Community Update: Benicia's Water Infrastructure and Conservation Efforts

Leadership, Safety, Reliability

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What is the Issue?

- California is in a severe drought.

- Benicia residents have been California leaders in water conservation, reducing water consumption by up to 43% - <u>thank you!</u>

- Benicia needs to continue:
  - Upgrading our aging water/sewer infrastructure
  - Implementing current technologies
  - Empowering our local water consumers to conserve even more
  - Building on our track record of success and continuing to set an example for other California cities

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How Can the City and Residents Continue to Save Water?

- A recent Grand Jury Report determined all Solano County cities – including Benicia – must work to fully comply with programs to:
  - Further water conservation efforts
  - Repair leaks in our aging infrastructure
  - Use modern, accurate reading water meters

- The City in 2015 has:
  - Addressed critical maintenance needs and decreased water waste
  - Completed an audit that has identified leaking, deteriorated pipes

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Where Does Benicia Get Its Water?

- Benicia gets nearly 85% percent of its water from the State Water Project. We simply cannot rely on water from the State.
  - In 2014, the City had to purchase water at a cost of nearly $900,000 when the State abruptly cut off Benicia's supply due to the severity of the drought.

- There is no guarantee whatsoever that Benicia residents will receive the water the State previously agreed to.

- Benicia must be able to:
  - Increase the reliability of our own local water supply
  - Be self-sufficient
  - Not be at the mercy of Sacramento.

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Is Benicia's Water & Sewer Infrastructure Safe?

- All cities in Solano County have old, deteriorating water infrastructure that continues to jeopardize:
  - Conservation efforts
  - The environment
  - Public safety services

- Significant segments of Benicia's water and sewer pipes are nearly 80 years old, and include outdated clay and asbestos cement pipes.

- We must ensure a secure, adequate water supply in the event of an earthquake, fire or catastrophic emergency and mitigate leaks and sewage spills.

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What Has the City Done to Address Water & Sewer Infrastructure Issues?

- The City continues to practice fiscal prudence to minimize ratepayer impact by:
  - Leveraging technology
  - Focusing on preventative maintenance
  - Maintaining proper treatment and purification of our water and wastewater
- The City can only focus on the most critical of water and sewer maintenance needs to fix leaks and prevent spills to keep the community safe.
- Aging infrastructure must continue to be maintained and upgraded for the health and safety of residents.

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What Has the City Done to Address Water & Sewer Infrastructure Issues? (cont.)

- As the State continues to change regulations required for cities' water and sewer systems, Benicia must meet these requirements to avoid costly fines and to keep the community safe.

- In 2014, Benicia:
  - Strengthened our Emergency Response Plan
  - Fixed over 100 water leaks
  - Increased the number of sewer lines being repaired and cleared of debris to prevent hazardous wastewater spills.

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Will water conservation efforts and infrastructure upgrades affect water and sewer rates?

- The City is currently undergoing a rate study to determine changes in water usage and consumer needs amid this historic drought and aging infrastructure that poses risks to the local conservation efforts, water reliability, public health and safety.

- The City will continue to update the community about effects on rates so our community can continue being a statewide leader in water conservation efforts.

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Didn't the City Recently Raise Water Rates?

- To conserve and protect Benicia's water supply, the City recently implemented a temporary drought surcharge:
  - Benicia had to buy water on the open market after the State withheld 95% of Benicia's promised supply.
- In addition to purchasing water, the temporary drought surcharge has helped the City:
  - Quickly identify and address wasteful leaks in our aging water system to protect local drinking supplies
  - Decrease water waste
  - Ensure water reliability in an emergency
- The drought surcharge will be eliminated in the coming months.

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More Information

- For more information visit the City's website at www.ci.benicia.ca.us (click on link to water/ wastewater rate study)
- Help us inform others about Benicia's Water Conservation and Infrastructure Efforts
- Do you belong to other groups that need this information? Let us know!

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QUESTIONS and DISCUSSION

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