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Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
1/11/2018	1	City Council	approved	

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

January 11, 2018

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SUBJECT

Approve Revised Five Year Underground Utility District Plan (Located City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Council approve the revised Five Year Underground Utility District Plan (Exhibit "A").

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) Rule 20A requires that Pacific Gas and

Electric (PG&E) allocate funds for the underground placement of existing overhead electrical facilities. Cities and Counties determine the specific locations of utility undergrounding projects through formation of Underground Utility Districts (Districts) and adoption of Five Year District Plans. Exhibit "A" is the recommended Five Year Underground Utility District Plan that facilitates the orderly and planned use of the future allocation of these PG&E funds.

The proposed revisions will update the current Five-Year Plan (Exhibit "B") that was last adopted by Council on June 25, 2015. The proposed revisions omit three Districts which have been completed and closed out, revise the scheduling for four Districts which have been formed by Council, revise the scheduling for two Districts which have not yet been formed by Council, and will add two Districts to the plan.

BACKGROUND

Commission Rule 20A requires that PG&E allocate funds for the underground placement of existing overhead electrical facilities. These funds accrue to PG&E from all rate payers as part of their monthly bill and are strictly reserved for the conversion of overhead facilities in approved Districts. Specific Districts are formed by City Council action at noticed public hearings using criteria established by Commission Rule 20A:

1. Such undergrounding will avoid or eliminate an unusually heavy concentration of overhead electric facilities;
2. The street or road or right-of-way is extensively used by the general public and carries a heavy volume of pedestrian or vehicular traffic;
3. The street or road or right-of-way adjoins or passes through a civic area or public recreation area or an area of unusual scenic interest to the general public;
4. The street or road or right-of-way is considered an arterial street or major collector as defined in the Governor's Office of Planning and Research General Plan Guidelines.

The recommended Five Year District Plan, Exhibit "A", will facilitate orderly and planned use of the City's future allocation of these funds. It represents collaboration with impacted utilities (phone, cable TV, City traffic,) wherein each of these utility companies funds their own cost to convert the various services to underground. The Plan may be revised or updated by the Council as needed.

The proposed Five Year Underground Utility District Plan is consistent with the goals of the Fresno General Plan.

The proposed revisions will update the current Five-Year Plan (Exhibit "B") that was last adopted by Council on June 25, 2015. The changes are summarized below:

- The proposed revisions will omit three Districts which have been completed and closed out:
 - a. FRE-77 (Peach Avenue between Belmont Avenue and Kings Canyon Rd.)
 - b. FRE-92 (Willow Avenue s/o Nees Avenue and Nees Avenue w/o Willow Avenue)

c. FRE-93 (Nees Avenue between Maple and Hayston Avenues)

- The proposed revision will revise the scheduling for four Districts which have been formed by Council:

- a. FRE-69 (Ventura Avenue between “H” Street and FWY 99)
- b. FRE-84 (Blackstone Avenue between Shields and Belmont Avenues)
- c. FRE-85 (Belmont Avenue between FYW 41 and Chestnut Avenue)
- d. FRE-94 (Abby Avenue between Belmont and Hedges Avenues)

- The proposed revision will revise the scheduling for two Districts which have not yet been formed by Council:

- a. FRE-80 (North Avenue between Cherry and Orange Avenues)
- b. FRE-95 (Ashlan Avenue between Fruit and Arthur Avenues)

- The proposed revisions will add two new Districts to the plan, which are closely tied to a proposed City capital improvement project for curbs, gutters, sidewalks, bike lanes and trail improvements along the perimeter major streets:

- a. FRE-96 (The block surrounded by Church and Walnut Avenues, Grove Avenue Alignment and Martin Luther King Blvd)
- b. FRE-97 (The block surrounded by Grove Avenue Alignment, Walnut and Jensen Avenues and Martin Luther King Blvd)

By approval of the Plan, the Council is preliminarily agreeing to fund the City’s costs associated with modifying public facilities that will receive underground service. These City costs are generally included within Council-approved capital improvement projects for streetlight conversion from wooden poles to permanent steel poles fed by underground service. Once the Five-Year Plan is approved, staff will begin the District formation proceedings and PG&E will finalize the estimate for the City’s share of costs to participate in the District. Staff will return to the Council to present an action item to form new District’s in situations where the District has not yet been formed.

After PG&E undergrounds the overhead facilities, the individual property owners must convert their electrical service panel boxes from overhead service to underground service. The cost for this work in the past has been the responsibility of the property owner. However, the Commission has revised its policy to allow the cost of the conversion for each property owner to be a cost covered by the allocated funds from the Rule 20A. City policy is now to utilize Rule 20A funds for these panel conversions. In the case of City facilities, this may entail conversion of electrical services for traffic signals and street lights. Due to the potential impact of these conversion costs on City operating budgets, staff has traditionally recommended the formation of District’s where the street lighting conversion cost can be funded through capital improvement projects. The major cost to the City could involve:

1. Removal of street lights from wooden poles.
2. Installation of new street lights.
3. Installation of new underground electrical circuits for the street lights and traffic signals.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

By the definition provided in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15378 this item does not qualify as a “project” as defined by CEQA.

LOCAL PREFERENCE

Local preference was not implemented because approving the revised Five Year Underground Utility District Plan does not include a bid or an award of a construction or services contract.

FISCAL IMPACT

There will be no impact to the City's General Fund. Rule 20A undergrounding costs are funded by the Commission program and do not utilize any other City funding source. City capital costs will be included in capital improvement projects through the annual budget process.

Attachments:

Proposed 5 Year Plan (Exhibit A)

Existing 5 Year Plan June 25, 2015 (Exhibit B)

Vicinity Map (Exhibit C)