

Austin Water Oversight Committee (AWOC) meeting Transcript – 8/23/2023

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This is a-t-x-n the City of Austin's Government Access Channel there it is. I'm Leslie pool.

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there it is. I'm Leslie pool. And I'm the chair of the Austin water utility oversight committee, and I'm calling to order our Wednesday, August 23rd, 2023. Regular scheduled committee meeting. It is a little after 1:00. It is 1:02 P.M. And we are at Austin city hall in the boards and commissions room. I see that that council member Velasquez is has joined us virtually and council member Alison alter is here along with me, I believe council member Ryan alter. Our vice chair will be here shortly . So having called us to order, we I think we'll have a fairly quick meeting today and we will start, let's see, public communications. We have no one signed up to speak. Is that right? Very good. And so item number one is the approval of minutes approve the minutes of the may 24th, 2023, regular

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the may 24th, 2023, regular meeting of the Austin water oversight committee and council member Alison alter moves approval and council member Jose Velasquez. Second, are there any changes or corrections or comments? S hearing none. All those are approving. Please say yes. Yes. And that looks unanimous. The three of us. We move now to discussion and possible action regarding remaining Austin water oversight committee meeting dates for 2023 and you all will remember our at our last meeting we looked at shifting the current approved date of October 25 at 130 to the next day. Thursday, October

26th, at 1 P.M. And that looked like it worked for everybody's schedules. So I will need a motion to approve the shifting of this last meeting of the year

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of this last meeting of the year and I see council member Velasquez had made that motion and a second vice chair. Alter and is there any objection to adopting this? Yes. Councilmember Allison alter don't have an objection to adopting this, but we do have some staff who need to be both at mobility and water and occasionally I do go to the mobility.

>> So when we're looking for next year, if we can try not to schedule them at the same time that would be sure appreciated.

>> Sure. And this was a late change to the calendar because of changes to schedules. It wasn't this way initially. No, no, I understand.

>> I understand. Just it will be two in a row, I think, that are like that. So I just wanted to today that it would be better not to have them overlap.

>> Okay. No opposition to shifting that. So that is accomplished briefings, item number three director's report on innovations, events and

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on innovations, events and awards and upcoming recommends actions for council action on director Roalson. Good to see you.

>> Good to see you. Good afternoon, chair pool council members am. Shea Ralls. Roalson I'm the director of Austin water. I have a few items that I wanted to provide you some updates and activities beyond the specific items that we have briefings on today. First, regarding current events, as you know, the city and county are under a disaster declaration regarding wildfires. Austin water stays prepared for wildfires. We conduct regular work at our facilities to reduce risk. We implement shaded fuel breaks and prescribed burns on the wild lands properties. We manage. We work with our peers in emergency management, fire and ems. And in June, we conducted an emergency drill to practice our protocols around wildfire, and our partners participated in that drill. Toxic algae has also been detected in our Lakes and rivers

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detected in our Lakes and rivers . Two years ago, Austin water invested in leading edge equipment to be able to conduct in-house testing. We collaborate with watershed protection and have protocols and thresholds in place for when we test and when we increase the frequency of testing. We also have conducted laboratory testing to confirm our treatment process. These are effective at removing cyano bacterial cells and two weeks ago we conducted an emergency drill to practice our protocols around detection of cyanotoxins in our water treatment plants, the combined storage of our water supply Lakes, Travis and Buchanan has fallen to 45% full, and we have implemented stage two of our drought contingency plan. And we'll discuss this item more in our briefing today. But with the extremely hot and dry weather, we are experiencing a higher frequency of water, main leaks and breaks. So our teams are employing extraordinary measures to get more crews in the field to find and fix leaks and reduce water loss and reduce the time that our customers are without water

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our customers are without water service during repairs. Just this week we stood up a new and improved public facing leak map that shows the shutout area when crews are working in the system rather than just the single point identifying the leak so our customers now can see if their address is affected. So coming up on the radar, we have several important items coming for council approval. Next week you will vote on the contract award for the construction manager at risk for the \$700 million expansion and improvements project at the walnut creek wastewater treatment plant. We're also preparing to submit a letter of intent for walnut creek project to participate in the water infrastructure finance and innovation act with tia, which is a low interest loan program administered by the EPA. Once we're selected to apply, we will bring an rca to council with more detail. We're implementing resiliency projects all over our system, including power resiliency, such as bringing a

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resiliency, such as bringing a second power line to the wild horse wastewater plant and we continue to collaborate with other city departments and private development to implement improvements to our system as part of their projects. So we appreciate council's support for these items. And if you have any questions or concerns about any of them, please let us know. I look out to the horizon. We continue to make progress on our work in employee recruiting and retention. Our current vacancy rate is right at 10% and we have seen attrition ease slightly in recent months. Feel like knocking on wood when I say that timely implementation of hr actions continues to be a focus for us as part of our work in culture and employee support. We recently completed a culture survey and we're conducting listening sessions is open to all of our staff, our talent development team is conducting environmental scans upon request and developing a team. Specific plans for building trust and collaboration within workgroups . They're also implementing

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. They're also implementing supervisor and leadership training. I make a point of dropping in on those sessions to talk to our teams about the importance of this work and also welcome new staff in person at each biweekly new employee orientation. So on the subject of staff, one area I'd like to highlight today is the annual capacity maintenance operation and management conference that we host. 20 years ago, the city of Austin was under an enforcement order with EPA to reduce spills from our wastewater collection system. We implemented a highly successful cross-departmental program called the Austin clean water program, and we developed this what's called mom. We developed this mom conference as part of our commitment to managing our collection system and protecting Austin's waterways. Earlier this month, we put on the 20th annual two day mom conference and had more than 480 attendees at the Austin convention center, including 140 from the city of Austin. Our keynote speakers were from EPA, national headquarters, EPA, region six and the Texas commission on

