

Water Supply Water Commission To Tell Of Faith In Brown & Caldwell

The water commission last night very nearly wrote the city council a letter expressing confidence in Brown & Caldwell, the engineering firm conducting surveys for potential dam sites.

At the last minute, however, the letter was abandoned for what seemed to commissioners a better idea giving their views to the council in person the evening of October 24, when the council and members of the city commission will break bread together and discuss municipal problems.

The "vote of confidence" was prompted by Councilman Robert Burton's frequent sniping at the San Francisco engineering firm. Commissioner Fred Morris, who introduced the Brown & Caldwell matter at last night's monthly commission meeting, declared:

"I don't like this continual pecking away and finding fault and taking things out of context by Mr. Burton."

Capt. Edwin Pagenhart, although he referred to geologic excavations at the Bald Mountain site (since dropped from consideration) as "puny chicken scratchings," said he feels "that Brown & Caldwell are a reputable firm."

Other commissioners, including Chairman Bert Snyder Jr., expressed confidence in the firm's professional reputation. A motion to write the "vote of confidence" letter had been seconded and was ready for a vote when Water Superintendent Weston Webber intervened to suggest that the commission's feelings can be relayed to the council verbally at the October 24 meeting and the proposed epistle was scrapped.

Burton, council liaison representative to the commission, was not present.

A recommendation that service installation charges be increased from \$30 to \$140 on pipe sizes up to two inches was approved unanimously and will be forwarded to the council for action. Proposed increases (current charges in parentheses):

Three-quarter inch pipe, \$50 (\$20); one inch pipe, \$65 (\$30); one and one-half inch pipe, \$125

(\$45); two-inch pipe \$200 (\$60). The recommended charges are based on Webber's estimates of average cost to the city.

Webber pointed out, as he has done in the past, that the city loses money on each installation under the present charges. Chairman Snyder seemed to reflect the commission's opinion when he said: "I feel we ought to at least break even."

Most homes have three-quarter inch service. The installation charge is paid only once—when water service is linked to a residence or other establishment. Webber observed that only new homes and other new structures not yet connected will pay the higher charges, provided the increases are approved by the council.

Commissioners had before them a 1953 comparison of Santa Cruz installation rates with those of other cities. The list included these cities and charges, graduating from three-quarter to two-inch pipe:

Watsonville (surfaced streets), \$50, \$100.50, \$162.50, \$215; Fresno, \$35, \$45, \$65, \$75; Martinez, \$50, \$125, \$225, \$345; Palo Alto, (no three-quarter inch), \$150, \$200, \$235; Riverside, \$28, \$33, (no one and one-half inch), \$70; Santa Barbara, \$60, \$70, \$90, \$110.

Present policy calls for new users to pay the city's actual cost of installing connections greater than two inches. No change was recommended.

A discussion of the Pasatiempo water system led Pagenhart to renew his argument that five cents per 100 cubic fee is too low a rate at which to sell city water to the golf course (domestic and industrial users pay a scale ranging from 20 to 5 cents dependent on volume).

The golf course, under a contract which doesn't expire until 1961, pays 2½ cents. When the five-cent figure was suggested last June as a basis for negotiating a new 15-year contract with the golf course, most commissioners agreed that it would still amount to a "subsidy," but that it was worth it in view of the recreational benefits offered by the golf course.

A warm give-and-take ended with Snyder's remark that "We don't like losing money but it's the best way out."

A project dear to the hearts of the water commissioners was interred quietly when it was decided to cease efforts to have interest earned on water department revenue revert to the water fund. The interest currently goes to the general fund, and commissioners agreed resignedly that the council will continue to ignore pleas to the contrary.

The commission decided to let another recommendation to the council—for abandonment of the old Branciforte drive water line—rest until December to give the council sufficient time to do something about it.