



**FRESNO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES**

**Presiding:
Ruth Evans, Chair
Brian Domingos, Vice Chair**

Committee: Government Affairs Council
Chairperson: Ruth Evans
Vice-Chair: Brian Domingos
Meeting Date/Time: November 12, 2014
Meeting Place: Fresno Chamber of Commerce
Committee attendees: Bill Avakian, Ruth Evans, Victoria Salisch, Lorraine Salazar, Nick Amendola, Cam Maloy, Al Smith, Austin Ewell, John Taylor, Larry Fortune, Debbie Hunsaker, Randy Dhindsa
Committee absences: Sieg Fischer, Ryan Jacobsen, Brian Domingos, Lydia Zabrycki, Scott Miller
Staff: Rachel Eslick

CALL TO ORDER

- Ms. Evans called the meeting to order at 12:07 p.m.
- Ms. Evans announced Randy Dhindsa was added to the council by executive committee vote.

NEW BUSINESS

1. City of Fresno Water Rates

Public Utilities Manager Tommy Esqueda addressed the council about a proposal his staff will make to Mayor Swearingin to raise water rates to pay for infrastructure improvements and a water treatment facility. There are two plans being recommended. The first is \$429 million and would raise an average family's water bill from \$25 to \$52 over a five year period. The second is \$406 million and would raise an average family's bill to \$51 over a five year period. The only difference is the number of existing system upgrades and aging pipe replacements, which is not currently state mandated. Compared to the old project that was eventually repealed, this proposal includes a 60 mgd water treatment facility with the ability to upgrade to 80 mgd, instead of an 80 mgd.

The recommendations come after four public meetings over the last two months to discuss water problems and possible solutions with experts and residents.

Resident Doug Vagim spoke out against the proposal, saying residents don't need a water treatment facility. Instead, the City should utilize the existing facility in north Fresno. He also said the water bills will

be just as high as the last rate increase (that was repealed) and criticized the City for not facilitating round table discussions.

Nick Amendola made a motion to support both project proposals. Randy Dhindsa seconded the motion and it passed, with John Taylor abstaining.

2. Project Labor Agreements

Nicole Goehring of Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc., asked for support of a bill that repeals the City's ban on project labor agreements (PLA's). The history of bill 14-549 addresses legislation passed in the State that says charter cities with PLA bans cannot receive state grants or money for projects. The City has sued, but until a decision comes down, it has to repeal its ban to receive money for several projects. If the decision comes down in the City's favor, the repeal is reversed and Fresno will once again have a ban on Project Labor Agreements.

Larry Fortune made a motion to support the bill. Debbie Hunsaker seconded the motion and it passed, with John Taylor abstaining.

3. Fresno Unified Split

Mark Arax spoke about an idea that he's been promoting for some time to allow voters to decide whether Fresno Unified should be split into two school districts in order to achieve better student performance. The split would roughly use Blackstone as the dividing line, so one district would have Sunnyside, Hoover and McLane High Schools and the second would have Roosevelt, Bullard, Edison and Fresno High Schools. Arax gave a history on what led him to research the idea and some of the statistics that support his mission. He said he spoke extensively to the late Dr. Pete Mehas, who also shared this vision. Arax said studies show smaller school districts have higher API scores and graduation rates. He believes Fresno Unified is simply too big and students are getting lost in the enormity of the system. He pointed to low minority API scores compared to their white peers as evidence. Arax and a coalition of people are promoting their message and collecting signatures in the community in hopes of building momentum and bringing the issue to a public vote.

4. 2015 Policy Platform

Continued until December because of time constraints.

5. Report Cards

Staff showed a rough draft of report cards for State and City elected leaders. In 2014, the GAC took a position on 48 proposed State bills. 18 of those were voted on the floor and are eligible for the report card. The GAC gave staff direction to omit HR 29 because it's a resolution, not a bill. AB 52 will also be omitted because of amendments made. The GAC opposed it prior to the amendments and never went back to review it. Cal Chamber switched its position to support and every Valley legislator supported it. City elected leaders will be scored on about 8 issues, depending on whether recent issues are voted on before the end of the year. The Chamber will use the final vote on BRT and omit the first draft vote. A revised version of 2014 report cards will be presented at the December GAC meeting.

ADJOURNED

- **Meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.**