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and the Texas commission on environmental quality. Other presenters were from utilities and service providers all over the state and beyond, including Austin water. So this conference is a great example of how Austin water is leading the way in building technical excellence in the water industry. In addition to technical expertise, we're collaborating with our partners in the industry on management best practices. Assistant director Ana Brian Borja is participating on a national committee to refresh the effective utility management framework within Austin water. We are launching a new team for operational optimization and Austin water chief information officer David Johnson is the executive sponsor of that team. So we have several presentations for three presentations for you today. So I'll I'll, I'll give up the mic to our teams, but I'm happy to answer any questions.

>> Are there any questions of the director at this point? Yes. Council member.

>> Alter thank you. Appreciate that. Great overview of the work that you're doing. Can you speak a little bit more to the leaks

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a little bit more to the leaks that you're seeing and what's causing them and what steps you're taking to address those abnormal levels in these really hot and dry conditions?

>> The soil conditions are drying out and shifting and it's pretty common that this time of year we see an uptick in leaks and breaks. And it's more than usual because the conditions have been so hot and so dry. So we are mobilize Singh extra teams and extra shifts within the teams that normally do that work as well as within. We have a construction division that works on their own construction projects, but we're

deploying them into our distribution system to give us more. Are more boots on the ground and it when needed. We also have what we call idiq, which are on call contractors available to us to deploy as well, to help us bring our leak counts down. So it's hopefully we'll get some hope is not a strategy, but hopefully

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not a strategy, but hopefully we'll get some rain here soon. And the temperatures will will ease a little bit and we'll see those break counts come down again.

>> Thank you all right.

>> Thank you. Okay. Thank you. You want me to introduce this one? As you wish. All right. This is item number four, Austin water external review, third quarter update on implementation of recommendations.

>> Thank you. This will be again Shea Roalson, director of Austin water. This will be a quick update on our implementation of the Austin water external review. If I can make the controller work. Next slide please. Thank you. So this is what we showed

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you. So this is what we showed you last last meeting in May where we still had about about seven of our recommendations were not either underway or implemented yet. Next slide. I'm happy to say that at this point we have launched all but three of them, which and there is active work happening on those three. But we are we're definitely making making progress. We have more in the implemented category three more underway. And so we are we're on track on our implementation. Next slide, please. A few highlights on our newly implemented items on public information, we have issued the initial generic language notifications to the public. So we have emergency notification templates for boil water notices, emergency water restrictions do not drink advisories and winter weather preparedness and we have translated information for each type of event into 11 languages. So that item is complete. We're ready. Yep. We will be ready to

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ready. Yep. We will be ready to launch in the event we have any of those emergencies and then on the SOPs and training, we have one of these items that we have been working through is making our way through training all of our staff, you know, how to access our standard operating procedures. We have a lot of new staff making sure that everyone's up to speed. And that's that is complete. Now next slide,

please. So newly underway, we are initiating the work to remediate at an elevated an issue on one of our treatment units at the Ulrich water treatment plant. We are underway on evaluating the cost of continual polymer feed. The polymer system is the system that we implemented after the floods of 2018 that help us with high turbidity events. And we run those polymer systems all the time in order to be sure that they will work when we need them. But one of the recommendations from the external review was, do you really need to run them all the time? Is that really a best

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time? Is that really a best practice? So we're evaluating that. And then in the reporting structure, we are underway on our leadership training specifically related to the work that we're doing in our treatment plants. And then sops and training our oil spill response plan was one thing that external review noted. They thought we should update. So that's underway as well. Next slide, please. And then in terms of some of the items that were underway before and they're still underway, wanted you to know that we are actively working on them. Nothing is stuck in the system. Everything is moving on. The training on the new user training is regularly offered and it's now captured in the city's train system. And we have other trainings beyond including adding various incident command system trainings and position

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system trainings and position specific trainings for our incident management team. And we're tracking all of those in in Mok, we also implemented a required moment in every employees is in their annual review that they must complete this training in order to be successful on their spr and then on evaluating emergency planning and training at each plant. We've I mentioned earlier the exercises and drills that we've been doing. We also have been conducting fire department meetings where we actually have them come out to the plant and we walk around with them and we have some collaboration sessions and those have been really very well received. And we've been doing life safety plan presentations and evacuation drills at our plants as well. And then on the notification Ann thresholds, we are updating our standard operating procedures related to situational awareness. And that is very nearly done. So that will certainly cross the finish line before our next meeting. And

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before our next meeting. And then under operations and engineering, actually we are stress testing the Ulrich water treatment plant that is where we have been. We've been incremental Lee running the capacity, the treatment up to higher and higher levels of capacity. And today we ran 140 million gallons a day through the plant for several hours. I think it's still going actually until 2 P.M. And that has gone very well. That's the most water we've ever produced from Ulrich. So we're the team's been stoked to

get to, you know, put the plant through its paces. So that's been a lot of I'm going to say it's been a lot of fun. And Stephanie. Stephanie, can correct me. But yeah, and that is that is pretty much the update for this meeting. Happy to answer any questions?

>> Any questions? Yes. Councilmember alter.

