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CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: May 5, 2020

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Water Resources Division, Public Works Department

SUBJECT: Wastewater Collection System Annual Report

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receive a report from staff on calendar year 2019 wastewater collection system maintenance and management activities.

DISCUSSION:

The City operates 257 miles of wastewater collection system pipelines, the majority of which are six or eight inches in diameter and convey wastewater to the City's El Estero Water Resource Center. The operation of the wastewater collection system is regulated by the State Water Resources Control Board under a Waste Discharge Requirement Permit.

In April 2011, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper (Channelkeeper) filed a lawsuit against the City in federal district court, alleging violations of the Clean Water Act caused by spills from the wastewater collection system pipelines. The City and Channelkeeper agreed to the terms of a Consent Decree in March 2012. By the time the Consent Decree was negotiated, the City had already committed over \$400,000 and substantial staff resources to the development and implementation of management practices to improve collection system operations, with the ultimate goal of spill reduction. This work was incorporated into the Consent Decree and is the basis for most of the requirements of the Consent Decree.

In 2016, the City and Channelkeeper agreed to amend the Consent Decree to extend the initial five-year term for up to three additional years. This Amended Consent Decree became effective in March 2017 and included additional management practices to further improve collection system operations. In addition, the requirement to repair, rehabilitate, and/or replace collection system pipes each year was reduced by one mile. Excess funding from this reduction in capital work, estimated at approximately \$450,000, was moved to the operating fund for increased cleaning activities.

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The City was required to produce a written Annual Report by March 31 of each year for the duration of the Consent Decree. The report details the previous year's activities and the current year's work, particularly as it relates to the rehabilitation, replacement, and/or repair of wastewater collection system pipes. Although no longer a requirement under the Amended Consent Decree, the Annual Report will be presented to Council. This report is available for review and will be summarized in the staff presentation.

For the second consecutive year, the City was successful in meeting or exceeding the maintenance practices and capital improvement work objectives required by the Consent Decree. For 2019, the City met the Consent Decree Sewer System Overflow Reduction Performance Standard (SSO Standard) for collection system spills. The SSO Standard for 2019 was eight spills, and the City had four spills. None of the spills in 2019 caused a beach closure, and the volume spilled to public waterways was approximately 122 gallons.

The Amended Consent Decree terminated on March 31, 2020. Although the City has met all the requirements and the Consent Decree is now terminated, Staff will continue to undertake measures to minimize spills.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

Funding for the implementation of the Consent Decree, along with all wastewater system costs, is provided through Wastewater rates. In Fiscal Year 2013, the rates were increased to provide sufficient revenue to fund increased costs of compliance with the Consent Decree and to meet other Wastewater Fund needs. From Fiscal Year 2014 through Fiscal Year 2019, rates were increased to generate sufficient revenue to cover the operating and capital costs of the Wastewater Fund, including the costs associated with the Consent Decree.

Fiscal Year 2021 was expected to see a five percent revenue increase. Though, with the COVID-19 pandemic the financial impacts to the community is predicted to be substantial. In order to be responsive to the suffering financial community, wastewater is anticipating a zero rate increase for Fiscal Year 2021. With the anticipated reduction of revenue, wastewater is looking at reduced funding availability for the CIP. However, it is anticipated that the impact to the SSO Standard program is minimal and the previous goals established by the program is still planned.

A copy of the report may be requested from the Public Works Department for public review; please contact us at PWInfo@SantaBarbaraCA.gov to request a copy.

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SUBMITTED BY: Rebecca J. Bjork, Public Works Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office