

STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTY OF BRAZORIA

CITY OF LAKE JACKSON

BE IT KNOWN that the City Council of the City of Lake Jackson met on Thursday, October 1, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in Special Session at LJ Civic Center, 332 Hwy 333 East, Lake Jackson, Texas with the following in attendance:

Bob Sipple, Mayor
Vinay Singhania, Mayor Pro-Tem
Matt Broaddus, Council member
Gerald Roznovsky, Council member
Buster Buell, Council member
Jon J.B. Baker, Council member

Modesto Mundo, City Manager
Meagan Borth, Interim Assistant City Manager
Sally Villarreal, Assistant City Secretary
Sherri Russell, City Attorney

DISCUSS AND CONSIDER ORDINANCE EXTENDING THE DISASTER DECLARATION ISSUED BY THE MAYOR ON SEPTEMBER 26, 2020 –FIRST AND FINAL

On motion by Council member Singhania second by Council member Baker with all present members voting “aye” the rules were suspended requiring two readings.

On motion by Council member Buell second by Council member Roznovsky with all present members voting “aye” the ordinance to extend the Disaster Declaration issued by the Mayor on September 26, 2020 was approved.

DISCUSS THE WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM EMERGENCY

Mayor Sipple opened the discussion with informing people about the alert system.

Mr. Mundo gave the following overview of events:

At the moment, we are focused on two major tasks, Rescind Boil Water Notice and holding the necessary chlorine residual level of 1.0 ppm for 60 days. They are separate issues but linked together.

1. **Rescind the Boil Water Notice:** Benchmark is **0.2** ppm free chlorine residual throughout the system. It could take us 7 – 14 days. Right now, we are measuring a 4.0 ppm at the wells. We believe sooner but TCEQ makes the decision. TCEQ is establishing the testing protocol and sites we will need to test. They will monitor our sampling.
 - a. Free Chlorine benchmark of **1.0**. ppm, as advised by the CDC, must be held for 60 days. The time clock starts once we reach 1.0.

- b. We are 100% well water now and until we complete the chlorine conversion process. This is/will put a significant strain on our system, thus the importance of the drought contingency plan.
 - c. The Drought Contingency plan will need to remain in place for the duration of the chlorine conversion. We first need all our capacity to flush the system, and second, we need to minimize the strain on the system once the 60 days clock begins. We have worked with our major car washes to give them 4-hour blocks. The Mayor will sign emergency order setting out their schedule.
 - d. We are interviewing an engineering firm to bring them on-board to help us through the chlorine conversion process. TCEQ is helping us to get to the 0.2 but they need to transition back to our regulatory agency. Their engineers cannot stay with us throughout the duration of this chlorine conversion, they need to move back to their role as the regulatory agency.
 - e. We have made a STAR request to the state for additional utility help. Pearland has been a great help in this area. I have made a request to the City Manager of Sugar Land as well. We will have to discuss reimbursement of personnel if they cannot donate.
 - f. This event will not qualify us for refunding any of our expenditures. Thankfully, we have received many free assets from the state, i.e. bottled water, restrooms, and assistance in the POD so far.
2. **Customer Service Inspection Program.** This is a long-term project for us, but we have begun early at the request of TCEQ. We have City of Houston inspectors working with us to help identify any possibilities of cross connections in the system. We are looking for surface water cross connections only.
3. **Public Communication.** We have brought Lora-Marie Bernard on board to help us with our communication efforts. Meagan will go into detail tonight to cover our efforts. The three ways we are pushing information out are:
- a. 11:00 am Zoom Daily Update with Press and Public.
 - b. Video Updates with Mayor and Meagan, these are approximately a minute. This is a live video on Facebook and then stays on the site. We will have one of these at least once a day to keep pace with questions if we have answers or a good topic to talk on.
 - c. Graphics in our usual releases.

- d. Working with more ways to get the message out to sign up to our emergency notification system. We will focus on our utility bills to get the word out about signing up for our Notification System.

