

Comments regarding the Feasibility Study

My apologies for this being beyond the deadline! I have been unable to get this done until now. I read PWN's statement at the listening session and was unable to attend the others. As you analyze the feedback from the listening sessions, I wanted to add some written comments regarding process.

I realize you need to be evaluating the feasibility of purchase based on quantitative data such as cost, and rates. This is essential, of course, in determination; but this should be weighted as well with qualitative data. It appeared in the listening sessions, that the two page survey you had participants complete was attempting to do this to some degree. The qualitative side of the equation has to do with more intrinsic value such as: Self-determination and responsibility, local control, leaving a generational legacy, buy in on projects, having a sense of regional cooperation versus profit motives, environmental concerns, ability to vote on certain items, a feeling of ownership, etc. These are just as important to consider. I am not a researcher, and do not know how the formula would look, but it is important to give some sort of weighted measure to this type of data in the overall evaluation of deciding on feasibility. It will also go a long way in terms of public perception of mistrust both of the company and the district because qualitative methods are an inclusive strategy.

Data collection approaches for qualitative research usually involves:

1. Direct interaction with individuals on a one to one basis
2. Or direct interaction with individuals in a group setting

Qualitative research data collection methods are time consuming, therefore data is usually collected from a smaller sample than would be the case for quantitative approaches. The benefit of the qualitative approach is that the information is richer and has a deeper insight into how the public is interpreting this event. The main methods for collecting qualitative data are:

1. Individual interviews
2. Focus groups
3. Observations
4. Action Research

In this situation it looks like 3 and 4 might be done through observations of public interactions, and critical analysis of actions such as meetings initiated by the board regarding the process. Number 1 and 2 could be utilized for additional refinement of gaining qualified data. The listening sessions can be seen under individual interviews but three minutes is not much time. Perhaps some random interviews could add some depth to data. Adding your question sheets

for ranking is helpful here. Please make a concerted effort to invite written comments throughout the process. Focus groups may be an option as you get further into the process and want to present what is current and get feedback.

Focus groups are useful in answering the same type of questions as in-depth interviews. Specific applications of the focus group method in evaluations include

- identifying and defining problems in project implementation;
- identifying project strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations;
- assisting with interpretation of quantitative findings; ⁵
- obtaining perceptions of project outcomes and impacts; and
- generating new ideas

This may be a redundant message as you already know all this, and, certainly, your consultants are aware of methodology approaches. However, I wanted to reinforce the importance of validating the social as well as the economic value of public ownership of our water system.

Thank you for the hard work that this project is going to require and for your commitment to public service.

Susan L. Schiavone, Seaside

(Division 1 Rep., Ordinance 152 Citizens' Oversight Panel)