

## **City Council approves SDS pipeline conditions**

**April 15, 2009**

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**THE GAZETTE**

By an 8-1 vote, the Colorado Springs City Council on Tuesday ushered in a new era of good feelings between the city and Pueblo.

The Council approved the conditions set by Pueblo County to build the \$1.1 billion Southern Delivery System water pipeline from Pueblo Reservoir. Officials from both communities then shook hands and spoke of a new spirit of cooperation, where there was once litigation and mistrust, over water issues.

The pipeline, in the planning for more than a decade, will bring 78 million gallons a day to the Springs, enough to meet anticipated demand through 2046.

There are numerous state and federal approvals still needed, but Pueblo County was considered the largest hurdle. Approval there once seemed so elusive that Colorado Springs Utilities advanced a backup plan to build the pipeline from Fremont County. Pueblo commissioners will vote April 21 to issue a 1041 land-use permit, named for the legislation that gives counties authority over multi-jurisdictional projects.

Pueblo's conditions require Colorado Springs to give \$50 million to the new Fountain Creek Watershed District, a consortium of local governments and organizations working to improve the creek, and to spend \$75 million on wastewater or water reuse improvements here by the end of 2024. Other conditions address construction, land acquisition and flows in the Arkansas River.

Fountain Creek suffers from erosion, water quality and flooding issues, problems that could be exacerbated by sending more treated effluent from the pipeline downstream.

Council members said the conditions are things Colorado Springs should have done long ago.

"We have to recognize we have a responsibility to take action, not only for Colorado Springs, but for all of our region, to protect this very valuable resource we have on Fountain Creek," said Councilman Larry Small.

Councilman Darryl Glenn said the regional approach should extend north as well as south, and he voted for approval because the conditions allow Colorado Springs to provide water to northern El Paso County water users.

"We have to change the way we view water management. We need to manage water and the impacts of water on a regional basis, and I do believe this is a solid step forward," Glenn said.

The dissenting vote came from Councilman Tom Gallagher, who said he believes water demand here will outpace the pipeline's capacity in 20 years, and Colorado Springs will have to find more water.

"I believe this community will be here long after the year 2046 and I don't believe this solution helps those future generations of people," Gallagher said.

What isn't locked in is the route. Utilities officials will return to the council later this year to ask which route the pipeline should take, though Pueblo has always been the preferred route, and it is \$150 million cheaper than the Fremont County route. Colorado Springs officials have said they hope to start building the pipeline this year; the permit allows them up to three years.

The three Pueblo County commissioners attended Tuesday's council meeting, and echoed a new spirit of inter-county cooperation.

"Finally there is ownership of Fountain Creek. It's not a no man's land where we don't know what's going to happen," said Commissioner Jeff Chostner.

"Today the curtain between Colorado Springs and Pueblo has been raised," said commissioner Anthony Nunez.