



AGENDA INFORMATION SHEET

DEPARTMENT: City Manager's Office

CM: Sara Hensley

DATE: September 19, 2023

SUBJECT

Receive a report, hold a discussion, and give staff direction on pending City Council requests for:

- 1) Request for a work session for the creation of a comprehensive program for public hydration stations (exterior water fountains and bottle fillers), with an initial short-term goal of tripling the number of stations across Denton.

BACKGROUND

On June 23 and 24, 2023, Council conducted its annual retreat where discussions focused on governance challenges and policy development. During the retreat, Council discussed options to improve the current 2-minute pitch process (as outlined in Section 2-30 of the Code of Ordinances), specifically focusing on the current allowance within the code for a policy recommendation to proceed directly from a pitch to consideration of a resolution or ordinance without first being discussed in a work session. Council gave direction to modify the pitch process so that a supermajority of the City Council must provide direction for any 2-minute policy pitch to proceed directly from a pitch to consideration of a resolution or ordinance. The attached ordinance reflects this change in Section 2-30(c)(3).

On July 18, 2023, the City Council considered the ordinance and with Council Member Watts absent, the ordinance was not adopted by a vote of 3-3. In accordance with the Council Rules of Procedure, this item was then brought forward for consideration when the full City Council was in attendance and the process was formally adopted at the July 25, 2023, City Council meeting (**Exhibit 2**).

Staff will review one outstanding request for information per elected official during each work session. The weekly work session process will include staff introducing the requested topic followed by the requesting elected official having up to two minutes to describe and justify their request. The remaining elected officials will then have up to one minute to provide feedback and indicate their support for the use of staff time to respond to the request. Staff will respond to all requests where a consensus of at least four elected officials is established. To the extent possible, responses will be provided in the requested format including Informal Staff Reports, Legal Status Reports, City Council work session topics, or ordinances and resolutions to be considered on future City Council agendas. The Agenda Committee will assist in scheduling items receiving consensus based upon priority offered by Council Members, work session availability, and readiness of the item depending upon the total number of staff hours needed to develop, and the departments involved.

As guidelines for Council Members to note and offer their priority while supporting an item, the following general categorization could indicate any Council Member's support to assist staff and the Agenda Committee. The following considers the item's perceived urgency, impact, and/or importance. It is a general

framework only to help offer some prioritization, especially in consideration of other scheduled Council priorities, major goals and projects, and scheduled work.

- **High** – Time sensitivity of the item is significant; the item is critical to the community or organization; and/or the item is of such importance that it should take precedence over other scheduled priorities, projects, or items.
- **Moderate** – The item is somewhat time-sensitive; the item has a valuable impact to the community or organization; and/or the item is important but should be integrated into work plans accordingly.
- **Low** – The item is not time-sensitive; the item has an impact, but it is limited; and/or the item should be scheduled into work plans where possible but should not affect or delay other scheduled work.

The following items will be discussed during this work session:

1) Request for a work session for the creation of a comprehensive program for public hydration stations (exterior water fountains and bottle fillers), with an initial short-term goal of tripling the number of stations across Denton.

a. *Requestor:* Mayor Pro Tem Beck

b. *Council Member Request:* “I am proposing a work session for the creation of a comprehensive program for public hydration stations (exterior water fountains & bottle fillers), with an initial short-term goal of tripling the number of stations across Denton. A successful initiative would be designed to address multiple critical aspects of our community, including public health, disaster resilience, economic development, and community engagement. By establishing a network of hydration stations throughout our city, we can provide a myriad of benefits to our residents while promoting a sustainable and healthier Denton.

Rationale:

1. *Emergency Preparedness:* Such a program would help ensure that during extreme weather events, such as droughts or heatwaves, our residents and unhoused population have reliable access to clean drinking water, reducing the risk of dehydration, heat-related illnesses, and the expense of emergency response calls. With climate changes, communities across the country are beginning to adapt by reversing decades long loss trends in order to return to more resilient public infrastructure.
2. *Community Engagement:* By increasing our offering of free access to drinking water during festivals and community events, we promote inclusivity and encourage participation, making Denton an even more vibrant and welcoming place to live and visit.
3. *Business Incentives:* I am proposing that we explore offering various incentives to businesses to encourage them to participate in this initiative. These incentives could include hydration station maintenance support, tax & fee offsets (including TIRZ leveraged funding in appropriate districts), marketing opportunities, and recognition for their commitment to sustainability. By partnering with local businesses, we can expand the network of hydration stations and ensure exterior public water access across broader distributions of Denton.