4. Bottled Water. The POD has moved to the Recreation Center.

5. EOC: We are meeting each day at 4pm to cover our accomplishments and establish tasks for the next 24 hours plus.

Debbie Webb, APW Director

TCEQ has brought their technical team to help the utilities department. The utility department is split on 2 different teams working twelve-hour shifts. They will remain on this schedule until this issue is resolved. Pearland and Houston have sent teams to come in to help us. As we get through the flushing cycle, we anticipate being able to give people at least a day off to recover. For now, everyone is working until we get to the 0.2 level. The plan with TCEQ we are adjusting levels of chlorine to turn over the tanks, the existing water has been flushed. We are not super chlorinating the water and beginning to flush with that water. We have not yet made it to the end of the systems. It will be days until we get water to the end points of the system.

Council member Buell noticed when he arrived that hydrants were being flushed. Ms. Webb said this is part of the program.

Hydrants will be flushed on two different sides of towns. There are four teams of two people flushing. We cannot speed this process up because there must be a certain pressure maintained in the tanks.

Council member Roznovsky asked Ms. Webb to explain the way it works.

Ms. Webb said we have two plants in town. We would start at the Oak Drive plant and work the way out downstream from that plant and try to go as far as reach as we can go. Same thing at Beechwood, same thing from the towers until we get to the ends of the systems.

Mayor asked what the situation is with the hospitals.

Mr. Mundo stated the hospital must stay on our connection. The hurdle is because if they could connect directly on the BWA line, and they were on there for 60 days, they would have to become a public water supply and then be regulated by TCEQ. In addition, they would need to go through the flushing process. For these two major reasons they had to be maintained by our system.

Council member Baker asked about how many tanks the City has. Ms. Webb said each water plant has two ground storage tanks. The capacity of each tank is 1 million gallons a piece at Oak Drive and 1.1 million gallons at Beechwood.

Council member Baker asked if we know the chlorine level of each tank. Ms. Webb said that is fluctuating right now with an upward trend and somewhere around a 3.

Council member Baker asked Ms. Webb to explain the flushing. Ms. Webb said it is opening of fire hydrants and going downstream making sure the water is being moved out. Ms. Webb said the city has approximately 800 fire hydrants.

Ms. Webb stated we flush all the fire hydrants, but the North plant is on BWA water and those tested fine.

Mayor Sipple asked the public to please help conserve water. It is essential for everyone to help conserve water.

Council member Baker asked what happens to the water when it is purged? Ms. Webb said it is being drained into the storm sewer system and into the river.

Council member Singhania asked if the residents will notice a difference. Ms. Webb stated the residence will notice a taste and odor difference. The increase in chlorine makes it smell like strong chlorinated water. This will be normal during this process.

Ms. Webb thanked the TCEQ team and said they have been remarkable. TCEQ has also said the City's team is doing a great job as well.

Council member Baker asked what TCEQ requirements are for testing. Is it different than the way the city tests? Ms. Webb said the method of chlorine testing will be the same. Testing is done every day.

Council member Roznovsky asked about the testing that was done on Saturday and it being below range. Mr. Mundo said TCEQ will post the data this weekend and will give us the link to post on our website for the public to see which areas tested low.

David Walton, Building Official

Mr. Walton stated the city has been working in teams of two to inspect every residential home and business. There has been great success getting on the property of individuals who are home. The inspectors are all licensed professional plumbing inspectors and are qualified to do the home inspections. The teams are currently doing approximately 96 homes per day. Starting tomorrow the focus will be on the downtown business core before the inspectors have to be let go and return to Houston.

The inspectors are making contact with residents and identifying themselves. They all have city badges.

The common things they are finding are hose bibs without vacuum breakers and makeshift sprinkler systems. Backflow testing is also being done throughout the city. A sprinkler system is required to have a pressure vacuum breaker. We are documenting where these are located.

Council member Baker asked if he could explain how to handle citizens not wanting the inspectors on their property. Mr. Walton said they would document that they could not get onto the property. Then we would explain the potential hazards they are looking for and the important role everyone plays in keeping the water safe. This is also part of the TCEQ plan.

