Utilities Customer Advisory Group
Minutes for the Meeting on
August 14, 2019
3:00 p.m.
Utilities Center
Conference Room 225

Committee Members Present
Eugene Suttmiller, Chairman
Shirley Clark, Vice-Chairman
Frank D. Gomez, Committee Member
Robert Snyder, Committee Member
Paul Royalty, Committee Member

City Staff Present
Jose Provencio, Business Services Administrator
Mario Puentes, Gas Business Analyst
Tanya Rivera, Administrative Assistant
Domonique Rodriguez, Rate Econ. Analyst Mgr.
James Safford, Management Analysis
Marcy Driggers, Sr. Assistant City Attorney
Renee Armijo, Office Assistant

Others:
Susan Schmugge, League of Women Voters
Cassie McClure, Public Outreach Consultant
Suzanne Michaels, Public Outreach Consultant
Becky Baum, RC Creations, LLC

Chair Suttmiller called the regular meeting to order at approximately 3:04 p.m.

1. Conflict of Interest:
Chair Suttmiller: I guess the first part is the Conflict of Interest. Is there anybody? In the opening of each meeting the Chairperson shall ask if any Member on the Committee or any member of the City staff has any known Conflict of Interest with any item on the agenda. Is there anybody that has conflict of interest with anything that’s on the agenda? The answer is no.

There were none.

2. Acceptance of Agenda:
Chair Suttmiller: We will consider Acceptance of the Agenda. Has everybody had a chance to look at the agenda? Is there anything you wish to change?

Clark: Move to approve the agenda.

Royalty: I'll second.

Chair Suttmiller: All in favor?

The Agenda was Accepted Unanimously 5-0.

3. Acceptance of Minutes:
Chair Suttmiller: Acceptance of Minutes. Has everybody had a chance to read the minutes?
Clark: Move to approve the minutes.

Chair Suttmiller: Anyone want to second?

Snyder: I'll second.

Chair Suttmiller: All in favor?

The Minutes were Approved Unanimously 5-0.

4. Public Participation:
Chair Suttmiller: Public Participation. At this point I'll look at anybody that has, yes ma'am. We do have a public participant.

Schmugge: I'm Susan Schmugge. I'm from the League of Women Voters and I read this attachment when it was available on the City website. I have a question. You may be addressing the answers or presenting this today. If you are just tell me. The first page talks about an August update which is today and the first item is a presentation to the working group last month. I have not heard of the working group and I wonder what the working group is.

Chair Suttmiller: Do either one of you want to answer this? I can answer it. I was on the working group at that meeting ma'am.

Schmugge: Okay.

Provencio: Chairman, Commissioners. Jose Provencio with Utilities, Deputy Administrator for Business Services. To answer the question the working group looks at the detailed presentation of the Rate Review. In this case it's for the Solid Waste Review which looks at and presents the details of the revenue requirement and the increase that's being requested. That's usually a meeting of two members of the UCAG and staff and the consultant when dealing the, at least in this case was a Revenue Requirement for the Solid Waste Rate Review. That's what it is. We do that so that we brief the two members of the working group, of the UCAG so that they have the working knowledge and information to bring back to the regular committee and then discuss more detail of the upcoming details for the rate review.

Schmugge: Okay.

Chair Suttmiller: If I may, it's a chance for us to question the experts about things we don't understand.

Schmugge: Was that a public meeting? Was the public invited to that meeting? That's really what my question was.

Provencio: No, not it's not. It's a working group.
Chair Suttmiller: It's a working group and there's no decisions made.

Schmugge: Well my question stems from the fact that that seems to be different than the process used for the previous use of utility rate.

Chair Suttmiller: There was one for that also.

Schmugge: A working group?

Chair Suttmiller: Yes.

Clark: I was on the ones on the Water and the Wastewater. I worked on those.

Schmugge: Okay.

Clark: My basic skill set's in finance and we have a summary on the finance, but then there's also the detail from all the finance and we get to go through that. If there's questions we can bring it up. If it doesn't look right to us we can ask the consultants; "this doesn't look right, we've got a problem with this, what's your answer to it?" We get all the details worked out to where we've got a good solid presentation to bring to the full Board.

