

City Water Commission Ponders Possibility Of Sharing Water Project Costs With The County

City water commissioners looked at a recommended 5½-million-dollar dam project in the eye last night and came away with the thought it might not be a bad idea to explore the feasibility of a cost-sharing county-wide water supply program.

All commissioners present at the group's monthly session agreed that it would be to the city's benefit to attempt to tie the city's water needs into the master water plan to be formulated by the county water advisory committee.

A subcommittee may be appointed next week to discuss a joint approach to city-county water supply problems.

The commission set a special meeting for next Monday and declared its readiness to meet weekly—instead of monthly—until the board has arrived at recommendations it can present to the city council.

At the same time a note of pessimism was sounded indicating the belief of commissioners that an engineering report advising a 5½-million-dollar dam and reservoir in Rodeo gulch is too complex for the commission to take a stand by August 23.

"I feel it's too big a decision" to be made by August 23, said Commissioner Fred Morris, sitting as chairman in the absence of Bert Snyder Jr., who is out of town.

The significance of the date lies in the fact it is the deadline for placing a water project bond issue on the November general election ballot.

The city council had asked the commission to schedule a council-commission meeting before August 23 on the engineering report advising a 5½-million-dollar dam and reservoir construction project to store San Lorenzo river water in Rodeo gulch.

Mayor Paul Forgey attended the session and pointed out that congress recently authorized interest-free federal loans for county water projects.

This is another talking point favoring city-county participation in a county-wide water supply program, the mayor said.

"It might be better to have the county build a dam and sell water to the city and other county areas," Forgey said. "It would be cheaper than having the city build a dam and bear the entire brunt of the cost."

Morris agreed but observed that time must be an important element in city planning.

"We can't wait too long for the county to take action," he said.

Brown & Caldwell, the San Francisco engineering firm which recommended the Rodeo gulch project over a two-dam project in the Soquel watershed, predicted the city's present sources of supply will be inadequate by 1960.

Water Superintendent Weston Webber, asked the size of a rate increase necessary to finance the Rodeo gulch project, said a "cut down" version could be put into operation for bond-backing rates "nearly double" today's scale.

That would mean a hike of "about \$1 more per month" for domestic users, Webber said his studies indicated.

The question and answer were merely informative, inasmuch as no decision has been taken on a project or the method of financing.

Webber said his rate estimate was based on a 4½-million-dollar project, or one million less than the Brown & Caldwell cost estimate.

The million could be knocked off the bond issue by reducing projected treatment capacity and using the \$400,000 now in the water depreciation fund, Webber said.

The title of the proposed Rodeo gulch project was settled when the commission voted unanimously to call it just that—the Rodeo gulch project.

Some confusion had been generated by the title—Doyle gulch—used in the Brown & Caldwell report. This was traced to the circumstance that the U.S. coast and geodetic survey maps used by the firm employ the Doyle gulch name.

In an action not connected with dams but linked with future water policy, the commission voted unanimously to recommend that the city council take steps to request the Cowell estate executors to relinquish the estate's free wa-

25 cents goes to



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