



Recommendation for Action

File #: 22-1730, Agenda Item #: 4.

4/21/2022

Posting Language:

Approve an ordinance amending the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Austin Water Operating Fund Budget (Ordinance No. 20210811-001) to increase appropriations and operating expenditures by \$1,400,000, reduce the ending balance by the same amount, and increase the number of authorized positions by 16 full-time equivalents to increase support for drinking water treatment plant operations.

Lead Department:

Austin Water.

Fiscal Note:

Funding in the amount of \$1,400,000 is available in the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 ending fund balance of the Austin Water Operating Fund. A fiscal note is attached.

Prior Council Action:

August 13, 2021 - Council approved an ordinance adopting the City of Austin Budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022, beginning on October 1, 2021, and ending on September 30, 2022.

March 3, 2022 - Council approved a resolution directing staff to develop recommendations regarding Austin Water billing adjustments or budget reallocations in lieu of billing adjustments, in response to the February 2022 boil water event.

For More Information:

Joseph Gonzales, Austin Water Assistant Director, Financial Services, 512-972-0359; Blanca Madriz, Austin Water Program Coordinator, 512-972-0115.

Council Committee, Boards and Commission Action:

February 23, 2022 - Austin Water Oversight Committee approved a resolution for full Council consideration, for recommendations regarding Austin Water billing adjustments or budget reallocations in lieu of billing adjustments, in response to the February 2022 boil water event.

March 31, 2022 - Austin Water Oversight Committee approved a motion on a vote of 3-0 with Mayor Pro Tem Alter off the dais, supporting Austin Water's staff recommendations to add FTE's and modernize software in lieu of billing credits, as outlined in the memo to Mayor and Council dated March 22, 2022 and the Committee recommended Council approve this proposal.

Additional Backup Information:

On March 3, 2022, Council approved Resolution No. 20220303-062 directing staff to develop recommendations that (1) consider mitigating adverse utility bill impacts experienced by customers due to the February 2022 boil water event that could include a one-time bill credit and fee adjustments, and (2) provide alternative recommendations to reduce risk which may involve a one-time reallocation into Austin Water's operating budget or its five-year Capital Improvement Plan in lieu of direct utility relief to customers.

In considering mitigating adverse utility bill impacts experienced by customers due to the February 2022 boil water event, Austin Water presented a goodwill one-time bill credit option to the Austin Water Oversight Committee on February 23, 2022. If authorized by City Council, this one-time bill credit, totaling approximately \$3.9 million, would be applied to each account through the City's utility billing system.

In lieu of direct utility relief to customers, Austin Water also evaluated alternative recommendations to reduce risk for all water treatment plants and identified the following opportunities:

Enhanced Core Staffing (12 Full-Time Equivalents - FTEs)

- (2 FTEs) Austin Water Operations and Maintenance Supervisors - providing overlapping Supervision to plant operators from day to night shift.
- (5 FTEs) Austin Water Operations and Maintenance Plant Technicians - establishing enhanced operator onsite 24-7 coverage.
- (5 FTEs) Austin Water Operations and Maintenance Plant Technicians - establishing enhanced onsite dayshift coverage for maintenance.

Enhanced Support Staffing (4 FTEs)

- (1 FTE) Austin Water Process Engineer - establishing additional access to onsite engineering and regulatory support.
- (3 FTEs) Austin Water Certification Trainer Seniors - creating and administering plant-specific job aids, on the job training, and other resources for operators, co-located at major treatment facilities.

This Council action requests approval of a budget amendment to add a total of 16 FTEs to Austin Water's Operating Budget, as outlined above, at a total FY 22 cost of \$400,000. An additional \$1,000,000 is proposed for the software modernization initiative described below.

Modernization Software for Standard Operating Procedures

In addition to the staffing enhancements requested through this Council action, Austin Water is developing strategies for modernizing software to facilitate plant operator training and access to Standard Operating Procedures. Strategies under consideration include:

- Electronically map all standard operating processes to the procedural level.
- Develop employee training materials with detailed process maps that walk employees through their daily tasks, electronically.
- Create roles, responsibilities, and ownership with enhanced audit trails.
- Enhanced ability for employee knowledge management and knowledge transfer.

Austin Water may bring a separate request for Council consideration for the procurement of any of these software enhancements or related professional services that require additional Council approval. Austin Water recommends implementing the enhanced staffing and software modernization investments in lieu of the goodwill bill credit. These enhancements will strengthen operational resiliency at our drinking water treatment plants and reduce the risk of future operational upsets.

Strategic Outcome(s):

Government that Works for All.