>> Thank you. Thank you. Appreciate the transparency here on the implementing Ann think it's really important. You know, for our community to see that we

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for our community to see that we are taking this report seriously and investing. I do want to call your attention to an answer in the Q and a that details a lot of the budget investments which you didn't mention yet, that a company making sure that these recommendations are implemented, it's no good to have a report and suggestions if we're not putting the investments in that need to happen. And that's in the Q and a and response to one of the questions that I asked. So you mentioned earlier that the vacancy rate that you are seeing at Austin water was 10. What is the vacancy rate at Ulrich so the vacancy rate at Ulrich today is 37, and that's the same as the last time we were here.

>> And that is not because we have not hired we have hired, but we've also lost some people. So we continue we continue to grapple with recruiting and retaining staff, particularly at our treatment plants, at our

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our treatment plants, at our water treatment plants.

>> Okay.

>> And what are those ratios at the other treatment plants?

>> Davis is at 21, which is down% from from last meeting. And so they've had nine. Davis has had nine hires and three separations. Ulrich has had six hires, but six separations is and then Hancox is at 17. They've had six hires, but eight separation burns so we are we do have I think I mentioned this in previous updates, but we have done some open houses where we actually we invite applica agents to come to the plant and take a tour and we have computers there to help them apply on the spot and we did those with some success a few months ago and we have another round of those set up for the coming months, one at Ulrich and one at Davis. And we I want. To be sure to point out that our hiring process is really strong . We have one of the fastest

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. We have one of the fastest time to fill in the city. So we're very effective at getting positions posted, interview and filled. And so we don't have an issue with the recruiting process. We just that we have we have a I like to say we don't have a recruiting problem. We have a retention problem. And that while we're seeing attrition levels ease, that continues to be a challenge.

>> Thank you. Needless to say, still being at 37% vacancy for Ulrich is or however we're pronouncing it. Is disappointing . And what I'm hearing you say is it's a retention, not recruiting. I know that one of the things that we did in the budget that or I guess I was told was in the budget was already in the budget was the, the stipend continuing frost and water. What are we doing for retention if we've narrowed it in and saying that's the problem, how are we addressing

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problem, how are we addressing it and what are we hearing are the key issues we are trying to, I would say turn all the knobs on retention so we have a 10% retention stipend that you mentioned that we implemented in in March.

>> It went into paychecks in March. There was a some discussion of the city manager's office of reducing that. When the, when this year's cost of living increase went into effect. That's not happening. Our staff will retain that 10% for the next fiscal year so that gives us some breathing room. That's not a permanent solution . The work that I mentioned earlier in my update about culture, the leadership addressing workplace, making sure we are a place where people want to come to work, where they feel like they their work is valued, they belong, they can reach their professional goals. That is also a key part of retention. And then we have a number of items, hr related items, where we are

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items, where we are reclassifying staff in a higher positions. We are checking our mix of what staff we need and different work groups and making those changes. We are reviewing Lang salary and compensation Ann and adjusting that where where we can. So we are doing all of all of those things and that is a normal part of our business. We do that all the time, but we're we're certainly looking at what else can we do. We implemented a safety stipend and that it it just it recognizes that's something that the human resources department at the city had developed and we have adopted it. And it recognizes that Austin water is a safety sensitive environment and it puts our staff into three different categories and then provides a stipend associated with with with the safety sensitive work that our staff do. We have a licensure stipend where if your license requires a one level of license with tcu,

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one level of license with tcu, but you achieve the next level up, then we have a stipend for that. So we are we are trying to address as many areas as we can to make Austin water a great place to work that people don't want to leave.

>> Thank you. Appreciate appreciate that. Are there supports that you need with respect to retention or obstacles that need to be removed in order to retain their .

>> The short answer to that is I believe I have the support that I need to tackle the challenges that we have. These challenges are not unique to Austin water, and so a lot of the other departments are tackling them as well. And we are working together, particularly the enterprise funds, Austin energy, Austin water aviation. We are we are collaborating a lot and assistant city manager, good.

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assistant city manager, good. Who's sitting in the office in in the audience is helping us lead that.

>> Thank you. I just want to encourage you to continue to lean in on that. Those retention issues and, and the vacancy rate at Ulrich that's a alarming that it's still at 37% with everything else that we have and you know a I feel for the staff that are continuing to do the work under conditions which, you know, if, so much of the staffing that needs to be there to have the plant operating optimally is not there, that means a whole lot more weight is on their shoulders and coming on top of the disasters that we've had. I can only imagine what that feels like for those folks who are there. So I just want to say that we, we value their work and, and I'll speak for myself. I just, you know, want to manage , want to continue to lean in to

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, want to continue to lean in to make, as you said, Austin water , the place that people want to stay and work.

>> This is the most important work that I do as director.

>> It's this is my top priority is making Austin water a great place to work. It's the people.

>> Thank you. Thank you.

>> I've got one question. Zebra mussels do have a status update for us on this, so we do zebra mussels are here to stay, as you know.

>> And we do regular cleaning of our infrastructure that is in the in the Lakes and what we have found is by doing those annual cleanings where we actually send divers into the lake to clean that, to clean our raw water intakes and those structures and lady bird lake dam that we are seeing that each year it's a

little easier to clean them. And so we really feel like we are. And again, just because I've get superstitious, we really feel like we have that we have those

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like we have that we have those systems in place to handle zebra mussels.

>> That is great. Yes and that's a good hopeful note to end that conversation.

>> And kudos to the team.

