



SOUTH SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT

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Staff Report

To: Board of Directors

From: Richard Sweet, PE, District Manager

Date: July 1, 2015

Subject: **CONSIDERATION OF INTERIM OPTIONS REGARDING OCSD'S
REQUESTED PAYMENT OF DISTRICT CUSTOMER BILLING
SERVICES RENDERED FOR THE PERIOD COMMENCING JULY
1, 2015**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board consider the options set forth in this staff report and direct staff how to proceed.

BACKGROUND:

At the Board meeting of June 17, 2015, staff presented the Board with background on the District's payments to member agencies for billing services. As stated in the staff report for that meeting, for many years the District's member agencies (Oceano Community Services District (OCSD) and the Cities of Arroyo Grande and Grover Beach) have billed their customers for the wastewater treatment and conveyance services that the District provides. In return, the District has compensated the member agencies for this service. Since 2013, the District has paid approximately \$12,000/year to the City of Arroyo Grande, \$20,000/year to the City of Grover Beach, and \$22,000/year to OCSD for these services. The per customer rate for each member is different.

At the Board meeting of June 17, 2015, the Board directed staff to negotiate with member agencies in order to develop a written agreement outlining the billing fees and costs going forward.

This item—consideration of interim options—has been placed on the July 1, 2015 agenda based on the Board's direction at the June 17, 2015 Board Meeting and staff's subsequent discussions with OCSD's general counsel regarding billing services beginning July 1, 2015. The urgency of this item is that OCSD has requested that the

District agree to reimburse OCSD for its billing services commencing July 1, 2015. The July 1 Board Meeting provides the only opportunity to timely address this issue.

DISCUSSION:

Acknowledging the importance of this issue to the District, staff has split discussion and consideration of member agency billing into two separate phases.

Phase 1

The first phase, which will be presented at the July 1, 2015 Board meeting, will consider interim options for reimbursement for billing services undertaken during the period between July 1, 2015 and execution of a written agreement with each of the member agencies providing service. These options include:

Option 1: Authorize the District Manager to enter into a letter agreement with all three (3) members that the District will continue to pay each member at the member's current annual rate, pro-rated monthly for the period July 1 – August 31, 2015. For OCSD, the pro-rated amount for the two-month period would be approximately \$3,666.00. If an agreement is reached among the parties by August 31, 2015, the agreement may provide that the agreed-upon rate would apply retroactively to July 1, 2015. OCSD's legal counsel has expressed that OCSD would be willing to continue billing the District's customers under this arrangement.

Option 2: Authorize the District Manager to set aside a reasonable amount of funds in a District reserve account to pay for the costs of all customer billing services provided by the members to the District for the period beginning July 1, 2015 and until such time as a long-term agreement is negotiated with the member agencies or an alternative method of billing is established. This option would require a future agreement between the District and the billing parties regarding the rate to be applied for the period beginning July 1, 2015. It is unknown whether OCSD would support this option.

Option 3: Investigate all legally feasible options for billing services beginning July 1, 2015, but make no commitments for the interim period. Under this option, the District would proceed without considering how to pay for billing services rendered by member agencies in the case that a negotiated agreement is not reached. This option risks OCSD refusing to provide continued billing services for the period beginning July 1, 2015 without the District's commitment to pay OCSD for services rendered.

Phase 2

The second phase would involve a broader investigation and analysis of the District's customer billing issue. In order to prepare for this discussion, district counsel has begun researching the District's various options for collecting fees for the District's services, including the possibility of having the County collect the District's fees on the property tax rolls, and negotiating an agreement with all member agencies. These options, among others, will be presented to the Board at a later Board meeting.

Options

1. Authorize the District Manager to enter into a letter agreement with all three (3) member agencies to continue paying each agency at the current rate for the interim period of July 1, 2015 -- September 1, 2015. In the event a long-term agreement with the three agencies is achieved prior to September 1, 2015, the agreement may provide for an alternative payment for the interim period.
2. Authorize the District Manager to set aside a reasonable amount of funds in a reserve account to pay for the costs of billing services rendered on behalf of the District until such time as a long-term agreement is reached.
3. Begin investigation and analysis of legally feasible options for customer billing, but make no commitments for the interim period.

Richard G. Sweet, PE
District Manager