MODEL STAFF REPORT

The City, along with 154 other cities served by Atmos Energy Corporation, Mid-Tex Division ("Atmos Mid-Tex" or "Company"), is a member of the Atmos Cities Steering Committee ("ACSC" or "Steering Committee"). In 2007, ACSC and Atmos Mid-Tex agreed to implement an annual rate review mechanism for Atmos Mid-Tex, known as the Rate Review Mechanism ("RRM"), as a temporary replacement for the statutory mechanism known as GRIP (the "Gas Reliability Infrastructure Program"). This first RRM tariff expired in 2011, and although ACSC and Atmos Mid-Tex met many times to attempt to reach an agreement on a renewed or replacement tariff, they were unable to do so. Atmos Mid-Tex filed a full rate case in 2012. The resulting rates were approved by the Railroad Commission in December 2012 in G.U.D. No. 10170.

ACSC and the Company renewed discussions to develop revisions to the RRM tariff, and have reached a tentative agreement on the form of the RRM tariff to be in effect for a four-year period from 2013 to 2017. If the RRM process is to continue to function as a substitute for the GRIP process, cities that exercise original jurisdiction must adopt a tariff that authorizes the process. For the reasons outlined below, the ACSC Executive Committee and ACSC legal counsel recommend approval of the new RRM tariff by all ACSC member cities.

<u>RRM Background</u>:

The RRM tariff was originally approved by ACSC member cities as part of the settlement agreement resolving the Atmos Mid-Tex 2007 system-wide rate filing at the Railroad Commission. The RRM process was created collaboratively by ACSC and Atmos Mid-Tex as an alternative to the legislatively-authorized GRIP rate adjustment process. GRIP, like the RRM, is a form of expedited rate relief for gas utilities that avoids the long and costly process of a full rate filing. However, ACSC strongly opposes the GRIP process because it constitutes piecemeal ratemaking, does not allow any review by cities of the reasonableness of capital expenditures, and does not allow participation by cities in the Railroad Commission's review of the annual GRIP filings, or recovery by cities of their rate case expenses. The Railroad Commission undertakes only an administrative review of GRIP filings (instead of a full hearing) and the rate increases go into effect without any material adjustments. In ACSC's view, the GRIP process unfairly raises customers' rates without any real regulatory oversight. In contrast, the RRM process has allowed for a more comprehensive rate review and annual adjustment as a substitute for GRIP filings.

<u>Purpose of the Ordinance</u>:

The purpose of the Ordinance is to approve the RRM tariff ("Attachment A") that reflects the negotiated RRM process. For the RRM process to continue, cities exercising original jurisdiction must approve a tariff that authorizes the process.

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Reasons Justifying Approval of the Negotiated RRM Tariff:

In the opinion of ACSC's Executive Committee, the RRM process is a better deal for customers than the GRIP process. Atmos Mid-Tex has stated if it were to file for a rate adjustment in 2013 under the GRIP provisions, it would request approximately $5 million more in rate relief than it plans to request in a filing under this revised RRM tariff. ACSC assumes that is because the GRIP process only evaluates changes to capital investment. The RRM process looks at revenues (that may be increasing) and expenses (that may be declining), as well as capital investment.

Additionally, the statute authorizing the GRIP rate adjustment process allows the Company to place the entirety of any rate increase in the unavoidable monthly customer charge portion of its rates. If the Company were to file for an increase under the GRIP provisions, the entire amount of the increase would be collected through the fixed portion of the bill, rather than the volumetric charge that varies by a customer's usage. Between 2007 and 2012, ACSC was able to negotiate rate design results that constrained residential customer charges to the $7.00 to $7.50 range. However, the Railroad Commission has recently raised the residential customer charge to $17.70.

The Company has agreed that for the first filing under the revised RRM tariff, there will be no increase to the residential customer charge. Thus, some of the primary benefits of the attached RRM tariff are that it moderates the impact of rate adjustments on residential customers by not changing the residential customer charge for the first RRM period. In subsequent years only 40% of the proposed increase in revenues to the residential class will be recovered through the fixed customer charge, and in no event will the residential customer charge increase by more than $.50 per month. No such constraints exist under the GRIP process.

Additionally, the attached RRM tariff provides a discount as an incentive for cities permitting the Company annual rate relief. The RRM tariff includes an adjustment amount that is a reduction to the Company's requested increase. The adjustment lowers the Company's rate request by at least $3 million each year. Additional reductions will also be made each year depending on the size of the Company's requested increase. The attached RRM tariff also caps at 55% the percentage of equity that can be used to calculate the Company's capital structure. Railroad Commission policy allows rates to be based on a parent company's actual capital structure, which for Atmos could mean increases in equity above the most recent level of 52%.

Under the RRM tariff, cities are also able to review the Company's annual expenses and capital investments and make adjustments, or disallowances, for any such expenses or investments that are considered to be unreasonable or unnecessary. The cities' costs in reviewing the annual filings, such as fees associated with the hiring of expert consultants and legal counsel, will be reimbursed by the Company on a monthly basis.

If cities do not approve the RRM tariff, the Company has stated that it will reinstitute its annual filings under the GRIP provisions. The anticipated GRIP adjustment for 2013 would be approximately $5 million higher than the Company anticipates requesting through an RRM filing. Additionally, GRIP rate adjustments would place the entire amount of the Company's requested increase into the customer charge. The ACSC Executive Committee recommends that ACSC city members take action to approve the Ordinance authorizing the RRM tariff.

Explanation of "Be It Ordained" Paragraphs:

1. This section approves all findings in the Ordinance.

2. This section adopts the attached RRM Tariff ("Attachment A") and finds the adoption of the tariff to be just, reasonable, and in the public interest. Note that only the new tariff being revised is attached to the Ordinance. The initial RRM Tariff has expired by its own terms, and other existing tariffs not being changed in any way are not attached to the Ordinance.

3. This section repeals any resolution or ordinance that is inconsistent with this Ordinance.

4. This section finds that the meeting was conducted in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551.

5. This section is a savings clause, which provides that if any section is later found to be unconstitutional or invalid, that finding shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remaining provisions of this Ordinance. This section further directs that the remaining provisions of the Ordinance are to be interpreted as if the offending section or clause never existed.

6. This section provides for an effective date upon passage.

7. This section paragraph directs that a copy of the signed Ordinance be sent to a representative of the Company and legal counsel for ACSC.