utility's strategic plan to help ensure that the investments are there for years into the future. The annual water rate adjustments will still be required to be passed as part of the annual budget process.

"These investments will position the utility well for the future," said Schneider. "It's a solid plan."

"It will take care of our existing customers and position ourselves to expand to future customers if need be," he concluded.

Hutter stays on as timekeeper, Lagos moves to customer service

It's been nine months since TASS was first implemented and most staff have acclimated to using the new system.

In addition, the system has become more stable and has produced some helpful reports. As such, only one timekeeper will continue working in both TASS and CMMS.

As of March 2, Heidi Lagos returned to her position in the call center working as a customer service rep.

To help make sure our timekeeping continues to be entered correctly into both TASS, and CMMS, Yvonne Hutter will continue working as a timekeeper at the water utility. She will continue in that role until a solution that provides for punching, rule-based analysis, and cost accounting can be designed and implemented.

If you have issues with payroll going forward, please bring them to the attention of Hutter as appropriate. If you are emailing city payroll, please carbon copy (CC) Hutter so that she can reconcile your TASS account with CMMS.

Good luck to Heidi in resuming her customer service position.

Thank you to them both for managing the dual systems and making sure we were all paid correctly.



Yvonne Hutter



Heidi Lagos

Tuition reimbursement, free courses offered

Keeping up to date in your area of expertise is essential in today's economy.

The city and SPRWS assist employees in maintaining their education by providing tuition reimbursement for eligible coursework. The city provides up to \$600 of tuition reimbursement per year for full-time employees and \$300 for part-time staff. The utility will provide an additional amount up to \$2,500 per year for full time employees and up to \$600 for part-time staff. Combined, a full-time employee could be reimbursed up to \$3,100 for coursework taken as part of an accredited program.

If you are interested, now is the time to apply. Funds are available on a first come, first served basis, and city funds often run out early in the year.

Contact Racquel Smrz at 266-6815 for more information on tuition reimbursement and how to qualify.

Century College courses offered

In addition to the tuition reimbursement, the water utility has contracted with Century College to have two seats available for a wide variety of classes you can take for free. Many of the half- to full-day courses are targeted toward supervisors, but a significant number cover such topics as Word, Excel, Access databases and other Microsoft programs.

You can get a complete list of classes available from Century College by contacting Debbie Szulim on the second floor of the administration building or at 266-6263. If you are interested in taking any of the courses, you also sign up with Szulim.

You must obtain supervisor approval prior to signing up for the course.

Massages available onsite every two weeks

Chair massages are available onsite every two weeks at the water utility.

From 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the Wednesday prior to payday, Roger Mound is in the east conference room on the first floor of the administration building.

The massages are done in a private room while fully clothed and seated upright. Light music plays in the background while Roger works out those aches and pains from sitting at your desk for too long, or from lifting heavy objects.

Maybe you're a weekend warrior that is still a bit stiff from your activities. Or maybe you suffer from

chronic pain.

Roger welcomes all employees to take part in his therapeutic massage techniques. He is a certified Associated Bodywork & Massage Professional.

The massages can last either 15 minutes or 30 minutes. A 15 minute massage is \$18 while a half an hour costs \$30.

Please make sure you are using your own time to take part in the massages.

You can sign up in advance on the sign-up sheet in the cafeteria bulletin board or on the day of service on the door of the east conference room.