



September 18, 2023

Mayor and City Commissioners,
City of Brownsville
1001 E. Elizabeth Street
Brownsville, TX 78520

Dear Mayor Cowen and City Commissioners,

As per Article VI. – Utilities Board, Section 4(f) of the City Charter, the Public Utilities Board shall provide the City Commission an annual report providing an update on the progress of working with the City of Brownsville on common goals. These joint common goals include collaboration and coordination on planning and policy issues to eliminate duplication of services, create administrative efficiency, provide for joint service efforts, and ensure quality of service at the lowest cost.

To comply with the mandate of providing the report to you no later than the end of the fiscal year as indicated, the BPUB Chairman and Executives will present the attached report at the September 19, 2023, Regular City Commission Meeting.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding any of the information being shared, I would be happy to discuss further at your convenience. I can be reached by email at [REDACTED] or by mobile at [REDACTED].

Respectfully,

Signature on file

Marilyn D. Gilbert, MBA
General Manager and CEO

Enclosure: Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Report

Article VI. – Utilities Section 4(f) Miscellaneous

cc: John F. Cowen, City of Brownsville Mayor
Tino Villareal, City Commissioner, At-Large A
Rose M. Gowen, MD, City Commissioner, At-Large B
Bryan L. Martinez, City Commissioner, District 1
Linda C. Macias, City Commissioner, District 2
Roy De Los Santos, City Commissioner, District 3
Pedro Cardenas, City Commissioner, District 4
Helen Ramirez, City Manager
Mark Dombroski, MPA, Assistant General Manager & COO
Miguel A. Perez, Chief Financial Officer
Constanza Miner, EDFP, Chief Administrative Officer
File



Fiscal Year 2022- 2023 Report

Article VI. – Utilities Section 4(f)– Miscellaneous

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Common Goal 1 - Eliminate Duplication of Services

Road Projects

Brownsville Public Utilities Board (BPUB) works collaboratively with the City of Brownsville (City) Engineering and Public Works department to coordinate the repair, upgrade, and installation of utility infrastructure with the City's road repair and construction. The collaboration reduces costs and road closure time. In FY 2023, BPUB completed two major road-related projects, has nine streets currently under construction, and numerous in the planning or design phase. Key projects include:

- Old Hwy 77 from FM 802 to Morrison Road, approximately 1.2 miles, will be a complete roadway reconstruction to an urbanized section with water and wastewater utility improvements. BPUB's project to support the reconstruction is currently in the design phase, with construction expected by the end of 2023.
- Design for a \$14.5 million water and wastewater improvement project in downtown Brownsville is underway. BPUB collaborated with the City's Public Works and Engineering Department to determine the needs and limits of the project, which will encompass Adams Street to St. Charles Street and 7th Street to 14th Street. The project is funded through the 2021 American Recovery Program Act (ARPA), and construction is expected to begin in November 2023.
- Working with the City, BPUB is upgrading the water and wastewater utility infrastructure along Wild Rose Lane, from Coria Street to Honeydale Road, in conjunction with the City's roadway reconstruction project. BPUB is in the design phase, with construction bids expected in FY 2024.

Backflow Testing

BPUB's Cross Connection Control Department performs annual backflow preventer assembly tests for City-owned valves. Backflow preventers ensure the potable water supply is not contaminated due to a reverse flow event. This collaboration eliminates the cost of testing for the City while increasing BPUB customer compliance with state requirements.

Common Goal 2 - Create Administrative Efficiency

Accela Software Integration

In collaboration with the City's Planning and Redevelopment Services Department, the BPUB has engaged the services of CAYENTA – Customer Information System, to assist with the integration of Accela Solutions to enable viewing by the BPUB's system. Accela's platform enables online access for citizens and customers to interact and do business with the City and improve the City's permitting and inspection services while allowing BPUB staff to expeditiously receive and review the information necessary to establish utility service connections immediately after inspections are passed. This integration will eliminate the need for Planning and Redevelopment Services staff to dedicate the time to send individual emails advising BPUB Customer Services Staff of passed inspections.

- On October 1, 2023, CAYENTA is scheduled to provide a product release for testing.
- Viewing privileges are scheduled to go live by November 1, 2023.

Joint Billing Services

The BPUB in collaboration with the City offer a joint utility bill that allows customers to receive one bill for varied BPUB utility services and City charges.

- Reduces the costs and overhead associated with carrying out the billing process for both entities. Approximately 690,000 bills are printed and mailed annually.
- Allows customers to efficiently make one consolidated payment for services and charges.

