Communication from Public

Name: Tess Taylor
Date Submitted: 08/30/2024 08:04 AM
Council File No: 23-0600-S9
Comments for Public Posting: Please see attached opposition to this proposed rate increase.

To: The Los Angeles City Council

From: Tess Taylor, President / Governing Board, Greater Toluca Lake Neighborhood Council (GTLNC)

cc: Mayor Karen Bass, Board of Public Works, Los Angeles Department of Sanitation, Office of Public Accountability and Council File 23-0600-S9 (2023 Budget Recommendation / Sanitation / Fee Study / Preserve Operations)

Date: Tuesday, August 27th, 2024

Re: Public Hearing on Agenda Item 1 (CF 23-0600-S9) regarding the proposed five-year plan of Sewer Service Charge, Low Strength Sewer Service Charge, Quality Surcharge Fee, Sewerage Facilities Charge, Industrial Waste Fees and Septage Disposal Fees increases.

Attachments: Related GTLNC Community Impact Statement and comments in support of the oral testimony of Tess Taylor.

In bringing this matter to the Los Angeles City Council's attention, I in no way wish to make responsible or diminish the fine work of the Bureau of Sanitation's Director, Barbara Romero. Our community has come to rely on her and her department, all of whom set an enviable level of quality and service in city government, and who have a difficult and often thankless job to perform.

An intentional "setup" to circumvent a good faith and meaningful due process, and to achieve an unjust and virtually unopposed Council approval.

- The City is circumventing a tax increase ballot measure by using its monopoly power to impose a massive cost increase on residents and businesses to offset the hundreds of millions in taxpayer funds lost on failed policies. This quietly doubles our sewer charges while conducting a de facto election under the guise of a benign public relations "let us know your thoughts" outreach.

- None except GTLNC filed a Community Impact Statement because no one knew that a council file number existed. No notices on this matter contain the council file number which, as is well known, is a critical element in how the Council is notified about the considered opinions of neighborhood councils through their own due process, in accordance with the longstanding purposes of the Neighborhood Council system, reflecting the sentiments of residents and businesses throughout the City of Los Angeles. This process is maintained at considerable taxpayer expense to support the services of both the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and the City Clerk – not to mention the incalculable volunteer hours and commitment of a small army of elected Neighborhood Council board members and officers, and community committee members.

- The absence of critical identifying information is a significant suppressant, which has the effect of limiting the very opinions which every elected Councilmember should solicit, welcome and encourage.

- How coincidental is it that the advancement of this proposal occurs alongside three other significant policy proposals, all scheduled during the same period during the month of August when many families are on summer vacations? It certainly thins the ranks of potential protesters, doesn't it?

Independent Analysis Needed

- Absent is an independent, impartial third-party review and analysis, including by the Office of Public Accountability and Ratepayer Advocate, who was **NOT** permitted to review the proposed Sanitation rates. What's the point of a public Ratepayer Advocate who is not permitted to advocate? The only "analysis" we've received is a whitewashed, public relations version, promoted by the revenue beneficiaries themselves. Our public

tax dollars are paying City staff to work against interests of residents, voters and taxpayers.

- The way this rate increase has been manipulated virtually guarantees adoption by this government as a largely unregulated, monopoly utility. The burden of proof sufficient for approval has not been carried by the City of Los Angeles, and to add insult to injury, the Council sits in judgement of its own institutional proposal.

- The City is handling this rate increase in such a concealed manner as to be a breach of its fiduciary duty to voters by holding an election while pretending that, "we want to keep you informed" but never stating that in fact "this is a referendum," the disclosures for which are completely inadequate.

- An adequate professional analysis might conclude that any necessary funds might come from other sources, for example, from a bond measure, the City's General Fund, or federal funds.

A Backwards Approval Standard

- A standard that a proposed rate increase will be approved unless a majority of ratepayers file timely written protests is completely backwards, counter-intuitive and should be as unacceptable to you as it is to ratepayers.

Greater Toluca Lake Neighborhood Council

Community Impact Statement

To be filed with the Offices of Mayor Karen Bass,
Council President and Councilmember for Council District 2 Paul Krekorian,
Board of Public Works, Los Angeles Department of Sanitation,
Office of Public Accountability and CF-0600-S9
(2023 Budget Recommendation / Sanitation / Fee Study / Preserve Operations)

Passed at GTLNC Regular Board Meeting on Tuesday, August 20th, 2024

Position: OPPOSE
VOTE: 10 / 0 / 0

The Greater Toluca Lake Neighborhood Council opposes the City of Los Angeles proposed Sewer Service Charge rate increase of $700 million over the next four years. This would double current customer rates beginning with a 22% increase in October 2024.

The lack of transparency is shocking.

There has been little to no outreach by the Bureau of Sanitation. Rate payers have not had access to financial information, a meaningful opportunity to review and analyze the proposed rate increase, or the ability to comment and voice their concerns. The bad faith manner in which this de facto "voter referendum" has been conveyed to customers virtually guarantees adoption of this controversial rate increase by this government monopoly utility. Also absent is an independent third party review and analysis, including by the City of Los Angeles' Office of Public Accountability.

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