Schmugge: Okay, All right. The use of the term working group was new to me which is why I asked the question.

Clark: We may not have used it on any other.

Chair Suttmiller: Keep in mind there's absolutely no decisions made.

Schmugge: Yes I recognize that. Right. Okay, thanks.

Chair Suttmiller: It's a very useful thing because ...

Schmugge: I'm sure.

Chair Suttmiller: ... If I don't think or who is ever on it doesn't think that they provided enough details in an area or that this needs to be strengthened or problem with this, that gives...

Schmugge: Of course that can happen again today.

Clark: It can.

Chair Suttmiller: ... It can happen again today but it sure cuts down on time and also on confusion because then it becomes confusing, well they said this, they said that. You said this and this and this and this makes me thinks it could be either this or this. You need to clean that up kind of.
Schmugge: Okay, thank you.

Chair Suttmiller: Okay. Thanks for the question. Do appreciate it.

Clark: Thank you Susan

Chair Suttmiller: Okay, anybody else? This is your chance.

There was none.

5. **Solid Waste Rate Review:**
   a. **Update and Next Steps for the Solid Waste Rate Review**

Chair Suttmiller: Okay the next item is Solid Waste Rate Review by Ms. Domonique Rodriguez.

Rodriguez: Hello, my name is Domonique Rodriguez. I'm the Rate and Economic Analyst Manager. I will be presenting today the update for August 2019. The Revenue Requirement was presented to the working group on July 18, 2019. At this meeting the working group recommended to have a full cost and a phased-in option to be included in the Rate Design when that was completed for the potential increase of the Solid Waste Rates.

The total Revenue Requirement is approximately over $847,000.00 which is a 6% increase. This increase is due to salaries and personnel increases, cost of disposal to the transfer station, and the correct amount of funding for vehicle replacements. There are some items pending and this may change once the Revenue Requirement is finalized. Since this information was provided to the working group I wanted to give an update as to those numbers that we have now.

Chair Suttmiller: Can you go over real quickly the items that are pending?

Dominquez: Sure. The items that are pending. We are currently looking at including some economic friendly solid waste vehicles. That is a direction that the City is going towards so we would like to have those amounts which include the purchase of equipment that is economic friendly and the maintenance cost that would go into those and the fuel savings that would then be offset. We are finalizing those numbers. We had to do a little more research to get that because it is not widely used so we want to make sure we do research it as much as we can to include those numbers. Okay.

Royalty: The 6% increase is since when? When was the last?

Dominquez: The last Solid Waste Rate Review that I remember was approved in 2015.

Also, I wanted to bring forward the next steps for the UCAG. We are looking for the public outreach plan. We are seeking guidance from the UCAG. We recommended open houses and the Farmers Market. The Farmers Market has been very successful for the UCAG. I do know that there has been talk about
changing what you would like it to be called, but I wanted to show here to get a feel and to get guidance from the UCAG so we can start scheduling the public meetings or open houses or what the name would be. Also to get information so we then could move forward with ads, poster boards, handouts, bill inserts that will be brought to the next meeting for your review and approval.

What we've done in the past is the meetings were Tuesday's through Thursday and they were 5:30 to 6:30. Then below is kind of a sample of what we've done in the past. We've done at a minimum of eight that you see here. These are the where the venues were, the addresses. What we're needing is to know what the UCAG would like to do moving forward. Suzanne also has some information for you.

Michaels:

Thanks. Good afternoon. I'm Suzanne Michaels, public outreach for Las Cruces Utilities and of course for you all. What I wanted to do, this is a document that was handed to you in January that explained all of the outreach that we did for the Wastewater Rate Review which was the last one. I have copies of this that I can hand to you if you think that this would be useful and we also have copies for the audience if anybody wants to see it. I just wanted, you've already seen these. They're already posted on the website. I just thought it would be nice to have it freshly in your hands so that you can see.

