



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: May 23, 2023

DATE: May 3, 2023

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Timber Weiss, P.E., Licensed Engineer, Engineering & Capital Projects, Community Services Dept, 954-4626, tweiss@washoecounty.gov

THROUGH: Dwayne Smith, P.E., Division Director, Engineering and Capital Projects Community Services Dept., 328-2043, desmith@washoecounty.gov

SUBJECT: Recommendation to adopt Resolution R23-64 for the Golden Valley Artificial Recharge Program to temporarily pause monthly payments beginning June 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023, to allow for additional public outreach and allow for a community-driven determination of the future of the Golden Valley Artificial Recharge Program. [Reductions in Program rate revenues are estimated at \$13,551.00 in Fiscal Year 23 and \$81,304.00 in Fiscal Year 24]. The Golden Valley Artificial Recharge Program is a program established through ordinance to assist with groundwater recharge within the Golden Valley subbasin in support of domestic well users located within this portion of Unincorporated Washoe County. Community Services. (Commission District 5.) FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

SUMMARY

Washoe County staff is requesting that the Board of Commissioners (Board) approve and adopt Resolution R23-64, to temporarily pause the required monthly service fee under Ordinance 1548 that applies to all properties within the Golden Valley Artificial Recharge Program (Program), beginning in June 2023 through the remainder of calendar year 2023. Approval of this resolution will provide time to continue to work with the Program customers to continue the community-driven analysis and input process in support of the determination of the Program's future. Community surveying, meetings and a workshop will be done in June 2023, and it is anticipated that these efforts will culminate in a customer driven recommendation that will be provided to the Board in the fall of 2023.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Fiscal Sustainability:
Long-term sustainability.

PREVIOUS ACTION

On November 12, 2014, the Board adopted Ordinance 1548, adopting Washoe County requirements and schedule of rates, tolls, and charges for the Golden Valley Artificial

AGENDA ITEM # _____

Recharge Program within Washoe County by providing for rates, payments, procedures, and their enforcement relating to conditions of service, exemptions and appeal procedures.

On June 25, 2002, the Board adopted Ordinance 1166, adopting a schedule of rates and charges for the provision of artificial recharge water service in Golden Valley, establishing Washoe County to submit billings to all water users within the Golden Valley area and requiring payment thereof, and providing procedures for its enforcement.

BACKGROUND

The Program initially began as a pilot program in the 1990s, funded by the United States Bureau of Reclamation, to inject potable water into the Golden Valley aquifer to combat declining groundwater levels. As the pilot study ceased artificial recharge in 1997, the Golden Valley community requested Washoe County adopt this pilot study and convert it to a rate-funded program. The Washoe County-managed Program began in 2002 under Ordinance 1166, assessing a monthly fee to property owners within Golden Valley in exchange for artificial recharge service, monitoring efforts, permit management, and project management.

Washoe County operated the program as directed under Ordinance 1166, then under Ordinance 1548 after its acceptance by the Board in 2014. All Program features were operated as directed until 2015, when monitoring efforts found a dramatic increase in water levels in a particular area within Golden Valley. The injection of potable water into the aquifer ceased in April 2016 while all other Program features continued, including the assessment of the monthly fee. All Program features, aside from the artificial recharge, are still in action.

During the pilot study phase of the Program, water levels within Golden Valley appeared to rise consistently with artificial recharge activity. Between 1997 and 2002, when artificial recharge halted due to the end of the pilot study funding and the restart of the Program under Washoe County management, water levels within Golden Valley quickly dropped. When the artificial recharge activity halted in April 2016, water levels continued to rise in many parts of Golden Valley. While it was expected that water levels would lower as a response to the ceasing of injection, this continuation of rise in water levels caused concern and raised questions about the real impacts of the Program on the Golden Valley aquifer and other hydrological influences on the aquifer.

Washoe County hosted five public outreach meetings throughout the spring of 2022 through the spring of 2023, in efforts to inform the Golden Valley community about the Program and acquire customer input on the future direction of the Program. Approximately 70 - 80 Program customers were present at each of the public meetings. Washoe County collected written and verbal input from public meeting attendees and cataloged the input into suggestions for future direction of the Program and its value.

Simultaneously, in 2022, Washoe County contracted with a professional engineering firm tasked with the hydrological and geological analysis of the current conditions within the Golden Valley aquifer and provide a predictive scientific model for the aquifer. Washoe County staff presented a Program update to the Board in March 2023 and certain

members of the Board expressed concern that not all Golden Valley community members were given the opportunity to provide their input for the direction of the Program, and additional public outreach will be needed to reflect the interest of the Golden Valley community more accurately. Initial surveys were distributed to all Golden Valley community members, and returned responses indicated that additional public outreach and education would be beneficial which will lead to the best recommendations to the Board, anticipated in the fall of 2023. Washoe County staff will continue to engage with the Golden Valley community and acquire additional input to support a community-driven approach to support the modification of Ordinance 1548.

FISCAL IMPACT

Should the Board approve adoption of Resolution R23-64 to temporarily remove the program monthly fee from June 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, reduction in revenues of \$13,551 for the remainder of FY23 and \$81,304 in FY24 will be realized in the Utilities Fund (566), Golden Valley Recharge Operations (664300), Water-Metered (491000). Program expenses will exceed revenues; however, the Program fund has sufficient operating cash of \$750,804 as of April 30, 2023.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Board of County Commissioners adopt Resolution R23-64 for the Golden Valley Artificial Recharge Program to temporarily pause monthly payments beginning June 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023, to allow for additional public outreach and allow for a community-driven determination of the future of the Golden Valley Artificial Recharge Program. [Reductions in Program rate revenues are estimated at \$13,551.00 in Fiscal Year 23 and \$81,304.00 in Fiscal Year 24].

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be: "Move to adopt Resolution R23-64 for the Golden Valley Artificial Recharge Program to temporarily pause monthly payments beginning June 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023, to allow for additional public outreach and allow for a community-driven determination of the future of the Golden Valley Artificial Recharge Program. [Reductions in Program rate revenues are estimated at \$13,551.00 in Fiscal Year 23 and \$81,304.00 in Fiscal Year 24]."