AGENDA DATE: April 16, 2019

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Water Resources Division, Public Works Department

SUBJECT: Name Change For The El Estero Wastewater Treatment Plant

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt, by reading of title only, A Resolution of the Council of the City of Santa Barbara Renaming the El Estero Wastewater Treatment Plant the El Estero Water Resource Center.

DISCUSSION:

The El Estero Wastewater Treatment Plant (El Estero) plays a vital role in protecting public health and the environment while serving as a foundation for community sustainability. Referring to the facility as simply a “Wastewater Treatment Plant” is a disservice to the public as it inaccurately represents the role of this critical facility. To help advance the public’s understanding of these remarkable facilities, the industry has been moving toward a focus on the value of these facilities in recovering resources (water, energy, and nutrients), protecting the environment, and providing a safe and sustainable foundation for communities to thrive.

At the February 15, 2018 Water Commission meeting, Hillary Hauser of Heal the Ocean requested that the Commission consider renaming El Estero to reflect the vital role the facility plays in protecting the environment and recovering water and energy. The Commission directed staff to explore this issue and return with a new name for the facility.

Given the significant improvements taking place at El Estero, with the completion of the $30M Secondary Aeration Project, the timing is ideal to create a new narrative for water resources that reflects the sustainable role El Estero plays in resource recovery and shows where we are headed with expanded recovery of water, energy, and nutrients. El Estero already recovers many resources, including sustainable disposal of Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG). The facility receives FOG from local restaurants and injects it into the digesters, increasing biogas production that, through the co-generation facility, generates electricity to power nearly 70% of El Estero’s electrical needs. Additionally, biosolids are produced from the solids wastestream that are further composted off-site and used as nutrient-rich soil. Lastly, water is recycled through a state-of-the-art tertiary facility using ultra-filtration as a means to increase water quality, which offsets the need for potable
water for irrigation. As the state moves to develop regulations for expanded use of recycled water, this water could be used to augment raw water from Lake Cachuma and Gibraltar Reservoir, improving the City’s resiliency during droughts. Clearly, El Estero is no longer just a wastewater treatment facility but a resource recovery center that takes the “waste” out of water.

In fall 2018, the City entered into a contract with Katz & Associates, a public relations firm, to assist with public communication and the rebranding and renaming of El Estero to reflect this change in narrative. Katz held numerous meetings and workshops with wastewater staff to review facility uses, public awareness, and the relationship El Estero has with the community in order to develop a new name and tagline. The name “El Estero” resonated with staff as it pays homage to the historic Spanish culture in Santa Barbara as well as the history of the site as an estuary. An estuary serves as a great example of a sustainable ecosystem that provides natural treatment along with water, energy, and nutrient recovery to the natural environment. Staff embraced the renaming process, and after several months of discussion selected the following name and brand:

El Estero
WATER RESOURCE CENTER
Enhancing Santa Barbara’s Quality of Life

Staff recommends that Council adopt a resolution renaming the El Estero Wastewater Treatment Plant the El Estero Water Resource Center.

The Water Commission reviewed this item at a special meeting on March 28, 2019 and voted X-X in support of staff’s recommendation.

PREPARED BY: Gaylen Fair, Acting Wastewater System Manager/js
SUBMITTED BY: Rebecca J. Bjork, Public Works Director
APPROVED BY: City Administrator’s Office
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
WATER RESOURCES DIVISION

RENAMING EL ESTERO WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT
Why Rebrand El Estero?

• Current name too narrow
• More than a wastewater treatment plant
  - Resource recovery and conservation
  - Recycling, energy, minerals
• Key part of City’s environmental stewardship and protection of public health
• Key part of City’s future sustainability
Names and Taglines

• Name:
  - Recognizable
  - Demonstrates purpose
  - Not complex
  - Works Visually
  - Reflective of the community identity

• Taglines:
  - A short phrase
  - Conveys the essence of the program, service, or product
  - Demonstrates the emotional and functional benefits
  - Bolster image or identity
Staff-Driven Process

Meeting One
• El Estero leadership met to determine vision and set goal of renaming

Meeting Two
• Presentations to all El Estero Staff with worksheet to gather feedback

Design
• Based on worksheet results, developed two design concepts and applied them to top two names and taglines

Survey
• Online digital survey for all staff to complete

Final Selection
• Final Selection based on survey results
Key Takeaways

• Abundant pride in the facility and the role it plays in the community
• Importance of maintaining ties to the past while focusing on the future
• Repeated terms:
  - Sustainable
  - Natural
  - Reliable
  - Safe
  - Efficient
  - Resilient
  - Advanced
  - Protection
  - Service
Representing El Estero’s Value

• El Estero (meaning “the Estuary” in Spanish)
  - Sits on site of a former estuary
  - Recognizes Spanish heritage
  - Similar function to an estuary (energy/nutrients transfer, cleaning)
  - Connection to ocean and land
• “Wastewater Treatment” is not its only function
  - Water Resource Center
• Tagline describes the benefits El Estero provides
El Estero
WATER RESOURCE CENTER

Enhancing Santa Barbara’s Quality of Life
ENHANCING SANTA BARBARA’S QUALITY OF LIFE

El Estero
El Estero
ENHANCING SANTA BARBARA'S QUALITY OF LIFE
Next Steps

• Recommend name change to Council
• Launch the new name on Earth Day, April 22
• Share the new narrative through communication vehicles
• Consider new applications for brand