This is rather extensive public outreach and the reason we're talking about it was in spite of everything that we did and you see it all listed here, public notices for the open houses which were quite extensive, in both newspapers. We had a billing insert that went out in 40,000 bills during September in English and in Spanish. We had 10 open houses. We have display boards as we go again for the Solid Waste Rate review. Two newspaper articles. We posted stuff on Facebook. We did a press release. In spite of all that we had maybe two to four people show up at the meetings. Which, I mean there is an incredible investment in staff time, your time, the expense of running all these ads so we wanted to see how we might do something different this time. That's really what we're looking at here are the copies of the articles that were run, the billing insert, and also the ads that ran listing all of the open houses. Which is, that's the last page which is quite extensive. It includes the list of what Domenique has here up on the board.

What we were thinking about this time because the 5:30 to 6:30 which we thought "oh good, people will be after work. That would be a good time." Well it really didn't work out so well. We did discuss earlier, and you all agreed that if we could piggyback on existing meetings or where they're already were people like Farmers Market that that was a good thing to do. What we were considering is or wanted to put it out there, if we could do meetings at City Hall. Open houses, let's still use that term but we could switch it to listening sessions, say from 4:30 to 5:30 where there's already people there coming and going for different City Hall business and we were set up as we were before with a couple of display boards, couple members of the UCAG Committee, staff person or two who would be there as backup for any questions that came up
that you all weren't really sure of, for one solid week, say Monday through Friday from 4:30 to 5:30 at City Hall.

Now, I have a call in to see if that's possible with City Hall. Have not heard back from them yet. Before they did allow us to be there after hours so the question is can we just have a little bit of the lobby to do this, in case somebody wants to stop and ask questions. Ms. Clark, we were talking to you earlier about the lunch at the Munson Center. Although there were quite a number of people there, apparently they weren't really appreciative of anybody walking up to their lunch-time table. Would you?

Clark: Yes I did the lunch at the Munson Center and I felt like I was intruding on people's space. I would go around and tell the people "I'm here for this purpose blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Here's some information if you would have any questions. We're here to answer them for you." What did we get, like three people walk up and ask us something and maybe one of them liked it and the rest of the other two didn't?

Michaels: Right.

Clark: I felt like it was a waste and I don't want to be intrusive on the senior citizens because I myself am one and I don't want to be intruded on if I don't want to be intruded on.

Michaels: We think that maybe that would not be a useful thing to repeat.

Clark: That would not be a useful. I didn't think that would be useful at all.

Michaels: The Farmers Market, now I've got a call into them also and I can hear on the message that they are year-round on Saturday morning and Wednesday morning from 8:30 to 1:00, so if you all are open to that idea, that seemed to be a good place.

Clark: We got a lot of good reception at the Farmers Market.

Gomez: I was there serving on one of the occasions. Yes.

Michaels: I think what we did, we would just follow the same model that we've already developed where a couple people were there for the morning for two hours and then we switch out. We'll definitely do the Farmers Markets. What do you feel about the 4:30 to 5:30 idea at City Hall? Although before our thought was to go to be in every part of the City to make it easy for people to have access, we just didn't get the turn out.

Clark: We had many open houses without anybody showing up.

Michaels: Okay. Tell me what you think about the idea of just one place, it'll be for this one week, and what we're looking at is.
Clark: We have traffic.

Michaels: Yes, there are people just kind of going there.

Chair Suttmiller: I'd almost say just a little bit earlier.

Michaels: Earlier?

Chair Suttmiller: 4:00 to 5:00, yes.

Michaels: 4:00 to 5:00. Okay.

Clark: We could go 4:00 to 5:30 even.

Chair Suttmiller: Yes. I mean that's not, the thing is, is the more traffic that's going in and out which is usually.

Michaels: Okay.

Clark: Utility customers.

Chair Suttmiller: Yes.

Michaels: Okay, so let's say 4:00 to a little bit after 5:00 in case of traffic.

Chair Suttmiller: I hate to make, I'm sorry Frank, go ahead.

Michaels: Mr. Gomez.

Gomez: Mr. Chair yes. Suzanne, here's one thought in mind. Each City Council Member has sometimes a monthly or bi-monthly or sometimes every two months meeting at their immediate district. Why not invite us when they are having their, and give us a little bit of time to go ahead and present what we have to do? That would be touching base with every citizen just about that is inclined to go to those progressive meetings to hear what we're about.