>> Yes. So was that it on everything on the implement portion of the recommendations. Okay. We're moving then to item number five, which is updates on water supply and drought response. Yes, it looks like we have some additional staffers coming up to talk with us here. Okay and council member Velasquez, anything if you want to ask any questions, be sure to just wave at me.

>> Okay? Thank you. Yeah. Did have a request for a briefing. For our next, we can bring that up when we. Our next meeting.

>> We can bring that up at the. Yeah. At the end of the. We'll have that on item number seven. All right, director.

>> Okay, great. Thank you. I'm going to turn it over to assistant director Kevin Crittenden.

>> Good afternoon, chair pool and council members. My name is Kevin Crichton, assistant director for Austin water. I'm

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director for Austin water. I'm in our environmental planning and development services area. We have an update for you this afternoon on our water supply conditions and drought update. But as you know, the weather conditions here in Austin continue to be hot and dry. And in June of last year we implemented stage one water use restrictions continuing in, you know, seeing low rainfall and low inflow. More recently in August, on August the 15th, we enacted stage two drought conditions. While we continue to be optimistic that as we move kind of into the fall weather, which is where we typically see more inflow and with a little bit of hope that we get some help from el Nino. We'll continue to watch that. But think we will we will be here at stage two for quite some time. So as far as the utility and our operations, we continue to be be aware of the conditions. We'll continue to watch water supply conditions and really continue with our messaging to our community to keep water

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community to keep water conservation at top of mind. We'll be continue doing our water conservation drought offerings. We'll be continuing our water conservation enforcement efforts and then also we'll be continuing to move water forward. Our long term strategic strategic water plan forward. So those are the some of the things that we have planned with me this afternoon, or Teresa Lutz, who is our division manager with systems planning her team is responsible for our water resources planning activities and then Eid Kevin kluge is our division manager excuse me, division manager of water conservation. So they'll take you through the details of our update. So with that, I'll turn it over to Teresa.

>> Thank you. Get that again. I'm Teresa Lewis.

>> Yeah, you're good now. Okay. Foreign me.

>> Excuse me. Chair pool and council members. Thank you for this opportunity to present. I'm Teresa Lutz systems planning division manager. Want to begin

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division manager. Want to begin by doing a quick overview of our water supplies. This is an overview map that shows Austin's water treatment plants and the basins, water supply reservoirs which are Lakes. Travis and Buchanan, upstream of Austin. Austin receives its water supply through the Colorado river through its three water treatment plants that are shown there on the map. The Davis water treatment plant and Orrick both draw water from lake Austin and then Hancock's plant draws water from lake Travis. Austin has access to up to 325,000 acre feet of water per year. And that supply comes from a combination of our senior water rights and back up contracts or water supply contracts with the lower Colorado river authority, our run of river rights. Those are our our own senior run of river rights. Those are represent water that's available all through the run of the river through a priority system that the Texas commission on

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the Texas commission on environmental quality oversees. And then the water from Icra through those contracts, we get additional water and water that's backing up our run of river. So if the water isn't in the stream through the normal priority system, through our water rights, then lower Colorado river authority can back that water up and provide us water from stored water in Lakes. Travis and Buchanan and release that. So we have that water available knell or other source is within the Colorado system. So as I mentioned, the Lakes, Travis and Buchanan are key in Austin receiving water to back up our water rights and provide water in especially in times of drought when there's less water flowing in the stream and the highland Lakes inflows is a key indicator, key factor that we monitor this graph shows the amount of water coming into

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the amount of water coming into the highland Lakes. I want to point out the different colors there. The purple bars are this year. Those are inflows through through July of 2023. Those have had been tracking very low until we got some pretty good inflows in may and June. And then it's gotten here dry again in July and August. But that those purple bars show the inflows for this year and also plotted on there are in the green bars the 2022 in flows those are shown there you can see they were fairly low they were actually calendar year 20. 22 is the lowest inflow year. That is in the period of record, which is from 1942 until 2022. So last year was the lowest inflow year . This year we're a little ahead of that, but we're still

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of that, but we're still tracking pretty low. On the next slide, we have a another key aspect that we track. This is the combined storage of both both lake Travis and Buchanan. So put those two together and when they're both full, that's 2 million acre feet of water. Currently, the storage is about at 872 000 acre feet, which is at 45. And as you can see on the graph there, we've just recently dropped below. The stage two of drought contingency plan trigger. That's part of our drought contingency plan. That's our council approved plan that we've had in place since 20 1618. And is in sync with the lower Colorado river authority's triggers as well for stage urges and drought stages. So as we were entering into our stage two, as the combined storage dropped below 900,000 acre feet,

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dropped below 900,000 acre feet, also zo entered into stage two and asked their firm water customers like Austin to implement their stage two plans. Let's see. And then there are just wanted to point out that at the releases to downstream rice irrigation and other agricultural irrigation operations have been cut off since midyear last year. So this year those those releases aren't happening, which is similar to back. You can see the blue line there. The blue arrows represent from 2012 through the end of 2015. Ann agriculture operation releases were also cut off back then in that in our previous drought from 2008 to 2016.

>> Let me ask you a question here, miss Lewis. The rivers that are running into the

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that are running into the highland Lakes, which ones are currently flowing and which ones are not? Do you know?

