

**DRAFT**  
**(for UAC review on 3/12)**  
**MINUTES**

Regular meeting of the City of Redlands Municipal Utilities Advisory Committee on February 12, 2024 at 6:00 PM in the Council Chambers at the Civic Center, 35 Cajon Street. The meeting was an in-person meeting with some attendees via Zoom.

**A. ATTENDANCE & CALL TO ORDER**

Present: Desiree Reyes, Committee Member  
Brandon Lopez, Committee Member  
Sid Jain, Committee Member  
Aholibama Ojeda, Committee Member  
Dan Jimenez, Committee Member  
John James, Committee Member  
Richard Corneille, Committee Member

Absent: None.

City Council  
Liaison: None.

Staff: John Harris, Municipal Utilities & Engineering Department Director; Goutam Dobey, City Engineer; Joshua Monzon, Committee Liaison/Senior Administrative Assistant; James Garland, Assistant Finance Director; Fernando Mata, Wastewater Utility Manager; Jungjoon Park, Joint Utilities Laboratory Manager (via Zoom).

Guest

Speakers: Sudhir Pardiwala with Raftelis via Zoom.

Mr. Harris called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. He introduced himself to everyone. He said the goal of this meeting is to be a high-level introductory meeting to discuss what the committee is about and some background on the Utility Advisory Committee (UAC) and the Municipal Utilities & Engineering Department (MUED). The plan is to have another meeting in March and a third meeting in April. The staff in attendance, Mr. Dobey, Mr. Monzon and Mr. Garland introduced themselves. The committee members introduced themselves and gave a background.

**B. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dennis Bell gave a comment. He spoke of his concerns with the City's leadership, and did not like the comparative costs of utility rates shown in the report by Raftelis – concerned with how the utility rates will affect him and other city customers.

**C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

On a motion by Committee Member Corneille, seconded by Committee Member James, the minutes of the regular meeting of January 27, 2021 were approved unanimously.

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Vote: 7 – 0 Passed

**D. COMMUNICATIONS**

**a. Director's Introduction Presentation**

Mr. Harris discussed the Municipal Code, some history of the City Ordinance and how it is connected to the legality of the City's utility rates. He stressed the importance of attendance, especially considering the short meeting window. He explained that Mr. Monzon will be the best contact for committee members with any questions they may have.

Committee Member Jain asked if the committee is disbanded after their recommendation to the City Council in July. Mr. Harris' plan is to continue the committee regularly even after the adoption of the rates.

Mr. Harris continued with the Municipal Code on duties of the committee members to the City's utility rates. He explained that other City commissions and committees have some overlapping responsibilities with UAC and possibly changing this in the long-term.

Mr. Harris explained in detail the four different divisions under MUED; discussing their bargaining unit, budgets, role within the department, staff size and more.

Committee Member John James commented on the history, purpose and origin of the UAC.

Mr. Harris discussed the State of California's Prop 218 and the City's steps towards creating new utility rates. Mr. Harris pointed out that Sudhir from Raftelis is available via Zoom to answer any questions. 5 years of rates were looked at but the City Council only accepted two years of the proposed rates. For potable water in July of 2021 there was no adjustment. In July of 2023 the first recommended rate from Raftelis was proposed for a 4 percent increase which was the last increase. Some grant applications have been pending for a long time.

For wastewater rates, Raftelis proposed a 15 percent increase in 2021 followed by 2 years of a 15 percent increase but the City council approved only 8 percent in July of 2022. No adjustment was made for 2023 and for the next two Raftelis proposed a 5 percent increase.

Mr. Harris discussed some history of the water and wastewater rates, grants, funding and how these factors have and still are affecting the wastewater plant. Non-potable water rates have not increased in a long time. Mr. Harris hopes to absorb the non-potable water funds into the potable water funds through discussions with the Finance Department. In the state of Colorado, this is the common practice to just have one water fund. Mr. Harris explained the differences between potable, non-potable water and recycled water.