Economic Development Advantages:

- Offering free drinking water through public hydration stations can attract more visitors and tourists to Denton, stimulating local businesses and driving economic growth. This particularly aligns with revitalization goals being developed in the Downtown Master Plan.
- Businesses that participate in the program can enhance their public image by promoting sustainability and community engagement, potentially increasing their customer base.

Improved Health Benefits:

- Access to clean drinking water is essential for public health. The program will promote hydration, reducing the risk of dehydration-related health issues and promoting overall well-being among our residents.
- Providing accessible water sources can also encourage physical activity and fitness tourism, further contributing to improved community health and economic vitality.

Public Hydrations Stations vs. current government and non-profit Bottled Water projects:

- **Environmental Impact:** Public stations significantly reduce single-use plastic waste and promote a more sustainable approach to hydration.
- **Cost-Efficiency:** Over time, maintaining public stations is more cost-effective than purchasing and disposing of bottled water. Governmental and non-profit bottled water projects can then have their resources freed up to target specific, difficult-to-support needs.
- **Accessibility:** Public fountains are accessible to all residents, regardless of their economic status, ensuring equal access to a basic human necessity. Location and distribution of hydration stations can be programmed like other infrastructure needs.

Federal and State Grant Opportunities:

In the work session, I ask staff to not only outline location and distribution options, but also to outline federal and state grant funding opportunities to support the implementation of this program. Here are three potential grant opportunities:

1. [EPA Drinking Water Grants](#)
2. [Texas Department of State Health Services Grants](#)
3. [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Grant Programs](#)

Potential Marketing:

"Denton THIRST: Transformative Hydration Infrastructure Reinvestment and Sustainability Targets." This slogan encapsulates the essence of the goals of such a program – not just providing water but creating a community where hydration is synonymous with transforming health, well-being, and opportunity.

In conclusion, the establishment of a public hydration station program in Denton represents a multifaceted opportunity to improve our city. It addresses critical needs, enhances our community, and promotes Denton as a forward-thinking, sustainable, and inclusive place to live and visit. I encourage my fellow council members to support this work session for the betterment of Denton.

- c. **Staff information:** The following information was shared via [Friday Report](#) response on October 7, 2022:
Drinking Fountains and Bottle Fillers – On September 19, Mayor Pro Tem Beck inquired on city ordinances, policies, and regulations regarding public facing drinking fountains and bottle fillers,

both publicly and privately owned. Staff advised of the following applicable 2021 International Building Codes (Section 2904) and Plumbing Codes (Chapter 4):

1. All businesses are required to provide water fountains to patrons and staff. Exceptions include hotels (and the sort), apartment house, and single and two-family homes. Existing businesses may not currently comply with newer building codes.
2. Drinking fountains shall not be required for occupant load of 15 or fewer.
3. Restaurants that provide water in a container at no charge do not have to install drinking fountains.
4. Where more than three drinking fountains are required, up to 50 percent shall be allowed to be water dispensers (bottle fillers).
5. 50 percent of all drinking fountains installed shall be wheelchair accessible and 50 percent installed shall comply with requirements for standing drinking fountains.
6. No drinking fountains or water dispensers shall be installed in public restrooms.
7. Freeze protection would be required for any outdoor installation of drinking fountains.
8. An increase in meter size may occur if installing additional fixtures at a site.

If the City Council wishes to move forward with this request, staff will prepare a work session for a future date.

d. *Date Requested:* September 15, 2023

e. *Format for response:* Work Session

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1 – Agenda Information Sheet

Exhibit 2 – Ordinance No. 23-1431

Exhibit 3 – Presentation

Respectfully Submitted:

Jennifer Rainey

Assistant to the City Manager