>> Think I haven't looked at the specific gauge by gauge numbers. We can follow up with that. But I would think that, we have I don't believe we've seen pro long periods of, of zero very recently in this in this recent time. I think that probably there is some but very low some flow coming in through those key locations right now. But we can double check that haven't looked at the individual gauge locations. I'm hearing I'm hearing anecdotally that right now and I don't know what right now is, but let's say in the last couple of weeks that the flows have fallen off so much that only the L.A. Is the only river that is currently flowing into the highland Lakes at this point.

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point.

>> Okay. Yeah.

>> So we can.

>> Which is a huge concern. Yeah

>> Yes, definitely. There are definitely times when there zero flows coming in from individual gauges or completely. She said there have been times, especially in earlier part of the year and in 2022 where there were there were times when no flows coming in.

>> So that would be a good additional information. Ann and then I'd also footnote that by saying my understanding also is historically the L.A. Is pretty much a constant flow river, whereas some of the others are interruptible and not as reliable. But that would be great to know which rivers we're talking about and what the flows are coming in to the highland Lakes.

>> Yeah, there are some springs that come in on the llano. Yeah. Okay. Thank you. Thank you. Appreciate that. This is the Texas water weekly. This was the one for last week. It's the one that we had time to put into the presentation. The the map shows the areas of extreme and

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the areas of extreme and exceptional drought that are occurring in the Austin area. Austin and the areas represented by the blue star there. So you can see especially to the south and west of Austin, there is area of exceptional drought and then upstream of Austin, an extreme drought. So we continue to watch this and watch the drought conditions as they change. Expect with this rain that we were able to receive yesterday, that the picture will look better next week. This is a three month outlook from noaa for ten year and precipitation for the August to October time frame as as what we've been experiencing here

tracking. We are experiencing above normal temperatures for this time of year and for that, they're projecting for the three month outlook for those to continue to and then for the chances of

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and then for the chances of precipitation to be normal in that period of time. For the update for the lower Colorado river authority, six month projection. This is a projection of combined storage for both Lakes. Travis and Buchanan combined. They do a six month projection and we track this closely. It comes out once a month. This is the August first projection. You can see there the line. Let me kind of orient you to the line, the beginning of August is the vertical gold line there. And then it's projecting out with four different lines. They have two that are dry conditions and extreme dry conditions. Those are the lower red lines. And then there is a median condition projection with the blue and then a wet conditions projection with the green. So as you can see in the projections there,

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see in the projections there, the lines, even the lower lines are projected to kind of flatten out for the fall. And the winter months, which is typical with increased decreased temperatures, there's typically a little bit less evaporation. And then water demands typically go down during that time and there are no projected releases for agriculture in here. So that's the six month outlook. Again, we're in the stage two level there and it's projected that we would stay in that for this period of time. Ongoing activities. Just wanted to highlight some of the monitoring that we're doing. Again, we're continuing to monitor for the inflows and the combined storage Paige lake levels and forecasted conditions. We have ongoing coordination with the lower Colorado river authority through our water partnership with lcra in the planning arena. We are

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in the planning arena. We are continuing to update our water forward plan, which is anticipated to be completed in the 2024 time frame. That's our 100 year integrated water resources plan. We're also involved in the region water planning process, which is ongoing. It's administered by the Texas water development board. We're involved in the in the process of developing the 2026 regional water plan that's ongoing and active currently, and we're very involved in that process on implementation Ann we're implementing our water forward plan, including our conservation and reuse strategies. We're working on our aquifer storage and recovery pilot project and doing preliminary planning for indirect potable reuse. And at this point I will hand it off to Kevin kluge. >> Thank you, Teresa. Good

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>> Thank you, Teresa. Good afternoon, council members. Again, my name is Kevin Kluge. The water conservation manager at Austin water. As Teresa mentioned, when the reservoirs are full, the storage is essentially 2 million acre feet. And even when we are not in drought, it's important to remember that Austin really leans into water conservation. So even when we are not in drought stages, we still have one day a week watering schedule for automatic irrigation system comes in June of last year. The storage went down to 1.4 million acre feet and we enacted stage one drought restrictions. And then over the last 14 months, Austin water has increased our public outreach and engagement in regards to residents needing to save water, particularly outdoors, and promoting the various tools and rebates that Austin water has to help the residents meet those needs. That leads us up to our most recent drought or stage two declaration

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drought or stage two declaration. In August 15th and next slide. There we go. Bringing us into stage two drought restrictions. These are the highlights of stage two drought restrictions on the left hand side. There you see the landscape watering restrictions as has been enacted for quite a while now, one day a week, watering restrictions for automatic irrigation systems. The change going into stage two is that we've lessened the amount of time that they can irrigate in the morning. Previously they were able to irrigate until 8 A.M. And now it's 5 A.M. And then they can irrigate in the evening hose in sprinklers can be utilized on the weekends. Saturday or Sunday, depending on your address in the morning until 10 A.M. And then in the evening starting at 7 P.M. In addition to these changes in hours, we are increasing our enforced

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are increasing our enforced patrols and investigations. As for the watering schedules on the right hand side are a number of other highlights that are being enacted in this stage. To wrap up this presentation, our next steps, we as a utility continue to monitor the drought situation, promoting water conservation and adherence to our watering schedules and as Teresa mentioned, we are still working to implement our water forward plan, our long term plan for our customers. The message really is that we're all in this together, despite all of the efforts of the water utility, we cannot solve our shortages. We have to work together as a community. So we will be continuing to reach out to Austin residents messaging that or asking them to take a look at

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or asking them to take a look at their own water sign up for leak alerts through my water, asking them to know how what the watering schedules are and adhering to those watering schedules, and then trying to take steps to save additional water. So that's really our messaging going forward. Continue to ask people to work with us to save water. And with that, any questions?

