

Mayor Barbara Larsen called the workshop meeting to order, with the following councilmembers present: Greg Marcil, Earl Queen and Jack Reilly. Cowlitz County representatives included Commissioners George Raiter and Kathleen Johnson, Kent Cash, Ken Cachelin, and Ken Stone. City staff included Public Works Director Dave Vorse and Clerk-Treasurer Ryana Covington.

Purpose of the special meeting was to provide the public with information on the proposed transfer of the West Castle Rock water/sewer system from Cowlitz County to the City of Castle Rock.

Following introductions, Ken Stone, Cowlitz County Department of Asset Management and Sustainability Director gave a Power Point presentation outlining the history of the system, which began in 1969 with the relocation of the Castle Rock High School to its present location.

At that time, both the city and county recognized the likelihood that growth will result in future annexation of this area into the city limits. In 1970, the school district agreed to invest \$50,000 into expanding utility services to their new site and Cowlitz County provided an additional \$80,000. Following this initial investment, the county formed a ULID in 1971 to fund the utility system.

In 1977, another ULID was formed to establish and install utilities to the Green Acres subdivision.

With more development occurring, the county and city adopted the Castle Rock Urban Growth Management Program in 1984, which outlines various policies and procedures. The policy provides for a logical growth area for the city, provides for economic and efficient utilization of public facilities, provides for joint planning and management of growth and establishes policies for water and sewer services and annexation.

Developers within the established Urban Growth Management area currently must adhere to city development standards, even though the properties are located in the county. In addition, utility extensions are limited to those properties within the Urban Growth Area.

Stone stated the intent of the agreement was to provide transfer of the county utilities to the city. For this reason, the city administers and maintains the system.

Mr. Stone stated that transfer of the system to city ownership would not change service currently being provided to county customers. The city would own and administer the system, including the customer accounts. Stone noted that for customers using 700 cubic feet of water, city rates are lower than the county rates. He noted that over 60% of West Castle Rock water/sewer system customers use less than 700 cubic feet of water.

Stone noted that the city charges customers residing outside of the city limits 1.5 times more than in-city rates. Vorse added that the city attorney is currently researching if the city can legally offer a transition rate to West Castle Rock water/sewer system which would defer the additional non-resident charge. This would provide time for customers on the West Castle Rock water/sewer system to decide whether annexation into the city would be something they would be interested in pursuing.

Stone stated that the transfer would need to be approved by both the city and county elected officials, through an interlocal agreement. It would also require an amendment to the Regional Utility System Operating Agreement to reflect the revised ownership of the systems.

Harold Conradi, west side resident, stated in 1977, he initially contacted the city, to request service to approximately seven – eight properties. He stated the city did not respond to his request, so he contacted the county. He credited the county with working to provide services for the west side residents. Conradi stated he does not have anything against the city; rather that he has been satisfied with the county's services. He felt that many residents in the Green Acres subdivision also shared his opinion and they would like the ownership of the system to remain unchanged.

Paul Helenberg, North County Recreation Association, asked county officials if they could install a trap gate on the culvert located on the east side of the Four Corners intersection to prevent backflow flooding during high rainfall. Mr. Cash stated he would look into this issue.

In answer to Commissioner Raiter's question, Stone stated the West Castle Rock water/sewer system amounts to approximately 5% of the entire system usage. Mr. Stone noted that for the past six years, the county has needed to impose double digit rate increases on their customers to make up for system costs.

In answer to a question from resident Glenn Pingree, Mr. Stone stated that interest in this issue has been generated from recent growth in the area. The 1984 Urban Growth Management agreement recommended the transfer be made within one year of the agreement date, however growth was slower than anticipated in the agreement. He added that water and sewer utility services are the key to the city's ability to develop. Vorse stated that developers wanting to connect to this service must currently meet double development rules; from both county and city ordinance regulations.

In answer to Mr. Pingree's question, Vorse stated that the Castle Rock High School property is now in the city limits and would not be affected by the city's outside rates. Commissioner Raiter noted that if West Castle Rock water/sewer system customers choose to annex, they would pay the same rates as in-city customers – which for the majority of them would be less than current county rates.

In answer to city resident, Mark Accimus' question, Mr. Stone stated that Cowlitz County

currently controls the utility hookups and billings for the West Castle Rock water/sewer system customers, however the Urban Growth Management Agreement requires developers to meet both the county and city development regulations pertaining to subdivision and building standards. In addition, proposed development outside of the Urban Growth area currently cannot receive utility services.

Vorse summarized the condition and life span of the West Castle Rock water/sewer system infrastructure. He also noted that the system's sewer pump station was upgraded in 1997.

In answer to Mr. Pingree's question, Vorse stated that upgrades to the regional sewer treatment plant allow for growth. Stone noted that many years ago, the county's agreement with the city was to allow 25% of the system capacity to accommodate the county growth. When the Regional Utility Agreement was amended a few years ago, this percentage was not included; and the capacity needs are on a first come, first served basis.

Mr. Stone noted that the county will still be active in the Regional Utility Agreement, since they still will have water customers along Spirit Lake Highway/Toutle area. He noted that the county also owns a sewer treatment system in Toutle.

In answer to Mayor Larsen's question, Mr. Stone stated that elected officials will need to agree upon the transfer, through an interlocal agreement. Vorse stated the purpose of this meeting was to provide the public with an opportunity to comment. From there, either a decision will be made, or if more research is needed, staff can proceed with obtaining the additional information.

Councilmember Queen stated that he would have liked more input from residents within the Green Acres development.

Mayor Larsen adjourned the workshop meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Mayor Barbara Larsen

Clerk-Treasurer