Bryan Sidebottom, Emergency Management Coordinator

Lt. Sidebottom received a call late Friday. He reached out to the State and the County and requested

water. One hundred pallets of water which is thousands of bottles of water. The POD started at the college. Due to the college starting back up the POD moved to the Recreation Center in phases. There are citizens who are not able to pick up water and arrangements are being made with city personnel to deliver to those people.

Lt. Sidebottom initially asked the City of Angleton, City of Clute, Brazosport College PD, BISD PD, Jones Creek PD and Freeport will be helping tomorrow. It has been a great collaboration. The National Guard has sent 30 soldiers helping. They are paired up with Parks Dept. personnel to make sure the water is being dispersed.

Council member Baker asked what type of feedback we are getting from the public. Lt. Sidebottom stated he received a letter of thanks from a citizen who was very thankful to the City. The feedback has been great.

Mayor Sipple thanked Lt. Sidebottom for his leadership on this. Mr. Mundo also thanked Lt. Sidebottom for all his help and dedication.

Meagan Borth, Interim Assistant City Manager

Ms. Borth mentioned the emergency notification system. We realized that a lot of people are not signed up. We currently have about 20,000 signed up. We would like to get as many people as possible. As we have sifted through the people who have signed up, some of them did not select a notification preference, therefore they are not getting the alerts. A phone number or e-mail must be listed for the system to recognize whether to make the alert call, text, or e-mail.

Apartment complexes do not get individual utility bills. Sign-up sheets have been sent to the apartment complexes to disperse to their residents and encourage them to sign up. The city will collect those sheets to get them entered. Also, starting tomorrow for the next four billing cycles, every bill will have a sign-up sheet to turn in. A link will be included so people can sign up themselves if they would like.

Council member Buell asked what would happen for the people who do not receive a paper bill. Ms. Borth said the link will be on the electronic bill. Also, when new residential service is set up, the customer service representatives will enter their information into the system.

Council member Roznovsky asked about circling and sending a blast to everyone. Ms. Borth stated the old emergency notification system we had, had the capability to make an emergency 911 call. The City Secretary is looking into our current system to see if it also has that capability.

Mr. Mundo also stated the emergency notification system has been used in this instance for the advisories such as the “do not use water”, the “boil water notice” and we will use it for the “rescind the boil water notice”. We only want to use it for emergency type situations. If we use it too much, people will want to get off the system.

Ms. Borth stated the call center has been shut down. Calls are now being directed to City Hall. A comprehensive Q&A sheet has been put out.

Daily briefings are done with city staff to keep them updated with the latest information so they can pass

it to the citizens.

Mr. Mundo stated we get questions that we cannot answer. For those questions, we must contact the correct agency. We do not want to give out false information.

Council member Roznovsky asked for questions that are asked in the Zoom or the Minutes with Megan. How are they getting the answers that cannot be answered at that moment? Ms. Borth said during the Zoom meetings, she is able to view the questions and have Mr. Mundo answer them. Some of the questions are put on the Q&A if they are not answered at the time it is asked. There were internet problems today so some of the questions are lagging, however they will be up as soon as service is restored.

Council member Buell asked who is on the EOC team. Ms. Borth said the EOC team is made of: All the Directors, Mr. Mundo, Ms. Borth, Bryan Sidebottom, Mayor, Sherri Russell, EMS, Police Chief, Fire Marshal, David Walton, and Deb Webb have been in EOC for this emergency.

Mr. Mundo stated depending on the situation, the team can change. Everyone must go through the proper NIMS training to be in the EOC.

Ms. Borth mentioned the Facebook posts are getting a lot of views. The highest viewed post is almost at 190,000 views. We are trying to get as much information out as possible. We will continue to do the news releases, videos, regular posts, Zoom meetings, etc.

Ms. Borth stated she will be working on a dedicated page within the City website just like we did with Covid. There will be a button to click on that will take you to all the water situation information.

Mayor Sipple thanked Meagan for a job well done.

