



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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## **City of Riverside to Examine Future of Agricultural Water Rates**

*Board of Public Utilities names task force; 15 months of meeting scheduled to start April 26*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The Board of Public Utilities has appointed a task force that will begin meeting on April 26 and spend the next 15 months studying the city’s agricultural water rates to determine if changes are merited. In the meantime, the WA-3 and WA-9 rates will be frozen at current levels.

The Riverside City Council recommended the establishment of such a task force back in November, when the Council was discussing potential increases to water and electric rates. The rate increases that were recommended from that process will be heard by the City Council on May 22, but the agricultural rates will not be affected, pending the recommendations of the agricultural water rate task force.

“Riverside has always embraced agriculture, first through citrus and most recently through the GrowRIVERSIDE movement,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “That history and the potential for nurturing more farm-based businesses make this the right time to review these rates.”

The Board of Public Utilities approved the formation of the task force at its March 29 meeting. Utilities Board Member Andrew Walcker will be the chairman and Seth Wilson of the Riverside Food Systems Alliance will be the vice-chairman. Recommendations to the City Council are expected in July, 2019.

“Riverside Public Utilities prides itself on being a community resource, so it is important to ensure that these rates are current and reflect the needs of the community,” Interim General Manager Todd Jorgenson said. “We are fortunate to have such a knowledgeable group of task force members.”

In addition to Walcker and Wilson, task force members will include: Rose Mayes, Jason Hunter, Gilberto Esquivel, Patricia Lock-Dawson, John Gless, Darleen DeMason, Michelle Sheehe, Dale Sexton, Tom Evans, Ed Adkison, Scott Andrews, Steven Robillard, and two additional members yet to be named.

Topics the task force will examine include: policy, legal and City initiative considerations; the City's agricultural and citrus heritage; the Gage Canal; the existing rate structure; and the Water Utility Cost of Service Study.

"Water has always been a key to Riverside's growth and prosperity, and that is especially true in the Arlington Heights Greenbelt," Mayor Pro Tem Chris MacArthur said. "I'm glad to see the task force is going to take the time to really delve into the issues facing resident farmers and growers who embrace agriculture in our city."

The task force will seek to recommend a fair and equitable distribution and pricing of water that promotes local agriculture and is consistent with the legal mandates of voter-approved Prop. R (1979) and Measure C (1987), as well as the goals of the GrowRIVERSIDE movement.

"Riverside Public Utilities takes very seriously its commitment to Riverside residents and business owners," said Board Chairperson Jo Lynne Russo-Pereyra. "The Board looks forward to receiving the task force's findings as it further examines this issue of great importance to our city."

The task force is expected to meet each month in the Mayor's Ceremonial Room on the 7th floor of Riverside City Hall, 3900 Main Street. The first meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 26; meeting dates, times, and materials will be posted at EngageRiverside.com under the heading "Council/Board Meetings." Meetings will be conducted in accordance with the Brown Act, are expected to last about two hours, and will be available for viewing on the City's website and at watchriverside.com. More information can be found at: <http://riversidepublicutilities.com/rateplan/default-pop-agricultural.asp>