Michaels: Let me check with them. We have checked in the past and have just not gotten a positive response. We will definitely go back and revisit that and see if we can get a positive response this time.

Chair Suttmiller: I was at one last night for Kassandra Gandara. There was a lot of people there. A lot of interested people who are vested in the community.

Michaels: Okay.
Chair Suttmiller: I think what it takes is like she had hers last night. I think if you called her tomorrow you'd have a chance at getting in the next one because they had a whole series of people who were presenting on polices and things.

Michaels: Okay.

Clark: Possible political blow back as this is an election year. We might get some blow back from the ones seeking re-election that they don't want this raise coming up to harm them in their elections. I see a lot of political crap going on.

Chair Suttmiller: Thank you. That's for Jorge to take care of for us.

Clark: That's right, and I know.

Walsh: Mr. Chair, Members. I'm sorry, my name is Delilah Walsh. I am the new Assistant Utilities Director.

Chair Suttmiller: Happy to have to you. I'm sorry, we were ignoring you and you're a Deputy boss.

Walsh: That's okay. I was waiting. Dr. Garcia has to be in the same phone conference as Marcy so I'm here in his stead. Of course getting to know the ropes. Just on that note a lot of what we want to do is preserve the integrity as far as the unbiased opinion of the City Councilors and we don't want them to be presented any information that may bias their decision, the final decisions on this Council. That's the purpose of the UCAG and we don't want to comingle any of that where the City Councilors may already preform.

Chair Suttmiller: Okay. It was more I was looking at it as an opportunity to get to a lot of people who are committed to the community.

Gomez: That's exactly the way I feel because politics is politics.

Clark: That's right. It is.

Chair Suttmiller: If we offer it to everybody and said "we're available. This is going on. If you want your people to know about it and people to come to your thing we'd be happy to show up and take 10, 15 minutes and present what's going on."

Gomez: Right on. Thank you for that.

Walsh: Again Mr. Chair, Mr. Gomez. It's actually against the law for us to involve City Councilors in any part of it. If they're hosting that meeting we want to make sure regulatory-wise that we're following.

Chair Suttmiller: Yes, we'll get with Marcy on this.
Gomez: I don't know. Obviously I was suggesting that because that's where we get the crowds of people from every district that is interested. The rest of them that are not, we pray hard for them to come and get interested, but I go for that. I'll support that 1,000%. Not 100, 1,000%. Every Council member should give us the opportunity to help them. To help the citizens. I was born with my middle name Smiles and I like to present everything with a smile as you all can see. Even if I came in shorts, I'm sorry but it's true business. Thank you, thank you very much for listening to me.

Walsh: Thank you.

Chair Suttmiller: Yes, I don't want to do anything that is even looking not kosher. Not let alone illegal.

Michaels: If I'm understanding we're going to focus on City Hall. We're trying to do all of the outreach between, in the last week of September and the first week of October instead of just spreading it out so the idea's in that. We're going to focus on City Hall and on Farmers Market because the other things that we've tried just really have not worked very well.

Chair Suttmiller: The other thing that worked real well is I believe it was Better Business Bureau did a thing up at the mall.

Michaels: At the mall. Yes.

Chair Suttmiller: That one was very good.

Michaels: Chamber of Commerce and

Chair Suttmiller: Chamber of Commerce, yes.

Michaels: If they have something going on during that time frame, absolutely.

Chair Suttmiller: That and say the Builders Association, something like that. If they're having an event I think the Builders Association are having a convention here in the next couple three months.

Michaels: Okay.

Chair Suttmiller: Not a convention but an open.

Michaels: I'll check on those two possibilities.

Chair Suttmiller: Those kinds of things, that anybody else professional organization that has large membership from the community, if they're putting something on. Usually most of them won't have a problem somebody coming in. They're not going to give you an hour or two or anything like that.
Michaels: No, no, no, they'll probably give you, I'm just going to guess.

Chair Suttmiller: 15, 20 minutes.

Michaels: I was thinking five.