David Stafford - 56 Banyan Court

Mr. Stafford asked if we had asked other companies if they would help with the current situation. Mr. Mundo stated we did have someone from a local company sit in a meeting with TCEQ. He was doing this as a private citizen to help and thought the plan we are working on was right on target.

Gary Martin – 205 Cherrywood Drive

Thanked Council and Mr. Mundo for the countless hours they have worked on this.

Mr. Martin asked Mr. Mundo about his comment regarding the state and the expenses the city is incurring in resolving this problem with our water system. Also, what does the long-term program consist of?

Mr. Mundo said the state can only help us through the emergency of this event. At some point it becomes the city's responsibility. The long-term project is not through the chlorine conversion process, it is the program with us working with the customer service inspectors to continually monitor breaches in the system and getting them repaired. These will be monitored continually.

Mr. Martin asked if there is still a possibility that the water system could be compromised somewhere other than a resident's home? Mr. Mundo said it could be and that is what we are going to look for. It needs to be a system wide and that will be a long-term project.

Mr. Mundo said up until this point we have always had excellent results with the TCEQ. We monitor

daily and turn in our reports monthly. The City is actually rated a superior water system. When we received our results on Saturday, it was a surprise to us. We have had a history of a good record and good maintenance on the system. We are still trying to identify where the problem came from.

Steve Gagnon – 101 Huisache

Mr. Gagnon asked how this was affecting the local businesses? Mr. Mundo said we are trying to work with all the businesses. The boil water notice is what is hurting the restaurants and we are trying to get out of it as soon as possible. We are putting every available resource on this. The drought contingency plan is what is hurting the car washes the most.

Mr. Gagnon asked if there is a filtration system that can help alleviate this for the businesses. A Reverse Osmosis filter is not sufficient. Ms. Borth reached out to CDC for this question.

Ms. Borth mentioned a question that has come in. She stated filters should be changed when the 60-day chlorine conversion is over.

Council member Roznovsky asked about the health impact. Who would be the contact when this situation goes away? Mr. Mundo said we have an open dialogue with CDC, and we will continue to go to them for help to answer questions. CDC and TCEQ have committed to helping the City through this process.

Council member Roznovsky mentioned citizens are concerned about the health concerns from the chlorine conversion. Mr. Mundo stated the CDC guidance is that the chlorine conversion of the 60 days is safe.

Council member Baker asked if we had any plans after the TCEQ and CDC for this to not happen again. Mr. Mundo said that is an ongoing conversation with the CDC. We will continue with the Customer Service Inspections and look for breaches in the system. We will look into answers to gain the trust of the public

Amanda Brewster - Carnation

Ms. Brewster stated she was on the LJ website looking for the water quality report. She said the last one was from 2017. Ms. Borth stated there could be an old link and that is something she is trying to work on, but she has posted a recent water report. Ms. Borth will help the resident find it and make it more apparent and easier for residents to see. Council member Roznovsky stated it was under a different menu.

Mr. Mundo asked Ms. Webb how often we send reports to TCEQ?

Ms. Webb said the water quality report also known as the consumer confidence report is an annual report. This report is put on the website every year. These are outside labs that test it that do it for every city. The report is sent back saying what the averages are. They get these reports from testing done throughout the whole year. When the outside vendor comes in to test the water, the results are sent to the state. The reports are always published, and they can be found at any time. Ms. Webb stated Lake Jackson has always been in compliance. Quarterly and monthly reports are sent to TCEQ. The city tests daily.

Mr. Mundo reminded everyone that this is a community effort. We are trying to improve our communication with the public. Mr. Mundo asked citizens to ask questions if they had any.

Mayor Sipple asked to keep the family of the young boy in your prayers and hearts. Mayor received a

call from Senator Cruz and Congressman Weber. They have pledged whatever resources we need are available. We have a lot of support from people and we are not alone.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

These minutes read and approved this _____ day of _____ 2020.

Bob Sipple, Mayor

Alice A. Rodgers, City Secretary