

SACWSD – Water Hardness Advisory Committee (HAC)
Public Meetings
Nov. 28 & 29, 2017

Nov. 28th - Commerce City Recreation Center
Nov. 29th - Second Creek Elementary School

Summary of Comments

Members of the South Adams County Water and Sanitation District's (SACWSD) Water Hardness Advisory Committee (HAC) convened two public meetings (one south, one north) to gather feedback and input from the public on a possible pellet softening central treatment option.

The meeting began with a presentation from SACWSD, General Manager, Jim Jones. Mr. Jones provided background information on: SACWSD history, boundaries, comparison of rates, and comparison of water hardness with similar metro area water districts; HAC composition, options they looked at, and a possible treatment option; and the pellet softening central treatment process, costs, pros and cons.

Following the presentation and clarifying questions, participants broke into small groups to give their feedback directly to HAC members who were leading small groups and taking notes on flipcharts.

The following is a summary of all comments over the two nights. The meetings were not intended to take a "vote" or poll. The intent was to gather input from the community on whether and why they supported or did not support central treatment as a way to address hardness in the water, and the pellet system specifically. This information will inform the HAC's final discussion (Dec. 5, 2017) to build agreement on a recommendation to the SACWSD Board.

Positives or Reasons for Support of a Central Treatment option

- Water we pay for should be usable (drinkable).
- If centrally treated, it decreases do-it-yourself (DIY) costs for equipment, maintenance, appliance replacement, bottled water, special soaps, etc.
- Better for appliance upkeep over time.
- Better that the District treats the water, than a homeowner has to figure out, buy and manage an in-home system.
- Want softer water from the District.
- If central treatment is the right answer, pellet softening looks to be the best option.
- The cost increase is a concern, but acceptable for the benefit of treated water.

Concerns or Reasons for Not Supporting a Central Treatment option

- Too expensive - difficult for those on fixed income, and if done it will be combined with an inflation increase as well, too much.
- Don't need it, water is fine – tastes fine.

- Don't need it, water is fine – no significant health impacts (meets EPA health regulations).
- Many already have and spent money on their own softening systems.
- This is a preference problem only (not health based), adjusting the water is the homeowners responsibility.
- Don't like forcing water chemistry and cost on residents; will lose personal control over water with in-home system.
- Concerned about possible sloughing off of build up in pipes due to the change in water chemistry
 - *NOTE: In the meeting information was provided about corrosiveness test results of the treated water – it is no more corrosive than current water; also information was provided about why Tuscon, AZ softened water caused sloughing – they softened water to “very soft” (0-75 mg/l) which is much lower than the SACWSD water would be after treatment (115 mg/l) therefore no sloughing is expected.*
- Concerned about TENORM (technologically enhanced naturally occurring radioactive materials).
 - *NOTE: In the meeting, information was provided about test result of the treated water for TENORM/possible hazardousness of the pellets – the pellets had no hazardous characteristics, no noticeable levels of TENORM.*

Suggestions to Address some Concerns

- Provide a way to offset the increase for those on a fixed income
- Provide a waiver/rebate for those who invested in in-home softeners

APPENDIX A: Notes from Public Meeting - November 28, 2017 – Commerce City Recreation Center (south)

16 people (+1 Board, +8 HAC) – 2 small group discussions

Nov. 28th - Group 1 Notes

Positives

- If do central treatment, pellet looks to be the best
- More healthy in that, without central treatment if a person is thirsty and they ran out of bottled water they are more apt to drink soda or juice
- Water we pay for should be usable (drinkable)
- It is needed
- Lowers the do-it-yourself (DIY) costs
- Difficult for some to transport potable water (bottled water)
- DIY treatment costs are costly for a personal softener
- Want treatment; was concerned about sloughing off of build up in pipes, but sounds like that is not expected to happen
- Water as-is has health concerns

