

Clearwater Gas System promotes 'green'

By LESTER R. DAILEY

Article published on Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2010



[Print](#)



[E-Mail](#)

Digg

CLEARWATER – At the council’s Jan. 11 work session, Clearwater Gas System officials proposed giving a \$4,295,384 dividend to the city and presented the outline plan for using the other half of the money to increase the energy efficiency of CGS customers.

The Clearwater City Council is expected to ratify those proposals at its Jan. 14 meeting.

I graduated in the...

70s 80s 90s

classmates.com

Go Now >>

Each year, the CGS pays half its net profit from the previous fiscal year to the city as a dividend. This year, the city was slated to receive \$1.7 million.

But fiscal year 2009-10 was a phenomenal one for the gas system. Not only did operating profits exceed expectations, but CGS received \$4.15 million as its share of a one-time gas buyout agreement with Florida Gas Utility.

The City Council instructed CGS chief Chuck Warrington to pay half the windfall to the city’s General Fund as a dividend and use the other half to develop energy conservation programs that benefit the city’s gas customers.

“We’d like you to approve in concept the use of the funds,” Warrington told the council, promising that further details would be provided later.

The concept he presented included four suggested ways to improve energy conservation.

The first suggestion was to improve the existing Residential Super S.A.V.E. (Supplying Advantage and Value through Energy) Program, which encourages CGS customers to convert from inefficient electric or propane appliances to more efficient

natural gas appliances.

The second was to have a rebate program to offset the cost of those conversions.

The third suggestion would create a system-wide neighborhood expansion program that would bring gas mains to neighborhoods that do not meet the normal CGS criterion of the mains paying for themselves within seven years.

The only suggestion that raised a controversy was the one to gradually convert the city's vehicle and equipment fleet from diesel and gasoline to clean-burning compressed natural gas (CNG) over a period of years and to build a CNG filling station.

Vice Mayor Paul Gibson wanted more information before he could endorse the idea.

In a related item on the work session agenda, Warrington requested the council's permission to apply for a \$500,000 federal stimulus grant toward the \$1.5 million cost of building a CNG filling station on Hercules Avenue, next to the Clearwater Airpark.

When Councilwoman Carlen Petersen pointed out that the application deadline is Feb. 1, City Manager Bill Horne said he would try to have the information Gibson requested by Jan. 14.

"The station contemplates a public-fill capability," Warrington said, adding that, in addition to city vehicles, it could fill Dunedin garbage trucks, corporate fleet vehicles and, eventually, private automobiles.

The conversion of Clearwater's fleet would begin with garbage trucks – two or three in the first year and more later – and gradually expand to smaller vehicles. Because it costs \$80,000 to convert a garbage truck to CNG and a new CNG garbage truck costs only \$40,000 more than a new diesel truck, it is unlikely that trucks currently in the fleet will be retrofitted for CNG. Instead, aging diesel trucks will gradually be replaced with new CNG trucks.

"As we continue to become a green city, I think this is an important step for us to make," Councilman George Cretokos said.

Copyright © Tampa Bay Newspapers: All rights reserved.

[Printable Version](#)

[Close Window](#)

[E-mail article](#)

Digg

© Tampa Bay Newspapers: All rights reserved.