



**BOISE, IDAHO  
COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
AGENDA**

July 28, 2020

4:00 PM

City Hall - Maryanne Jordan City Council Chambers

Virtual attendance is strongly encouraged. Please visit:

[www.cityofboise.org/virtual-meetings](http://www.cityofboise.org/virtual-meetings).

I. CALL TO ORDER

Pursuant to Idaho Code Section 74-204(4), all agenda Items are action items, and a vote may be taken on these items.

II. WORK SESSION ITEMS

1. **Introduction to Water Renewal Utility Plan (40 min)**  
Presenter: Steve Burgos, Public Works  
*ACTION REQUESTED:* Information Only
2. **Executive Session: Personnel, Land Acquisition, Records Exempt from Public Disclosure, Pending/Probable Litigation, Labor Contract, I.C. 74-206(1)(b)(c)(d)(f)(j)**

III. ADJOURNMENT



## PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

MAYOR: Lauren McLean | DIRECTOR: Stephan Burgos

# MEMO

**TO:** Mayor and Council  
**FROM:** Steve Burgos, Public Works Director  
**CC:** Courtney Washburn, Chief of Staff  
**DATE:** July 22, 2020  
**RE:** Introduction to Water Renewal Utility Plan

### INTRODUCTION

The Public Works Department's Water Renewal Services (WRS) is in the final stages of a multi-year planning effort dedicated to Boise's water renewal and recycled water future. Since 1949, all Boise's treated used water has been put in the Boise River just to flow downstream and out of our community. In 2017, WRS began the effort to consider what our water renewal future could look like if we prioritized local-level solutions, planned for water scarcity and balanced the values of our diverse and ever-growing community. Furthermore, we asked how that future accounts for changing pressures of regulations, rate affordability, infrastructure condition, capacity in our system and climate change.

The result of that effort is a recommended plan that integrates thousands of pieces of public input, technical evaluations of the possible options for renewed water, and comprehensive analyses of the regulatory, affordability and environmental implications. This recommendation, the **Water Renewal Utility Plan**, builds on our proven core competencies while reshaping Boise's water future.

The following memo provides background on how WRS has operated in the past, how we operate now, and what the future could look like if the recommended plan is approved. Finally, it will detail the ways in which the mayor, city council and the public will receive information and be able to provide feedback throughout this process. The mayor and city council involvement in this final stage is critical in providing feedback and decisions in key areas including **advancing our approach to managing end products like renewed water, maintenance and replacement of current infrastructure and funding models for how we pay** for the recommended plan.

Attachment: Introduction Memo (Introduction to Water Renewal Utility Plan)

## WHAT WE WERE

Boise's water history hasn't always been as pristine as it is today. The City of Boise's Water Renewal Services functioned as many sewer utilities did prior to understanding water quality issues. Prior to the 1950s, raw sewage was collected and discharged directly to the river. Industry lined the banks of the river, there was no Greenbelt and no Whitewater Park. The river was environmentally deteriorating thus making it a far cry from the pristine body our residents cherish today.

It was at this time that the city began to look for innovative solutions to update and improve its wastewater treatment processes and facilities. The dire condition of the river and the increased interest from the public to preserve it was the first major pivot of what we now call Water Renewal Services. In the fall of 1947, the League of Women Voters started an initiative for a bond election to fund Boise's first wastewater treatment facility. It passed, and starting in 1950, used water was piped to and treated at what was then our singular treatment facility, Lander Street. After treatment, cleaner water was discharged into the Boise River thus marking a significant shift in the health of the river. This was done well before passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, providing an early example of Boiseans' willingness to invest in improved environmental outcomes.

## WHAT WE ARE

Water Renewal Services is the city's utility responsible for renewing more than 10 billion gallons of used water per year. From the shower to the kitchen sink and toilet, from homes to businesses, large industry to hospitals and schools, every drop of used water travels through some of the more than 900 miles of underground pipes to one of two water renewal facilities. The utility manages its collection from Boise's users and renews that water to a high level before discharging it into the Boise River. Throughout the process, Water Renewal Services operates as an efficient, reliable and cost-effective utility.

Water Renewal Services operates five total facilities to support the management, collection and renewal of used water from our community. At the two water renewal facilities located in West Boise and Lander Street, all of Boise's used water is collected and sent through a complex treatment process before it is released into the Boise River. Treatment of used water is regulated by state and national governing bodies. Water Renewal Services also owns and operates the Dixie Drain Phosphorus Removal Facility, an innovative solution to help reduce the levels of phosphorus in the Boise River, as well as the Twenty Mile South Farm where biosolids from the community's used water are applied as fertilizer to grow crops for local animals.

