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WLABPublic: Comments for this evening's public input

'Howard Fenster' via WLABPublic <wlabpublic@como.gov>

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Reply-To: Howard Fenster <howardfenster@yahoo.com>

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Thank you for this opportunity to offer comments on our ongoing efforts to develop and improve water and electric services. Please review the following comments for your consideration.

1. It would be your responsibility as I understand it to initiate and manage the development of clear guidelines for the use of water and electricity by future data centers. These guidelines would serve as a foundation for city ordinances or at least the utility's policy. Columbia should be exceedingly careful in allowing data centers to access water for cooling. Alternative cooling technology and efficiency measures should be in place before P & Z and Council allow data centers. Likewise, given the grid and energy portfolio challenges the city is already expected to face in the coming years our assumption would be that data centers themselves finance the necessary grid build outs and energy plant or access. The latter should be consistent with the city's CAAP. I understand that we are likely years away from approving the construction of a data center. Nonetheless, we should be prepared.

2. Regardless of how the city intends to replace the Sikeston piece of its energy portfolio, utility scale battery storage has been shown to be an effective way to address pressure at the regional grid level that is beyond the city's control. Battery storage will also help address capacity concerns, especially if paired with renewable energy production such as solar or access such as wind power for climate action. Battery storage may eventually result in rate savings for customers. The cost of batteries is expected to decline over the next few years.

3. Given the city's interest in climate adaptation and action, I would like to see a plan to pursue robust partnerships with the largest electricity users and sectors to install energy efficiency retrofits or large scale measures such as the use of industrial heat pumps. Expanding community solar projects (neighborhood solar power for apartment blocks and industrial parks?) could also be a feature of such partnerships. Financial flexibility mechanisms will be necessary to facilitate these efficiency innovations for major users. We already have a structure in place for low interest loans and rebates.

Retrofits and upgrades are likely to play a significant role in reducing GHG emissions while planning for the city's expected growth in energy usage. This will be all the more the case if expedient decisions are made to fill out the city's energy portfolio with natural gas contracts, but ideally, we should be focusing on having efficiency join a battery system and renewable energy. That being said, might it be possible for the duration of gas contracts to last for shorter times while the city develops its renewable energy portfolio?

4. Fair electricity rates-- what constitutes them and how to implement them, have been contentious. There's no fairer way to manage rates than have everyone pay according to how much they use and reward the customers who use less. Perceptions of fairness are not helped by the comparatively large base charge. There needs to be some transparent explanation of why it is so big, what is it about our cost of operations that necessitates it and why the cost of operations cannot be distributed in tier increments similar to the kilowatt hour charge.

I appreciate the Board's collective efforts and your willingness to serve,

Howard Fenster
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