Concerns/Do not prefer Central Treatment

- Adjusting the water is the home owners responsibility
- Many have already spent money on their own softening systems
- Don't need central treatment, already have a home softener
- The survey should not drive decisions, too small a number surveyed
- If central treatment is implemented for the greater good, what do we do for people who have softeners?
- Water bills will never go down, they will always increase
- Concerned about the accuracy for the monthly cost
- Concerned about possible sloughing off of build up in pipes due to the change in water chemistry
- Concerned about TENORM
- Too expensive
- Fairness – how will the increase be fair to those who already spent money to take care of their own needs (DIY softeners)
- SUGGESTION: Provide a waiver for those who recently invested in more expensive home softeners.
 - Could the increase be less for those who already bought a softener?
- SUGGESTION: Mitigate the rate increase for central treatment for those on fixed incomes

Questions

- Need to know if treatment is necessary due to growth

Other SACWSD Issues

- It is unfair that some areas have more Denver water (north), while others seem bypassed

Nov. 28th - Group 2 Notes

Positives/Want Central Treatment

- It would decrease do-it-yourself (DIY) costs – equipment, appliance life costs, maintenance, etc.
- Would decrease some health impacts, like skin irritation
- Better to decrease hardness than not do it
- Better for appliance wear and tear to do central treatment
- Will be cheaper to treat centrally, than costs for DIY
- Like the funding mechanism if the treatment option is implemented – Flat fee based rather than consumption based

Concerns/Do not want Central Treatment

- Too expensive, particularly for those on fixed income
- Too expensive, will be combined with an inflation increase as well
- Water is fine, don't need it
- Concerned about water management - concerned there will be additional fees in the future

Other SACWSD Concerns

- Storm water tax – not fair to have the extra tax in unincorporated areas

APPENDIX B: Notes from Public Meeting - November 29, 2017 – Second Creek Elementary School (north)

19 people (+2 Board, +5 HAC) – 2 small group discussions

Nov. 29th - Group 1 Notes

(One resident in this group also attended the Nov.28 public meeting)

Positives/Want Central Treatment

- Better for appliance upkeep
- Better that the Districts treats the water, than a home owner has to figure out and buy a system
- Want softer water

Concerns/Do not want Central Treatment

- Concerned about growth
- Safety of softer water on plants, grass, etc.

- This is being forced on people
- This should be a homeowner's decision for taste or appliances, etc. (*commenter made similar comment on 11/28*)
- Survey results on costs of DIY seem high (one resident spends less than \$5 a month on salt for their system) (*commenter made similar comment on 11/28*)
- The cost of increase of salt in the water
- Don't need to have it treated (it is fine)
- There is more personal control with individual in-home systems
- This is not a health issue, not needed for health reasons; it is an aesthetic/preference issue (*commenter made similar comment on 11/28*)
- SUGGESTION: Provide a rebate for those who installed their own system? (*commenter made similar comment on 11/28*)
- SUGGESTION: Spend funds on improving the waste treatment facility to take more DIY discharge

Other SACWSD Concerns

- Chlorine smell sensitivity

Nov. 29th - Group 2 Notes

Positives/Want Central Treatment

- Treatment is needed, and the cost is ok
- Cost is a concern, but acceptable
- Water quality is poor, doing nothing is not an option
- Must do something
- Good not to have to deal with softening the water oneself
- Spending too much on DIY things, including special soaps, adding vinegar to dishwasher, systems, etc.
- The extra sodium is a concern, but since it is not more or significantly more than an DIY system it is ok
- Concerned about leaching from pipes, but since the water is not expected to be very soft the leaching is not expected, so it is ok
- Concerned about magnesium, iron and lead, but since the levels are expected to be low, the system is ok
- If no central treatment and with projected growth, there would be a cost increase to address increase in DIY system discharges in the waste treatment facility; would prefer a cost increase to have softer water than address treatment facility needs from DIY systems.

Concerns/Do not want Central Treatment

- Treatment system failure would effect all water
- Life capacity of this system and the resulting cost increases to replace infrastructure
- Possible sloughing, corrosivity