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City Councils appoint members to Brushy Creek Regional Utility Authority Board; Organizational Meeting Tentatively Scheduled

The cities of Round Rock, Leander, and Cedar Park have named three representatives to the newly formed Brushy Creek Regional Utility Authority, Inc. (BCRUA) Board of Directors. They are: Mayor John Cowman from Leander, Council Member Scott Rhode from Round Rock, and Council Member Cobby Caputo from Cedar Park.

The board is tentatively scheduled to hold its first meeting at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 22, 2007 at the Round Rock City Council Chambers, 221 East Main St. The agenda for the meeting includes discussion of organizational issues, a proposed application for funding from the Texas Water Development Board, and an update on the status of the Regional Water Supply Project. The meeting was originally scheduled to be held Tuesday, Aug. 7, but was cancelled because of an agenda posting error.

Rapid growth in Central Texas has created a crucial issue the BCRUA must address. Planning projections indicate that without a new water supply system, the cities could face water shortages in three to seven years, jeopardizing the safety, well-being, and economic health of the entire region.

“We’ve had explosive growth in this area,” says Scott Rhode, Round Rock Council Member and new BCRUA board member. “Families and businesses understandably want to move here because it’s a great place to be. With that, we’ve got to stay ahead of the expected growth in order to ensure that we can provide this basic, yet critical service. There are new hospitals, new schools, and new residential developments on the ground or in the development stages and Round Rock is only one third of its final build out population. So, the responsibility we have as elected leaders in the region is to plan for and secure the water and infrastructure to meet the demands of our ultimate population. This project does that.”

The cities of Round Rock, Leander, and Cedar Park, through the BCRUA, are partnering in the development of a new water treatment plant in Cedar Park, new intake structures on Lake Travis, and new raw and treated water pipelines. The project will cost an estimated \$330 million dollars and will be completed in three phases.

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“This is one of the most important and unique projects to be undertaken by the cities in recent years,” says Chris Lippe, BCRUA Project Manager. The cities are doing a great job of planning together to develop this regional water project. The result will be significant efficiencies and cost savings for ratepayers that wouldn’t have been possible had the cities chosen to go it alone.”

Phase 1 construction for the project will include a temporary, floating raw water intake structure at Cedar Park’s plant on the Sandy Creek arm of Lake Travis, a new raw water pipeline proposed within the Trails End Road right of way, and a new treatment plant. The proposed site of the plant is northwest of the intersection of Lime Creek Road and FM 1431 on the west side of Cedar Park.

Also in Phase 1, a treated water transmission pipeline is planned across the north side of Cedar Park with delivery facilities for Cedar Park, Leander, and Round Rock. The water treatment plant will have an initial capacity of 30 million gallons per day (mgd) and an ultimate capacity of 106 mgd. Cost is estimated at \$160 million. Construction is expected to begin in late spring or early summer of 2008 and be completed in two years.

Phase 2A of the project involves the construction of a new, fixed, deep-water intake structure in Lake Travis and a raw water pipeline to the new plant. Cedar Park’s and Leander’s existing floating intakes are located on the Sandy Creek arm of Lake Travis. Construction of a deep-water intake is vital to the project. If the drought had continued this year, the cities’ current floating intakes would have been grounded. The permanent deep-water intake structure is planned for completion in 2011. It will have an ultimate capacity of 142 mgd and will serve existing treatment plants as well as the regional plant.

Phase 2B of the project, which involves expansion of the treatment plant, is expected to be needed in 2016.

Cedar Park and Leander currently obtain their water from Lake Travis pursuant to contracts with the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA). Cedar Park owns and operates a 26 (mgd) water treatment plant on Lake Travis. The LCRA provides treated water to Leander. The City of Leander’s plant is being expanded from 6 mgd to 12 mgd, and Round Rock’s plant provides 48 mgd. Round Rock obtains water from the Brazos River Authority from intakes at Lake Georgetown and Lake Stillhouse Hollow. Round Rock also draws water from the Edwards Aquifer.

The LCRA holds water rights to the combined firm yield of Lakes Buchanan and Travis, which is equal to 489 billion gallons of water a year. Both reservoirs were constructed to serve as water supply reservoirs for Central Texas residents. Cedar Park, Leander, and Round Rock are planning to use a fraction of the water – about 8 percent when the project is completed – LCRA makes available. The water rights permit, issued by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), subject to TCEQ rules and regulations, has been thoroughly adjudicated.

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In addition, the TCEQ requires that the LCRA maintain a Water Management Plan for the Highland Lakes that ensures their operation during a drought in a manner that meets the terms of its water rights permit. The plan governs operation of Lakes Travis and Buchanan and is reviewed periodically to keep pace with growing water demands and improved information.

A decision has not been made on where the new deep-water intake structure will be located. The project team will be evaluating sites near the Volente area over the next six to nine months. The public will be given opportunities to comment and provide input on the proposed sites as well as other aspects of the project. To encourage dialogue and to obtain feedback, a blog has been set up on the project website www.bcrua.org. Those with questions or concerns may also call the project hotline (512) 684-3200.

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