Today, Water Renewal Services has become an example of the transition in wastewater management from one focused solely on treatment and discharge to one integrating the reuse of water and recovery of valuable products from used water. Yearlong and seasonal renewal solutions like those at the Twenty Mile South Farm and Dixie Drain, as



well as short-term pilot projects like the Pure Water Brew Boise Project are steps toward a more sustainable utility. But we've learned through our outreach process that our residents continue to expect more for the future.

In order to prepare and proactively manage for the future, Water Renewal Services embarked on the planning process that comprises the Water Renewal Utility Plan. The recommended plan supports community expectations of the utility and the broader goals for the city.

## WHAT WE COULD BE

The Water Renewal Utility Plan represents a significant evolution in resource management for our community. The plan recommends pairing traditional wastewater management with innovative, sustainable solutions to the challenges we face. The opportunity to keep a certain amount of clean, renewed water in our community is a method to build resiliency and prepare for water scarcity rather than sending all that water downstream. As vocalized consistently in feedback, our community seeks more from its water. Boiseans want to use their water again, in different applications. They want the city to prepare for uncertain events and times of scarcity. By adopting this plan, the city can set the course for scalability of more or less recycled water as conditions and community opinion change and evolve. It also allows us to explore local-level options, something not available when our renewed water was flowing downstream.

The utility plan also acknowledges that the existing system is aging and will need significant attention in the coming years. We heard from our community that proactive and prudent management of our existing system is a high priority. This plan sets a course for sustained reinvestment in our existing system so that we can ensure it provides the collection and treatment to effectively protect the river and the environment.

In the utility plan, we developed recommendations based on community input on the various ways we can use renewed water in our community for applications that make sense as well as proactively reinvest in our existing infrastructure. The City of Boise has the opportunity to be a leader in sustainable solutions to water renewal and recycled water, and we are excited to share with you the ideas from our community and the recommended approach to get there.

## WHAT WE NEED FROM CITY COUNCIL

For three years, Boiseans have been providing feedback on the Water Renewal Utility Plan to help shape the recommendation we will provide to city council. Experienced technical teams have evaluated the possibilities and created projects that can be implemented in tandem, explored cost-saving measures and reviewed risks and benefits of each potential portfolio of options. This comprehensive analysis resulted in a



recommendation that Water Renewal Services believes reflects the diverse views and values of the community. The plan can be scaled based on changing conditions and deliberately considers how to balance innovation with affordability concerns. The resulting recommended plan is truly a plan for our community, built by our community.

In the coming weeks, city council will be presented with the components of the Water Renewal Utility Plan in memo format. Beginning on August 4 and for the subsequent five weeks, city council will receive a weekly memo with details comprising the major components of the Water Renewal Utility Plan including:

- Infrastructure Condition + Capacity
- Climate Change + Regulatory
- Community Engagement + Expectations
- Financial Capacity + Affordability
- Recommended Approach

These memos will offer specific details that make up the utility plan, each of which has specific infrastructure projects and investment implications. In order to move this forward to implementation, we'll be asking city council to provide guidance on three key policy questions.

1. **Should the city proactively and prudently invest in infrastructure to address capacity needs, system degradation and growing regulatory requirements to prevent system failures?**

The Water Renewal Utility Plan has identified substantial investment needs to replace aging infrastructure. This replacement is required to plan for needed capacity for a growing community and to meet increasingly stringent regulatory requirements.

2. **Should Boise optimize the management of resources to include recycled water?**

The Water Renewal Utility Plan is recommending a significant evolution in the management of resources, which will notably include pursuing the use of recycled water in parts of the city to address the effects of climate change and water scarcity. This new approach will also include investing in projects that enhance water quality and habitat for the Boise River to ensure continued improvement for decades.

3. **Should the utility continue exploring alternative methods of financing projects and consider changes to our business model and cost structure?**

The Water Renewal Utility Plan is comprised of reinvestment in existing infrastructure and new methods for managing the utility. However, with a growing community, additional regulatory pressures and higher expectations



from the community, the plan represents a significant investment and new financing approaches may be needed to ensure that projects can be completed while taking into account affordability.

City council will be asked to review the memos and presentations, provide feedback and offer questions to the above policy questions in two public work sessions (**August 18 and September 1**).

Boise residents will also have the opportunity and be encouraged to review the information and provide comments and feedback. More information, as well as the memos and opportunity for comment will be available [here](#).

If you have questions or feedback about the process, please contact:

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Haley Falconer, Environmental Division Sr Manager  
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