Chair Suttmiller: Five. Yes. That's good or if say a teacher's union's having a convention here in the City, let us set up in a hallway kind of thing. That professional organizations especially.

Michaels: I'll check and see what's going on over at the Convention Center and see if there's something we could piggyback on there.

Clark: Okay. That's a good idea.

Chair Suttmiller: It's more the idea of piggybacking. It's not that.

Michaels: Yes we've already tried the thing of establishing our own event and trying to get something, everybody's lives are very busy.

Chair Suttmiller: Very much interested in if there's somebody getting a crowd together for us, I will show up if I can. That's going to be a problem. I will probably be out of cycle for the last half of August and most of October.

Michaels: Okay.

Chair Suttmiller: I will not be available.

Michaels: The one last thing I wanted to say is please remember that this is, we're dependent upon you all being there for the events that are scheduled.

Chair Suttmiller: I hate to say "well, let's do this and let's do this but I'm not going to be there." That's the way it is right now.

Michaels: Realistically maybe you could kind of pencil in on your calendars that those two weeks, last week of September, first week of October is when we're really focusing on this.

Chair Suttmiller: That's pretty much I can guarantee I will be gone. It's nothing within my power to change.

Michaels: Okay. All right. Thank you very much. Domonique was there anything else?

Gomez: Thank you Suzanne.

Domonique: Did you want to see if there are going to be public meeting open house listening sessions?
Michaels: Did you want to, okay so the reason that we looked at the term listening session is because the South Central Solid Waste Authority used that term and had a terrific turnout for two meetings. Now I don't think it was because of the term, but it just maybe is a little, maybe kind of a little fresher than open house. Listening session, do you want to go with that term?

Royalty: That sounds good to me. A lot better than open house.

Michaels: It sounds friendlier.

Clark: I have a comment on new titling of open houses. Community conversation.

Michaels: Okay.

Chair Suttmiller: That's good.

Clark: I'll throw that one out.

Michaels: All right. If you all are good with that then that sounds great.

Clark: I'm not going to take credit for that. It was given to me by staff.

Michaels: Community conversation, that's great.

Clark: Community conversation.

Michaels: I can see the headline now. All right. Do you have any questions?

Chair Suttmiller: Anybody have any objections at all? I don't think we have any objects.

Royalty: No objections.

Gomez: I agree with you 1,000%. I'm the 1,000 man today.

Clark: All right. Good for you.

Michaels: Thank you.

Dominguez: Continuation of the next steps. This is the timeline that I am looking at. September 2019, the full package of the Solid Waste Rate Review will be presented to the UCAG. That includes the Revenue Requirement, the Cost of Service, and the Rate Design. I will bring also the PowerPoint presentation that was used for public outreach. We did have those as handouts which was really good for those people who were just kind of coming by but wanted to get more detail in that short amount of time. I will bring that so that way you can review it and then the UCAG can approve it. Then we can use that for our outreach events. Then after the meeting then we will begin the public
outreach. That coincides with what Suzanne was talking about, that last week of September, beginning of October.

In October 2019, then I'll come back and I will update based on the public outreach. The numbers because we do sign in sheets so we see kind of what outcome we've had from the citizens. Then we can discuss and vote for a recommendation to the LCU Board based on your feedback from the public. That is all I have if you have any questions.

Chair Suttmiller: Any questions? Anybody have any questions? Nobcdy has any questions?

Gomez: Comment. Thank you very much for the good job.

Dominguez: Thank you. You're very welcome.

6. Other Items of Interest:
Provencio: Waiting for the next topic for the agenda. Chairman.

Chair Suttmiller: That's pretty much it. No it's not, next one is next meeting date.

Clark: Other Items of Interest.

Chair Suttmiller: Other Items of Interest.

Provencio: Chairman, Commissioners. The other items of interest. There was a little bit of thunder stolen from my introduction. As you well found out the Deputy Director does have a certain knowledge upon utility rate setting. I'd like to take this opportunity to first introduce Delilah Walsh. Delilah if you can come up here and introduce yourself very formally. Make it on the record so it's known and I will hand over the podium to Ms. Walsh.