>> I think the message about continued conservation is a really good one and a strong one. And think all of us with newsletters on the council, we can we can certainly remind everyone about shorter showers, fewer flushes of conserve with your laundry cycles. I curious if we know how much water is used by irrigation? Yeah, we have some estimates that based on our we have a disaggregated demand model where we look at end uses of water and what

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end uses of water and what categories they fall in.

>> It's roughly it depends on which year. There's a lot of variability with it depending on the, the, the, the conditions of, you know, the amount of rain we're getting and the temperatures and everything. But it's typically runs now that we're in permanent one day per week in the range of between about 20 and 25% of our overall water use, closer to 20.

>> I remember the controversies that we had when we were looking at reducing the number of days permitted for watering landscape and I'm I'm glad that we went to the one day a week as just the baseline mandatory. I think that has been that is really set set the standard for us going forward. And if the irrigation were a higher percentage, you know, some could argue that the 25% is still too high, but at least it's not the 35 to 40 or more that it that it could be. And we've also so we are no

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And we've also so we are no longer exempting from the watering schedule for the landscape, establishing the new landscaping. And I know that a lot of folks have shifted the kind of plantings that they've that they are investing in. And it's a long term shift, not as much Augustine grass either. And so I think on the whole, Austin is really very responsible community as far as trying to limit how much water we use because we can't make any more of it. Very, very precious resource. Any questions? Yes. Vice chair alter actually picking up where the chair left off around landscape, looking at water forward.

>> You know, one of the big areas of opportunity is, is through landscape transformation and other tools there. So I'm curious just where we are in that element of the plan moving forward. What's the. Yeah, I

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forward. What's the. Yeah, I just have no clue where where that stands.

>> Yeah, I'll take that. Yeah. At the beginning of last year, 2022, we really started working on implementing the landscape transformation strategy from the water forward plan. And we spent much of last year talking to public and stakeholders about how to transform the landscape of new single family homes going forward. We spent, as I mentioned, almost the entire year talking to people and then through out much of this spring, we really delved into how to implement these ideas. The ideas that we came up with really a basket of ideas, eight different types of activity is ranging from making sure we have good soil to begin with so that it holds the water to as well as emphasize using plants that will do well in this local area, but also focusing to number for a

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also focusing to number for a number of these activities on landscape I'm sorry, irrigation Ann, making sure we have good pressure in the irrigation and we will be implementing inspections on new irrigation systems going forward so that new homeowners who are getting a new system know that that system , is going to work and it's not going to waste water right off the bat. In addition to that, we have a proposal. We're working with development services division to update the uniform plumbing code next year and include several activities, one of which is the limitation of irrigation area for new homes that will be in the plumbing code, but essentially for new homes built. After 2025. Essentially there will be the option of installing irrigation systems in the front yard or the backyard yard. And then we are

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backyard yard. And then we are also working on a number of activities to help residents irrigate that water that you don't have an irrigation system in through rainwater harvesting or laundry to landscape. So we've already started implementing some of these activities and we'll be continuing some of these throughout the spring. And then that uniform plumbing code should come to you next summer for the rest of those is very good.

>> Well, thank you very much.

>> Yes, thank you.

>> Want to build on the landscaping piece and just ask if you can be in touch with the wildfire division because we have not adopted the part of the wildland urban interface code that has to do with vegetation. But I'm hoping that we will. And it would be great if the directions that you're suggesting. Okay. Overlap in some ways or if we can be providing a more unified message on what's a climate resilient

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on what's a climate resilient landscape looks like and what we need to be doing, I don't know all, all of the details, but some of that work would also support water conservation, I think because it's reducing certain types of vegetation near the buildings. So I think there could be some interesting synergies there where we could address both climate challenges together and combining the efforts at outreach, etcetera, could be much more effective.

>> Thank you. Thank you. All right. I think we're done. Is anything else on item number five? Great we'll move on to item number six, which is reclaimed water system, long range infrastructure plan. All right.

>> All right. We're going to do this again. We'll have a quick change out again. My name is Kevin Crittenden, Eid Austin water assistant director for environmental planning development services. In 2018, council adopted our long range

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council adopted our long range strategic water forward plan. That plan was certainly innovative and ambitious in its time frame and, and the goals of that plan. As you know, really the, the focus of that plan is really to develop a hundred year water supply, sustainable water future for our community, given our community's continued growth and the impacts of climate change an important set of strategies in that we were using has to do with moving what we call reclaimed forward or reuse forward. And so the slide that's in front of us today just highlights a number of those strategies. That includes our onsite reuse initiatives, which are really about using buildings as an independent water source so we can actually use for non-potable demands also centralized and decentralized reclaim strategies. Next slide please. Just to make a distinction Ann just for clarification, our central,

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clarification, our central, centralized, reclaimed water system, of course, our purple pipe system. That system has been in place since the 70s. It is a fairly large broad geographic connection network of pipes that we treat effluent from our wastewater treatment plants to a highly high quality and actually distribute that throughout the main core of our city and use it for a variety of commercial or industrial non-potable needs that's distinguished from what we would refer to as decentralized water supply, which is really the opportunities to use more local, I'll say water treatment plants. It might be a package plant and actually use it for things like golf course, irrigation, those sorts of things. And there are several instances where we see that in the city today. And then our onsite reuse program, really, which we've talked about before in this slide, it really has a picture of our our Clara, which is our closed loop onsite reactor at the pdc, which is where we're actually taking black water, treating it to a

