



18-253

TITLE: Consider/Discuss/Act on an Ordinance Approving a Negotiated Resolution Between the Atmos Cities Steering Committee and Atmos Energy Corporation, Mid-Tex Division Regarding the Company's 2017 Annual Rate Review Mechanism Filing

COUNCIL GOAL: Financially Sound Government

MEETING DATE: March 20, 2018

DEPARTMENT: Financial Services

CONTACT: Trevor Minyard, Assistant to the City Manager

RECOMMENDED CITY COUNCIL ACTION:

- Approve the ordinance.

ITEM SUMMARY:

- The City, along with 171 other Mid-Texas Cities Served by Atmos Energy Corporation, Mid-Tex Division ("Atmos Mid-Tex" or "Company"), is a member of the Steering Committee of Cities Served by Atmos ("Cities"). In 2007, the Cities and Atmos Mid-Tex settled a rate application filed by the Company pursuant to Section 104.301 of the Texas Utilities Code for an interim rate adjustment commonly referred to as a GRIP filing (arising out of the Gas Reliability Infrastructure Program legislation). That settlement created a substitute rate review process, referred to as Rate Review Mechanism ("RRM"), as a substitute for future filings under the GRIP statute.
- Since 2007, there have been several modifications to the original RRM Tariff. The Ordinance that resolved the Company's application under the RRM Tariff in 2017 also terminated the existing RRM Tariff and required a renegotiation of the terms of that tariff. Negotiations have taken place over the past several months, and have resulted in a revised RRM Tariff that has been agreed to by the Company. The Cities' Executive Committee has recommended acceptance of the revised RRM Tariff, which is attached to the Ordinance.
- Cities strongly opposed the GRIP process because it constitutes piecemeal ratemaking by ignoring declining expenses and increasing revenues and rewarding the Company for increasing capital investment. The GRIP process

does not allow any review of the reasonableness of capital investment and does not allow cities to participate in the Railroad Commission's review of annual GRIP filings or recover their rate case expenses. The Railroad Commission undertakes a mere administrative review of GRIP filings (instead of a full hearing) and rate increases go into effect without any material adjustments. In the Steering Committee's view, the GRIP process unfairly raises customers' rates without any regulatory oversight. In contrast, the RRM process has allowed for a more comprehensive rate review and annual evaluation of expenses and revenues, as well as capital investment.

- The RRM Tariff on which the 2017 rates were based allowed a rate of return on equity of 10.50%. The revised RRM Tariff reduces that to 9.8%. The revised RRM Tariff also captures the reduction in federal income tax rates from 35% to 21%, and should result in a rate reduction effective by mid-March, 2018. Prior RRM tariffs allowed Cities only three months to review the Company's filing. The new revised Tariff expands that time period by two months. New applications by the Company should be made on or about April 1 of each year, with new rates effective October 1. A rate order from the Railroad Commission in an Atmos Texas Pipeline rate case adopted the position of Cities with regard to incentive compensation related to Atmos' Shared Services Unit that reduced allowed expenses, and that reduced level of expenses will be applicable under the new RRM Tariff.
- The ACSC Executive Committee and its designated legal counsel and consultants recommend that all Cities adopt the Ordinance with its attachments approving the negotiated rate settlement resolving the 2017 RRM filing, and implementing the rate change.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- The RRM tariff was originally approved by ACSC Cities as part of the settlement agreement to resolve the Atmos Mid-Tex 2007 system-wide rate filing at the Railroad Commission. In early 2013, the City adopted a renewed RRM tariff for an additional five years. Atmos Mid-Tex's March 2017 filing was made pursuant to the renewed RRM tariff.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

- Franchise revenue from Atmos Gas is about \$1.2 million per year. There will not be a significant change in the current revenue.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS:

[Ordinance](#)

[Mid-Tex RRM Tariff](#)

[Exhibit A](#)