

Tabletop Discussions Notes
Petaluma Valley Funding Options Community Workshop

General Notes, Comments, Ideas, Questions
EVERYONE PAYS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyone benefits from groundwater• Everyone should share in the pains and gains• Desire for equitable fees across basin
FUNDING OPTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complexity could have diminishing returns in Phase I• Charge fees for development (but impact fees are already high)• Want to see the county pay the most• Like qualifying of land use/water use/business use• Look at using per parcel initially (Phase I) for fast/easy money but then changing and readjusting later. Nothing set in stone.• Why not a fee per dwelling unit? + Commercial users• Tier rate for heavy users
RECHARGE/CONSERVATION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can we credit recharge?• Incentivize recycled water so people will use this instead of wells• Large lots with low water use are likely recharging more than they are using
OUTREACH SUGGESTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complex fee structure would need to be transparent• Felt like state intervention was a scare tactic• Marketing needs to emphasize everyone is affected• Need a better map• Explain how residents on city limits should be informed more and how they are also affected by this and affect others, as well• Hard to find where meeting was on website
LAND USE NOTES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commercial use should be highest tax, especially cannabis• Many farmers are dry-farming – ag needs to be looked at more specifically
PROGRAMMING <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop storage options, increasing storage capacity• Conservation emphasis/education

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OTHER COMMON THEMES

- If some of the charge is based on usage, it may take away the emotion of the issue
- “Taxes will go up over time because they always do”
- Finish study to figure out problem before charging fees
- We shouldn’t have to pay city back for money spent – agencies should absorb costs
- Should be based on use – metered use is ideal, but how is that possible?
- Want cap on budget for GSA

- “Bad development decisions in Rohnert Park”
- “Almond orchards in Central Valley – we should be entitled to that water”
- “This agency is never going away; it will be a continuing cost to someone”
- All different water sources should be measured
- City taking water from surface water or aquifer that could potentially go to basin for everyone to use. City should be charged for taking that surface water.
- Good to give everyone a voice
- Should go back to state, not local
- Consultants too high pay

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the pros and cons of distributing costs to all land owners in the groundwater basin on a per-parcel basis?

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City uses GW for emergencies/backup • Spreads the burden, responsibility equally – “We’re all in this together” – everyone uses water • Distribute across all boundaries (similar to how we all pay for Warm Springs Dam) • May get more expensive in the future, so having a wider base of payers will be helpful • We know what the parcels are • Not paying people to read meters • Dividing equally could lower costs for some • Simplest, easiest • Most equitable • Everyone enjoys agricultural scenery, open pastures, cows • Everyone can handle fee – affordable rates • Don’t know use, so can’t bill on use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85% of parcels are in cities – don’t use much GW • Doesn’t incentivize conservation • Don’t like to be taxed for anything I don’t use and vice versa • Not fair for small user to pay the same as large user – most inequitable • Not every parcel has a well/is a groundwater user, and a parcel could also have multiple wells • One 100-acre ranch could be 20 parcels • Parcels are different sizes • Could have drastically unfair results • Has to be voted on • Who is the collection agency? Cost/distribution agency? • Non-well owners will fight against charge

a. **Do the pros/cons change if the parcel charge is under \$20 a year? \$10 or less per year? NO** – the cost is not the issue

2. What are the pros and cons of distributing costs to all landowners in the basin on a per-acre basis?

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe more fair • This could work if there were a program for offsets • Need accommodation for ag – maybe a base rate • Benefit to residential • Less expensive for some (small parcels) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone can have large acreage but not use much water • Differences of land use could be significant, not accounted for • Doesn’t account for recharge • More unfair than per parcel, not a fair distribution of costs • Smaller parcels could have denser water use, large lots may not always use more • Could penalize rural/agricultural/farmers • Not fair to large landowners (dairy, farmers) • Don’t want to pit people against each other by different water use

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a. Do the pros/cons change if the charge is less than \$10 per acre? NO

3. Distributing costs to all landowners in the basin on a per-acre basis taking into account how they use their land as it relates to groundwater use (e.g. residents, farms, businesses)

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can account for different water use for different users • Force you to think about conservation • This is how it's done in the West typically (based on crop, mapping) • Better than just acreage w/o accounting for usage • Could be more fair (the problem itself is complicated) • Could also be per parcel • Takes into account business use of water • City of Petaluma included • Account for farming w/o irrigation, type of ag, storage basins • Land use data from satellites to help determine use • Better way to estimate than flat rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can change over the course of time • How does city deal with urbanized areas? • Not as good as straight parcel tax • Difficulty and expense of gathering data • Should have an incentive program for accounting for recharge – watering recharges groundwater, and large lots using little water are likely recharging more than they are using • Complicated • Per-acre con – city wells on small parcels • Where do you draw the line? How do you make sure it is fair? • Large cost to large lots – may not be affordable? • High management, legal challenges – “less government is better” • Use may not match zoning or actual water use • Account for good and bad land management of each use type

4. What are the pros and cons of distributing costs to all well owners in the basin?

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City could pay one bill for its wells • Pay for new growth (if new well owners have to pay) • Wouldn't be opposed if fees were diverted from WSD, which well owners don't use • “None” • Fair across all well owners if it is only owners and by well number 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would it be fair to charge people the same for such different wells and uses? Different capacities, etc. • Hits well owners hard – they would be motivated to stop it politically • Don't have the info on how many wells there are • Active vs. inactive wells; define “wells” • Majority of people in basin would not pay anything • The city wouldn't pay adequately • Not equitable, not distributed equitably

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No use measurement • Well owners carry all the cost • City wells – they would spread the costs out amongst the users • Some properties cycle well use
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a. Do the pros and cons change if we charge all well owners in the basin for the amount of water they pump?

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People think about how they use water (incentivizes conservation) • More fair • Based on usage • City will pay more • Equal distribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big users pay more • Hard to get measurements • You'd have to meter – high cost • Still targeting well owners • Well owners might be paying twice due to electricity use, meter costs, maintenance, well cost • Not fair to put all burden on country people and wells

b. Cities and water districts use groundwater, and have large wells. If we charge cities or water districts, what are the pros and cons of them passing those costs on to residents as part of their water bills?

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have to • City will pay more if usage-based • Pass on fee for well use • More fair to equal use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you know how much city uses in comparison to unmetered wells? • Not well dispersed among all people in city • How to meter/discover all wells

5. Is there a combination of options that you believe would be fair and equitable?

- i. Parcel tax + water usage – people who use a lot of water also need to be charged
- ii. Small well charge + usage based
- iii. Per parcel + per well

b. Is there one option of combination of options that you prefer?

- i. Per parcel charge preferred, particularly for Phase I – agreement from multiple groups – simplest, easiest to collect