Walsh: Thank you. Well it's good to finally meet everybody. I've seen the names on e-mails. As Joe said my name is Delilah Walsh. I'm the new Assistant Director for the Utilities Department. I am very new to Las Cruces. I've lived here since July 5th or 6th so that's been quite a journey in itself. I am from Socorro New Mexico, two hours north. I am a graduate of New Mexico Tech. If you've been through Socorro there is a university there. I did get my Bachelor of Science and my Master of Engineering Management at New Mexico Tech. For the last 10-1/2 years I was the county manager for Socorro County and prior to that I spent about 15 years in finance and banking. Most of my background is in HR, finance, strategic planning, and management. I'm very much looking forward to working with utility and with the City of Las Cruces and with our various Boards. I really appreciate this process, I've been researching how much input you all have had in our rate processes. It's very impressive how involved you are. Good luck to you Mr. Royalty. It sounds like you've got your hands full too. If you have any questions for me, I'd be happy to answer. Yes ma'am.
Clark: I would like to thank you for being very open and up front and not shy.

Walsh: Yes, that's never been a description for me.

Clark: It's never been mine either and I was a City clerk here for 12 years. I'm not shy either.

Chair Suttmiller: My only comment is from here to Socorro in two hours? Is your nickname lead foot?

Walsh: From my house we have it timed.

Gomez: Question if I may. Do you remember me from Socorro, New Mexico?

Walsh: In what context?

Gomez: From 1963 to 76.

Walsh: Okay, I was only two years old.

Gomez: That's why I had to ask that. I was very involved in the City of Socorro and of course I have some relatives there. I have a brother-in-law who is in the chile business by the way.

Walsh: Which one is that?

Gomez: It's great to hear that we have you to come down and be amongst us. The elite of this group.

Walsh: I agree. Who's the chile farmer?

Gomez: Pardon me?

Walsh: Who is the chile farmer?

Gomez: Albert Bustamante.

Walsh: I grew up with them. My maiden name is Vega and we also farm.

Gomez: You're a Vega?

Walsh: Yes sir. That's really the reaction.

Gomez: You're the daughter of which one of the Vega's?

Walsh: Lencho. Lupe is my oldest uncle. Lencho is the younger. That's my dad. It's like being home.
Welcome. We're here to make you smile and that's what it takes. If I may for just one second and I'm trying to be as jovial as I can because that's exactly the way I feel. I went through a traumatic experience about a year or so ago but I'm back alive and I feel energetic. There's a little song that I want to sing to all of us and I want you to remember this for when I'm gone. *(SONG SUNG)* I love that. What else is better than that? There is one other thing but I'm not going into that. *(inaudible)* Thank you, welcome again. Thank you for letting me.

No problem at all. Welcome to Las Cruces and the utilities family. Great pleasure working with you I'm sure.

Thank you so much. Thank you.

Anybody else have anything to say?

Don't look so sad, keep smiling.

I don't know how to sing.

7. **Committee Member Discussion:**

I will give any of the public or anybody here one more chance to have input on anything. Is there anybody that wishes speak?

The next item on the agenda is the Next Meeting Date which will be September 11, 2019. Anybody have an objection or anything like that? I'm not going to be here and I will probably not be here, I'm sure I won't.

On September 11th.

On September 11th. We have to have at least three people here to have a quorum.

I will be here. I won't be gone until December.

If for some reason anybody else drops out, they're going to need to track it close because there's no sense bringing people in or anything else and then have to call it at the last minute for lack of quorum. It's the one thing that worries me. I want to discuss it with you Domonique or maybe with her also, I didn't know that at the time I said I needed to talk to you because I've got some questions about it. We've got some people on the Board that have a hard time guaranteeing their place at any one time because of health issues. I want to see if there's other ways we can handle that. Probably need Marcy Driggers to bless whatever we come up with. If I can meet with you two after this I'd love to do if you've got the time. Thank you.
9. **Adjournment:**
Chair Suttmiller: If nobody has anything else, please.

Gomez: I so move.

Snyder: Second.

Chair Suttmiller: We will force the end of meeting. All in favor?

Chairperson