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black water, treating it to a high standard and reintroducing it to the building to flush toilets. So that's kind of the, the gas sort of strategies or referred to in water forward next slide, please. And again, these are some of the typical areas that we can use as non-potable water to offset potable water supply. So these are uses that today are in most cases we use our potable system for. But really they don't need to be potable water. Things like irrigation, toilet and urinal flushing, cooling or processed water and different industries. As next slide. And this is just really a comparison of sort of our our 2040, 2070 and 2015, 21, 15 goals for different types of reclaimed water. So the central column really is talking about our centralized reclaimed. So our purple pipe system, the right side is more decentralized uses. So district scale uses are on site and you can see we're looking to try to increase those

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looking to try to increase those uses Luz or or displace those potable water demands in the term of like 12 000 acre feet per year in 2040. Growing that up to 54 000 acre feet in 2115 for the central system for decentralized options, we're looking at trying to achieve a 3000 ish acre foot offset, growing to about a 30 zero zero zero foot acre foot offset offset. Forgive me. Next slide, please. And so we're going to through the presentation. Teresa is going to step in again. Teresa Lutz is our division manager for systems planning. They're also responsible for our reclaimed water system planning. She's going to kind of walk you through some of the mechanics of the system, what it is, where it is, those sorts of things. And then shwetha pandurangi, who is our division manager of our utility development services team, we'll talk a little bit about the nexus between our reclaimed system and how we interact with the development community on certain of these

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community on certain of these different options and strategies . So I'll turn it over to Teresa .

>> Thank you again, Teresa Lutz Austin water. Want to kind of begin by giving a quick overview of the reclaimed water system. This is a map that kind of shows a picture of the existing system . We think of reclaimed water really as Austin's third water utility. And we've been undergoing efforts over the recent years to work to integrate out the functions of reclaimed water out into the different function areas of Austin water to kind of help establish that third water, third utility status of the of the reclaimed water system as we grow it, it gets to be larger and the amount of customers that we're serving grow and the system grows. So we have to main water treatment plants that

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water treatment plants that serve that supply the water for the reclaimed, the centralized reclaimed system. That's the walnut creek wastewater treatment plant and the south Austin regional wastewater treatment plant. Those two facility provide the water that goes into the centralized system and then the decentralized facilities. We have three smaller scale plants that have more localized, reclaimed water uses coming out of them. So our overall total water use, if you add up both the centralized and the decentralized, it's at about 5000 acre feet or so. In the last couple of years, again, where projects trying to increase that with water forward and build the system and build the number of customers and build how much water we are using, how much of the reclaimed water we're using for non-potable purposes to kind of look at the breakdown between on centralized and decentralized. Is that word distributed? Sorry,

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Is that word distributed? Sorry, that was a mistake there. It should say decentralized. There that is about 91% compared to about 9% in 2022. So that kind of indicates how the decentralized versus centralized compares in in scale of use. Wanted to highlight some of our reclaimed water capital improvement highlights. We've been focusing on what we refer to as completing the core, and that consists of a number of different water main reclaimed water main extension Ann projects that aim to connect the north and the south systems together. If you see on that little map, the northern system is fed by or supplied by the walnut creek wastewater treatment plant and the southern system by the south Austin regional. Completing the core is Austin's mains through downtown Ann and connects both of those

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Ann and connects both of those systems together and that is projected to be on track for completion in fy 26. Looking further ahead, we do planning for the long term system. We currently have a plan that's been in place for a while. We have projected out what the systems would look like in 2040 and 2070. And but as we as we go along, there are ongoing updates that we make to our infrastructure system plans, particularly as development or mobility projects provide opportunities for making system improvements. We may need to adjust the plans and then we are working towards planning our comprehensive update of these plans that we're going to be doing in the coming period. So that's kind of a quick overview there. And at this point I will hand it back to shweta. Good afternoon, chair and council

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afternoon, chair and council members.

>> My name is shweta pandurangi. I'm the business strategy manager, division manager for utility development services and I'll cover the last part of this presentation, Ann, that talks about our engagement with the development community, with respect to some of our water forward alignment and how we bring alignment with the development community. Through the water forward plan. Austin water received council direction to include water forward regulations into our land development code. More specifically, we Austin water was asked to address changes for large commercial developments and large commercial developments were defined as anything that was larger than 250,000ft S through this effort, Austin water has developed three touch points with the development community that will help identify strategies that will reduce the potable water consumption in these developments, I'll go over each of these in my subsequent slides before we wrap up. So what a

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before we wrap up. So what a benchmarking is our first touch. Point out what a benchmarking is. Basically an online gis based tool that takes about 15 minutes for the development community to submit some information about the development, which then provides a water use summary. And the third step of that talks about further follow up questions on how we can conserve water in that development and for projects that exceed the 250,000ft S, there's an in-person meeting to go over these strategies and truly find ways to optimize water use in that development. We anticipate roughly about 1 million gallon per year per permit just through water benchmarking initiatives alone in our next touch point is the centralized reclaim system. As Teresa and Kevin talked about early on in 2012, the centralized. In 2012, Austin water developed an ordinance that talked about all commercial and multifamily projects within 250ft of a reclaimed main will

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250ft of a reclaimed main will be mandated to use reclaimed water for irrigation, toilet flushing and cooling through our water. Forward efforts. We expanded the 2012 ordinance in 2021 to include large development use within 500ft of a reclaimed system to basically use water for toilet flushing, irrigation and cooling in the last two years of this expansion, we've seen roughly about 40 to 50 new connections through this effort alone. And our third touch point is the requirement of onsite water reuse systems. This initiative is currently voluntary and we're looking at stakeholder engagement as well as additional criteria development in the next couple of months before we look at a mandatory implementation of this. What this touch point really does is requires onsite water reuse systems for large commercial development projects to collect and treat rainwater and air conditioning, condensate

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and air conditioning, condensate for reuse inside the building, again, for toilet flushing, irrigation, cooling and laundry . The point that I want to as a takeaway, as we conclude this presentation is Austin water is working proactively in the early phases of the development to work with the development community to identify what water conservation strategies and work to meet our water forward goals with that, we thank you for your time and we're open to any questions.

