

MINUTES NBCA Membership Meeting

Thursday, March 23 2023

Las Brisas condos

36 members total present, plus our speaker.

Board members present: Ron, Dolores, Michael, Carrie, Lynn, Bob, Denise (Manny & Tracy absent)

President Dr. Ron Graban calls meeting to order at 6:02 PM and introduces guest speaker:

At-Large City Councilman Dr. Jim Klein

Jim: A report on the Flint Hills Oils Spill from Dec 24 is coming. He is keeping an eye on that. He said that globs of a type of oil have been coming up on North Beach. If people are barefoot, we want to know if that is harmful or not. We don't know the exact toxicity. Carrie said it's called "paraffin" and that Flint Hills contractor crews have been on North Beach raking it up over the past several weeks.

Jim: Desalination is the reason I ran for City Council because I felt the city was rushing into it. The city has 2 locations for proposed desal plants - 1) Inner Harbor close to North Beach and 2) La Quinta Channel near Portland.

Port of CC has applied for a permit to build a plant at Harbor Island near Port A, which is being contested by an environmental group called Port Aransas Conservancy.

CC Polymers (formerly M&G) is under construction and already has a permit for desal in the Inner Harbor. The outfall (salty discharge) could change the salinity of the bay. City hired an environmental study to be done by Freese and Nichols, which determined that the environmental effects would be negligible, but nobody has looked at the *cumulative* effect of multiple desal plants and impact caused by other industries to the bay.

Other Desal Plants in the US

Tampa, FL and Carlsbad, CA - only other 2 desal plants in the US. This one would be the first one to be in a "closed bay system." It takes 1.8 years for the water to circulate out through Port A or Packery Channel passes. It's like we're leaping before we look.

Carlsbad CA has had a sharp spike in water rates. Lots of people here cannot afford to pay more for water. The plant in CA has shut down continually to service it. So desal is not a continuous, uninterrupted water source, which is what it's being sold to us as.

Tampa FL - 3 contractors have all gone bankrupt trying to build it. We need to not only look at the upfront costs to build, but the cost to run and to maintain a plant. It takes a lot of energy to push water through a membrane to make it fresh.

There are other alternatives. The Evangeline Aquifer - the people for that are saying that it could provide 15 million gallons of water per day. They say it would naturally recharge and last for 1,000 years cost \$5/ per thousand gallons. Desal \$7-\$9 per thousand gallons.

The city provides water to the region at about 95 million gallons per day. Evangeline would be 15% increase, which would allow for moderate growth in the region. The population has grown at an average of about 3% over the past 30 years. Recently the population here dropped.

Desal would allow 20 million gallons of water per day or more. Why do we need that much water? I'm presuming that means that they want to bring in more heavy industry that consumes a lot of water.

The new Exxon plant uses 15 million gallons per day; the entire region uses 95 million gallons per day.

Question - Shelley Krumnow - could they pipe the brine (waste product) out to the Gulf?

Jim: The Port's proposed plant at Harbor Island near Port A would be closer to the Gulf. City Council just voted to partner with the Port to develop desal and other water sources. Jim was one of 2 No votes. I

have no reason to trust the Port. I have a problem with desalination and this plan stated “desalination AND other water sources.” If it said “OR other water sources” I could have possibly supported it.

Lynn Frazier - The Port knows what they're doing. Pumping the brine out farther is good. The bay is very salty. So the Port's idea of pumping it out where the current is strong. If we leave it here [in the Inner Harbor], that will not work. It will destroy more species of fish in the bay.

Chuck Anderson - The bay is saltier now than it was. Salinity is going up because freshwater releases are down. (Chuck sells seafood for a living, so he knows about oysters and water salinity.) So adding more salt (via brine discharge) would be bad for the fish in the bay.

Barbara Baird - At the Whooping Crane Festival, there was literature about how bad of an idea this is. I read that it would impact the food of the endangered whooping crane.

MaryAnn Gill: There is a momentum to bring desal to this area. Why? Who's behind the momentum of the movement?

Jim: The Port has been pushing this. The REDC Regional Economic Development Corporation, which defines our economy as oil and gas, has been pushing it. It also hinges on the Dec 2015 federal decision to stop the ban on exporting oil/gas from the US, which increased the oil/gas shipped out of our port.

Industry has voluntarily been paying a 25 cents surcharge for every thousand gallons that they use. But they are exempt from all water restrictions that the rest of us are under. Industry uses 50% of the water, but they don't have to conserve.

Question: Can they sell the salt from the brine?

Jim: The market for that is very low. Carrie: the brine is not just salt, it's also contaminants from the bay that are already in the water and get concentrated as they remove them from the water.

What can we do?

Everyone has a chance to vote for your elected officials. Contact your City Council members. All emails and phone numbers are on the city's website at <https://www.cctexas.com/council-members>

Question: Ivy Young - If we had the Aquifer, why did we build the Mary Rhodes Pipeline and who is benefitting from that?

Jim: The Mary Rhodes allowed us to draw water from a different watershed. Most of our water comes from the Nueces River but the Mary Rhodes extension draws from Lake Texana..

Lynn Frazier - Caribbean Islands like Aruba and Tabago do desal. Seems like it's possible.

Jeff Bower - lives at Las Brisas but worked in Tampa Bay. We went through the whole desal process. We had a snail that blocked the discharge and caused problems. Desal was high cost and didn't make enough water for as many people as there are.

He was a leader of the Florida Water and Pollution Control Operators Association (The Water People) - volunteers from all aspects of water and water regulations.

Ron - Next month - April 20 - we'll have another meeting. Please donate to help pay for food, etc.

Carrie - How many are here because they saw the new signs? (several raised their hands)

Lynn - Dirt from bridge is available. Contact him if you own land and are interested.