Mr. Harris showed a chart with the proposed utility rate adjustments. What is proposed from Raftelis is no non-potable rate adjustments for the next five years. Potable rate adjustments are proposed at 3.5 percent in each category for the next 5 years. For non-potable water, adjustments are proposed to be 15, 12, 12, 12 and 8 percent increase for the next five years. The usage of water is broken down into 3 tiers depending on usage – this was explained.

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Committee Member Corneille asked how the tiers are developed. He would like this to be further explained. Mr. Harris said he could expand further on this on the next meeting.

Mr. Harris showed a chart that compared Redlands' current and proposed rate for utility usage and compared these to nearby cities' rates.

A chart showed that no changes for non-potable water are proposed. Committee Member Jain asked why there is no recommendation for non-potable water rates to be adjusted. Mr. Harris explained there are not a lot of projects or salary and benefit allocation in that fund.

Committee Member Corneille and Mr. Harris briefly discussed some of the different projects the City has and how they relate to the non-potable water fund.

Residential and school wastewater rates were explained. The current residential rate is for \$62.43. An increase is proposed for about \$7 for the first year to \$101 in the fifth year. Schools are charged based on the amount of students and type of school. A similar increase is proposed for the residential rates. Mr. Harris discussed non-residential wastewater rates. The floor was then opened to any questions.

Mr. Harris answered questions from Committee Members Lopez and Jain regarding the schools rates. Mr. Harris expanded on what was shown in the charts and said he is planning on speaking with the schools on the rate adjustments later in the process.

Wastewater costs were compared with other agencies via a chart. A sample of a typical bill was shown as an example for a "common" home.

Committee Member James discussed the history of Raftelis' involvement with the UAC.

Committee Member Lopez asked why the 15% increase is needed for wastewater rates since it is a large increase. Mr. Harris said it is to alleviate the debt ratio of the SRF loan. Improvements do need to be made to the wastewater lab.

Committee Member James commented on the credit and bond rating and that the City should work to retain the City's recent double A plus rating.

Committee Member Corneille said it would be helpful to understand the Capital Improvement Programs and breakdown the costs of these projects. Committee Member Lopez said it would be good to present on what happens with the water that is used by residents. Mr. Harris offered to provide tours of the water and wastewater plants.

Committee Member Corneille discussed what the State is proposing on per capita water uses that could affect the City and UAC.

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**E. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. UAC Chairperson Nominations & Election**

Upon a motion made by Committee Member Jimenez, seconded by Committee Member Corneille, the committee, with a unanimous vote of 7-0, nominated Committee Member James to be the Chairperson of UAC.

**b. UAC Vice-Chairperson Nominations & Election**

Upon a motion made by Committee Member Jimenez, seconded by Committee Member Lopez, the committee, with a unanimous vote of 7-0, nominated Committee Member Jain to be Vice-Chairperson of UAC.

**c. Future Meeting Scheduling – March & April**

After a discussion of what time and date works for the Committee members to meet for the next meeting, 3 dates of March 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> were suggested and to be finalized after staff confirms room availability of the Council chambers and the MUED conference room.

**F. COMMITTEE MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Chairman James opened the floor to any questions or thoughts on recommendations for the next meeting. Committee Member Jimenez would like details on what the SRF loan is for. Mr. Harris said that the three items he sees being discussed in the next meeting is how Raftelis came up with the suggested rates, overview of planned capital improvement projects and the wastewater plant.

Committee Member Corneille asked about the \$45 million price tag of the wastewater project. Mr. Harris expanded on the SRF loan. Committee Member Jimenez asked what SRF stands for. Mr. Harris responded, "State Revolving Fund." Mr. Harris explained a little more on the SRF loan.

Sudhir asked to share his screen with UAC. He wanted to show the committee the City's calendar of committees, but it did not show up due to technical issues.

**G. ADJOURNMENT – Next regular meeting will be in March, 2024**

Chairman James commended Mr. Monzon and staff for keeping everything organized for this meeting. Mr. Harris offered to provide materials at least a week before every meeting. Vice Chair Jain also thanked Mr. Monzon and staff.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:02 PM. The next regular meeting of the City of Redlands Utilities Advisory Committee will be scheduled for 6:30pm either March 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024.