>> I'm wondering on the reclaimed water issue, you if it's better or or not for the city to have more of the like on the pss for the city to actually approve seizures as opposed to allowing if we deny them, they go to packaged plants or some kind of spraying on the landscaping. Is it better overall, do you think, for our systems and for the environmentally for us to take

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environmentally for us to take more of the wastewater and the reclaimed through our extension requests as opposed to denying them.

>> I think it's highly site specific.

>> Okay.

>> And it's also very specific to what the flows will be. And you know what their ability is to develop some of these on site treatment. You know, a typical package plant with spray irrigation Ann compared to connecting to our centralized system, especially when our if our centralized system is accessible. Well, you know, I would I think that either one can be workable. Generally, we like to see connections to our centralized system because then we can we can control it. But Wright, we do know that, you know, going into the future, as we've discussed with water forward, that these on site reclamation strategies are an important part of water supply

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important part of water supply of reducing reliance on potable water and using every drop of water sort of as many times as we can before we dispose of it. So I think that this is a situation where we want to have all the tools in our toolbox and do very specific analysis of each opportunity. Add to that no , I think that's exactly right.

>> I think that's why the touch point with the development community and our water use benchmark is really such an important tool. It really is about that understanding on a site by site basis. You know, what are the different potential sources of water and what are the potential uses of water. And really instead of thinking about water as a single commodity on a site, we say, well, how can we fit, have the right fit

for purpose, right? And so, you know, it's a lot of effort, you know, that we have to actually go through with the development community and kind of sit down and look at those things. But we want to use the Wright

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want to use the Wright application for the right location.

>> Good.

>> Any other questions? Yes. Vice chair alter I'm curious what the if analysis has been done and I'm sure it has, of weighing a whole lot of residential customers doing on site, you know, even if it's just their washing machine that they're reusing that water, that they're reusing.

>> So having a whole a whole lot of very small scale versus as more of your 250 000 plus, you know, multifamily and commercial , what what would be the greater benefit bit? Obviously, we want to do it all, but take that think part of that answers there's no silver bullet right?

>> We really don't believe that there's one application Ann versus the other. I think it's really a portfolio approach. And I think that the challenge with like decentralize ized use at a residential level, it becomes

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residential level, it becomes very complicated. And I think the plumbing requirements and individual responsibility is, you know, it it just gets very complex. And so, you know. Mr. Kluge mentioned, you know, we're going to be trying to pilot and incentivize like what we call laundry to landscape as a simple first step for residential folks to be able to make use of that. Getting more complex just makes actual individual build and construction that much more difficult. And so we'll take a small step there and get people used to it. These other applications, you know, we see probably a higher opportunity for a really stronger return on on potable water offset.

>> And if I could also and we're we're going undergoing our water for 24 update.

>> We look at that also as part of it. What are the different

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of it. What are the different uses and how can we you know, how can a strategy be utilized in different sectors? So, you know, kind of looking longer term, I think, you know, we've started with the things that give us the best opportunity Katy now. But, you know, we're continuing to plan, continuing to look out

for in the future and we'll continue to review van eenoo and understand that part of the benchmarking process also is helpful in providing us information that we can build on. And modify our plans and adapt our plans. But I think we see, you know, extending out into other areas and subsectors in the longer term future as as we kind of get our you know, get more of a of a foundation to build on.

>> Okay.

>> Well, thank you very much.

>> I would like to just tag on to that one. Sort of final thought, which is at the core of what we do is protect public health. Right. And so we have to

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health. Right. And so we have to be we are going to do all the things we need to do to have a resilient water future. And we are going to protect public health every step of the way and make sure that we don't implement anything that we can't adequately design, build and maintain.

>> Well, that sounds great. Very good. I think that's it for the presentations. We're up to future items, which is item number seven. And I know council member Velasquez had an item that he wanted to suggest for a future item. Councilmember Velasquez, thank you for the recognition.

>> We've had. Consider stituents around the Catalina and Metcalf drive area and 77 078741 that have been experiencing lengthy water outages recently. Numerous homes were affected and think

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homes were affected and think there were line breaks and of for more than 30 hours. I've told this is an infrastructure issue and it could be some time before we have a permanent fix. So I'd like to formally request a briefing on this issue at our next committee meeting to help us better plan for how we can be helping this community.

>> Thank you. Any other items? And I wanted to mention we were talking earlier in the meeting about the L.A. River and what what's the flow? What are the what's the river flow into the highland Lakes and at the Phillips, one of my senior policy advisors is in the back of the room and she was looking at the gauges. She said that only the L.A. is flowing, but barely. It is at one cubic foot per second. All the other rivers are at zero. So yeah. All right. There being no other items for our consideration today, I will call this meeting adjourned at 2:10 P.M. Thank you