

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Water Commissioners
Subject: Ortega Well Treatment Plant Parcel

DRAFT

The Ortega Well Treatment Plant (OWTP) is a vital City water facility that is soon to undergo a major upgrade. The facility treats water from four downtown wells. It cannot be moved as it is anchored to its location by underground pipes feeding it from these offsite wells.

The Water Commission desires to ensure that there is adequate land and access for ongoing and future operations, maintenance and upgrade of this important City water asset.

Historically the OWTP had heavy equipment access from the south. In 2003 the City transferred the parcel that housed the Public Works parking lot, the Surveyor's office, the old Recycle Center and the OWTP to the Redevelopment Agency (RDA). Subsequently the parcel was subdivided to create two parcels – one of which was sold to the Mental Health Association (MHA) for development of their building. The remaining parcel contains the OWTP, the Surveyor's building and the old Recycling Center - which is intended to be the Community Arts Workshop site.

During design of the MHA building Public Works staff requested continued access for heavy equipment to the south side of the OWTP. An easement was granted to the City over the proposed MHA driveway to the southern access to the OWTP. During construction the driveway was lowered in elevation and a 2.5 feet retaining wall was built across the OWTP access. The easement is useless – there is no access to the plant from the driveway.

Water Commission believes that there is need to ensure water staff have as much access to the OWTP site as existing development on surrounding parcels will allow. For this reason Water Commission believes the parcel needs to be split and the appropriate portion of land re-conveyed to the City as a water fund asset to maximize control of the land needed for current and future operations, maintenance and upgrade. It is preferable that Water Resources grant easements to others rather than have this facility in a compromised position dependent on the whim of easement grantors for normal maintenance access and future needs.

In 2005 Paul Casey (Community Development Director), Steve Mack (Water Resources Manger) and Ken Goodenough (Water Systems Manager) met at the OWTP. They agreed that the plant property line would include a 30 feet wide strip of land east of the foundation of the treatment building, running from Ortega Street to the property line of the MHA building.

The Water Commission asked staff to inquire as to when the property line will be finalized. Staff reported back that one party indicated this issue might not be resolved until the year 2015. Water Resources staff has informed us they believe there may be a need for more land than was agreed to in 2005 for routine operation and maintenance of the OWTP and that they intend bring the parcel property line issue to Council at the time construction of the plant upgrade is complete.

The Commission's position is that an important water facility project such as this major plant upgrade should have the property line, construction easements, utility (pipe) easements and access easements clearly delineated during design and finalized before construction begins.

It is the consensus of the Commission the property line agreed to in 2005 should be finalized before a construction contract is awarded for the OWTP upgrade. The easements needed for utilities, access and construction requirements should also be finalized at the same time.

The Water Commission respectfully requests that City Council sitting as RDA direct staff to finalize the property line and easements for the OWTP parcel before a construction contract is awarded for the plant's upgrade.

Thank you for your attention to this matter of vital importance to the City's water future.