Common Goal 3 - Provide Joint Service Efforts

Streetlight Projects

BPUB installs streetlights and maintains approximately 13,774 streetlights throughout the City to enhance public safety and improve transportation. The streetlight program enhances public safety by improving visibility for vehicle drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. BPUB is upgrading its illumination technology to energy-efficient LED lighting, which provides better illumination and reduces energy consumption. Out of 13,774 streetlights, BPUB has replaced 7,922 with LED lighting. Key projects include:

- BPUB is improving the streetlights along Billy Mitchell Blvd. The improvement streetlight project includes 56 architectural streetlight poles and fixtures to be installed from the Brownsville Airport District along Billy Mitchell Blvd Right-Of-Way (ROW) to Central Avenue. BPUB and its contractors designed and are constructing approximately 3 miles of electric lines and 56 new foundations along Billy Mitchell Blvd. Completion of the project is expected by the end of 2023.
- Along Expressway 77, there are approximately 844 City-owned expressway lights; BPUB maintains 337 of those lights, with AEP serving the remainder. Since the project's inception through 2023, BPUB has repaired approximately 276 lights and replaced about 200 feet of wiring.
- BPUB is working with the City on the Downtown Lighting Improvement Project to replace approximately 103 City-owned streetlights in the downtown area. BPUB has a dedicated crew to work on this project when requested by the City. Since the project's inception through 2023, BPUB has replaced about 86 light poles and fixtures. City's engineering firm is doing light pole base assessments and notifying BPUB when the base is approved and ready to install new light poles/fixtures.

Communication Synergy

To increase transparency and communication with the City, BPUB assigned City Liaison duties to the Chief Administrative Officer to serve as the point of contact for all communication between the City and BPUB to ensure that all communication on inquiries and requests was followed through.

The BPUB Board of Directors adopted the Service Interruption Communication Process in the July 2023 regular board meeting for use by the offices of communication & public relations, digital information platforms, business development, and key accounts when communicating with the City, customers, and other community stakeholders in a standardized, unified manner.

To avoid confusion between the entities' regular meeting agendas, the BPUB Board of Directors adopted a resolution amending the rules of governance of the BPUB that included a revamping of the regular meeting agenda to resemble the City Commission agenda, in addition to following the City's suit to live stream all board and committee meetings to increase public awareness and collaboration.

BTXFiber

When completed, the City's project BTXFiber, a middle-mile fiber network, will make the internet accessible and affordable to residents and businesses. The \$90 million project results from a public-private partnership between the City and Lit Communities. BPUB coordinates with the City and Lit Communities to reduce utility infrastructure conflict within the right of way, reducing the risk to utility services and limiting the project's cost. Specific actions include:

- Assisting with locating and identifying underground utility infrastructure
- Providing access to utility poles for attaching fiber
- Responding to events when utility infrastructure is inadvertently impacted

Migrant Support Services

In April 2023, BPUB assisted the City in responding to an emergency of an influx of migrants needing shelter. BPUB, in coordination with the City's Engineering and Public Works Department, energized three buildings and provided water tankers at the former Fort Brown Golf Course. Once energized, the City was able to provide much-needed services through the existing facilities.

Common Goal 4 - Ensure Quality of Service at Lowest Cost

Emergency Backup Generators

BPUB assists the City in mitigating flooding conditions by providing backup power for the City building (El Tapiz) and stormwater/drainage district pump stations (Impala Pump station, Fruitdale, and Morning side pumping stations) used during hurricane seasons.

Valve and Hydrant Maintenance

BPUB's Valve and Hydrant Department works closely with the City's Fire Department Stations to inspect, flush, and maintain over 100 hydrants in the fire stations' surrounding areas. This allows for inefficiencies in fire hydrants to be detected and scheduled for maintenance, repair, and/or replacement.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Cost Recovery of Services

Brownsville Public Utilities Board's Chief Financial Officer, in collaboration with the City's Chief Financial Officer, is working towards memorializing an equitable agreement to recover costs incurred on services provided to one another and prevent under-recovery. The Office of the City Attorney will be working on an MOU draft that incorporates the following services:

- Use of BPUB Right of Ways
- Capital Work Orders
- Street Lighting
- Resaca Dewatered Sediment Contribution to the City's Landfill

- Software licenses on behalf of the City
- City Damages
- City Customer Service Inspections
- Processing of TEF Check Distributions
- Fiber Network (ARPA)
- Waste Water Downtown Improvements
- Potable Water Treatment Plant Filtration Sludges Contribution to the City Landfill
- 5% Franchise Fee to the City
- Street Patching
- Accela Licenses
- Resaca Administration
- Waste Pickup BPUB Locations

Cannery Public Market

The City is renovating the historical Cannery Public Market, a 1940s Quonset-hut-style building in the Mitte Cultural District that will become the home of the Brownsville Farmers Market. BPUB is supporting the City by upgrading the water and wastewater infrastructure to enable the facility to support its commercial operations.

Resaca Restoration

In collaboration with the City, BPUB's Resaca Restoration Program aims to restore our vital resaca systems. The Resaca Restoration Program was launched in early 2013 to improve water circulation, control flood conditions, enhance water quality & storage, and support ecological improvements. In 2020, BPUB was awarded \$4.6 Million for the Town Resaca Restoration Project via a reimbursement contract from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). The Town Resaca Improvement Project includes:

- Phase I of the Resaca restoration project began in April 2022 with BPUB dredging crews. Over 100,000 cubic yards of sediment, sand, debris, and litter have been removed from the Resaca, increasing water storage and improving water detention.
- Phase II includes replacing two deteriorating weir structures and a failed gate valve, installing twelve stormwater interceptors and bank improvements, and planting native vegetation. BPUB anticipates requesting bids for the construction of Phase II in October 2023.