

Utility Undergrounding Advisory Committee
Joe LaCava, Chair

Minutes

Friday, July 18, 2014, 8:30 am – 10:30 am

Committee Chambers (12th Floor), City Administration Building
202 C Street, San Diego, California

For information:

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Purpose of the Committee per Resolution 308721: "Undergrounding Committee shall advise the City Council on (1) how the City may better implement the program to minimize community concerns related to the installation of utility equipment, including above ground utility boxes, while undertaking undergrounding projects, and (2) how the City, community, and utility companies could improve communication in implementing the goals of the Program"

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joe LaCava, Chair

David Moty

Vicki Granowitz

Bobby Johnston

Charles Angyal

Thomas Hebrank

Ian Stewart, SDG&E Representative

Jonathan Woldemariam, SDG&E

Representative

Ileana Engel, Cox Communications

Joe Gabaldon, Time Warner Cable

Ignacio De La Torre, AT&T

CITY STAFF/REPRESENTATIVES: Council President Todd Gloria, Molly Chase, Ralph Dimarucut, Hasan Yousef.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Joe LaCava called the meeting to order at 8:33 am and proceeded with introductions. Council President Gloria welcomed the committee, thanked members for serving, and spoke to the purpose of the committee.
2. **NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT:** None
3. **COMMITTEE COMMENT:** None
4. **CITY STAFF COMMENT:** None
5. **CITY ATTORNEY COMMENT:** None/not present.
6. **UTILITY PERSPECTIVE:** Information Item.
Jonathan Woldemariam presented a Power Point put together by SDG&E that explained issues and concerns related to full sub-surface transformers, specifically related to safety and maintenance issues. Danny Haburn, Distribution Apparatus Manager from Southern California Edison, presented next. Both presentations are included in supplemental materials for the purpose of reference materials.

Committee Member Comment: Ignacio De La Torres from AT&T followed up the presentations by pointing out that there was a theme of concern around safety and reliability on behalf of the Utility Companies when discussing placing equipment sub-surface. Ileana Engel from Cox Communications indicated that the surcharge program does not cover Cox Communications. Joe Gabaldon, Time Warner Cable, indicated that the process is evolving and Time Warner Cable has worked hard to reduce overall numbers of pedestals in a community but the focus is simplicity and reliability.

Public Comment: Don Taylor, Kensington, said there cannot be a one size fits all approach when we are talking about older residential neighborhoods such as Kensington. Don Rosencrantz, Kensington, insisted that other cities such as San Francisco have done undergrounding successfully. Erin Mackinnon, University Heights, introduced herself and let the committee know that the University Heights Community Association wants to make sure they have a voice in the process and transformer placement.

7. LABOR PERSPECTIVE: Information Item.

Chet Bennett, Business Representative for IBEW Local 47, spoke about his experience as a Journeyman Lineman for 43 years and the safety concerns he has for his workers. He spoke about the effect of the pressure and the heat on workers in confined spaces in underground vaults.

Committee Member Comment: Joe La Cava reminded the committee that the first three meetings are meant to be informational. Bobby Johnston requested copies of the presentations and indicated he would like to see more of an effort to create designs that reflect with the area. David Moty asked about the differences between transformers, switches, and fuse cabinets as well as how many circuits were typical in an undergrounding project. David Moty also asked what the problem has been in terms of avoiding the right-of way. Ian Stewart responded that in alley situations they have encountered problems with first responders who have issues with access. David Moty then asked if there was a preference between aerial and pad mount. Jonathan Woldemariam responded that aerial systems are much easier to work on but they understand the desire for undergrounding, to which Ignacio De La Torrey, Ileana Engel, and Joe Gabaldon agreed. Vicki Granowitz indicated she felt conversation was missed about placement above ground because of a focus on full sub surface. Tom Hebrank asked what was being paid for by surcharge. Rick Gardner, SDG&E, and Hasan Yousef, City of San Diego, began to go through the different programs. However, Molly Chase responded that the surcharge program would be explained in the next meeting by the City of San Diego. Tom Hebrank referenced Ileana's statement that post Talmadge they could reduce 30-40% the number of transformers necessary and asked if that was true for the other utility companies. Ignacio said that AT&T has reduced the size of the conduit and Jonathan indicated that SDG&E has found people are using more electricity and is trying to optimize their equipment.

Charles Angyal said it would be nice to have community perspective. Joe La Cava ended the discussion by stating that it was not the task of the committee to look at the pace of undergrounding.

Public Comment: Don Rosencrantz, Kensington, did not want to argue against good safety practices but stressed his belief that full sub surface undergrounding could take place.

8. ADJOURN TO NEXT REGULAR MEETING: August 15, 2014.
The meeting was adjourned by Chair LaCava at 10:31 am.