

## MSD Affordability Taskforce

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### Purpose

Evaluate the rate structure of the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati and recommend preferred alternatives to the Board of County Commissioners for improving affordability and equity of the current rate structure.

### Duties

The task force will develop a comprehensive understanding of the current MSD rate structure, examine the current state and trends relating to the general affordability of those rates including the impact of recent trends on individual customer classes, assess the industry landscape in terms of rates and rate structures of like communities as well as affordability programs being offered by other public utility agencies, review best practices in rate affordability programs for their potential benefit and the potential impacts of those programs on various customer classes.

### Process

| Assessment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Development of Solutions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Recommendations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand basic functions and mission of MSD</li> <li>- Understanding of rate structure</li> <li>- Understand affordability on customer classes</li> <li>- Understand how other communities are addressing affordability</li> </ul> <p><b>Agenda Topics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How did we get here?</li> <li>- What is MSD?</li> <li>- Current rate structure</li> <li>- Impacts/challenges of rate structure</li> <li>- Other types of rate structures</li> <li>- Affordability programs</li> </ul> | <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify and analyze potential solutions to address affordability issues</li> </ul> <p><b>Agenda Topics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brainstorming</li> <li>- Pros/cons of draft solutions</li> </ul> | <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Up to three alternative rate structures</li> <li>- Transition plan for each alternative</li> </ul> <p><b>Agenda Topics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prioritize each proposed solution</li> <li>- Final ranking of proposals</li> </ul> |

## **Participant Roles**

### Task Force Members

Task Force members will attend regular meetings of the group and send the identified alternate in their absence. Members will openly communicate on Task Force progress with people or groups with whom they are affiliated.

Members will present their concerns and issues, and those of people and groups with whom they are affiliated, at Task Force meetings. They will work collegially with other Task Force Members, mutually abide by and enforce ground rules and strive towards consensus agreements.

### Chair

The Chair will run the meetings and ensure adherence to the agenda. The Chair will determine the meeting schedule for the Task Force and send the agendas for the meetings with the assistance of County staff. The Chair will oversee the final report review process. The Chair is the primary media spokesperson for the task force.

### Facilitator

The Facilitator will seek consensus to determine whether a recommendation will be made by the Task Force and assist the group in identifying issues and interests, narrowing options, and developing consensus where possible.

### County Staff

County staff will serve as an organizational and technical resource.

## **Ground Rules**

- One person speaks at a time, no interruptions.
  - Raise hands to cue, try to defer to an existing discussion thread.
- Meetings will start and end on time.
- Avoid dominating the discussion so as to provide everyone with an opportunity to contribute.
- No personal attacks. Challenge ideas but not people. Listen as an ally, focus on the merits of what is being said and seek to understand. Ask clarifying questions.
- Take into account information and advice from stakeholders and technical advisors and make recommendations based on the best available information.
- Seek to identify options or recommendations that represent common ground, without glossing over or minimizing legitimate disagreements. Should a member have a serious disagreement, they will work with the chair to develop methods for productively bringing forward and addressing or resolving the disagreement with the Task Force as a whole.
- Meetings of the Task Force will be open to the public.
- Each person will speak to the public or others only about their own views. No member will speak on behalf of other participants or the group as a whole.
- Members of the public and other observers may attend meetings and must abide by these ground rules. At the discretion of the chair, and as time is available, the public may be recognized to make observations.
- Communicating with the Media: The Chair will respond to inquiries from the media and may speak to the process and its goals but not as to the status of the deliberations.

- Be mindful of comment length and the importance of encouraging participation from everyone in the group. When agreeing, do so briefly.
- Respect time commitments in the agenda; maintain focus on the issues and objectives.
- Members should bring concerns from the interests they represent to the attention of the group, so that later surprises are avoided. Members should also work constructively to understand the concerns of others, and help to find ways to address those concerns.
- Members will participate fully in letting the group know their perspective on issues, their concerns, and their differing points of view in an effort to achieve a shared understanding and find common ground.
- All members will act in good faith in all aspects of these discussions. This includes being honest and refraining from undertaking any actions that will undermine or threaten this process.
- All task force members agree to maintain the respectful tone of the meetings outside the formal meetings. Any reporting to constituents, the media, or other parties will focus on issues and not individuals.
- All discussion will take place during the public meetings. The only email communication will be to schedule meetings.
- Minutes will be posted on a publicly-accessible website for viewing.

### **Decision Making Process**

The Task Force decision making process will focus on developing consensus-based recommendations. Consensus is reached when members agree they can live with and ultimately support the package of recommendations being proposed. Some members may not agree with every aspect of a recommendation, but the disagreement is not sufficient enough to warrant opposition to the recommendation as a whole. The Chair will use the following scale to poll the group on whether consensus has been reached.

Members will express their level of comfort and commitment by indicating:

1. Wholeheartedly agree
2. Good idea
3. Supportive
4. Reservations – would like talk
5. Serious concerns – must talk
6. Cannot be part of the decision

If all participants fall between 1 and 3, consensus on the item is assumed. When someone falls between 4 and 6, that person must state their concerns clearly and offer a constructive alternative. The group will attempt to meet the interests of those parties, without diminishing their own interests.

If, at the conclusion of the process, some members do not agree with the consensus recommendations of the larger group, the Task Force will articulate in its recommendation those differences in order to assist the Board of County Commissioners in making an informed decision.

### **Media Relations and General Communication**

Hamilton County and the Task Force Chair will service as the primary contacts for the Task Force.