

**STAFF REPORT SUPPORTING RESOLUTION SUSPENDING ATMOS  
MID-TEX'S PROPOSED MARCH 6, 2012 EFFECTIVE DATE  
FOR A RATE INCREASE**

The City, along with approximately 153 other cities served by Atmos Energy Corp., Mid-Tex Division ("Atmos Mid-Tex" or "Company"), is a member of the Atmos Cities Steering Committee ("ACSC" or "Steering Committee"). On or about January 31, 2012, Atmos Mid-Tex filed with the City a Statement of Intent to increase rates within the City.

**Background**

In 2003, TXU Gas filed a statewide rate case which became known at the Railroad Commission of Texas ("RRC") as Gas Utilities Docket ("GUD") No. 9400. That same year the Texas Legislature passed legislation referred to as the Gas Reliability Infrastructure Program ("GRIP") which authorized annual piecemeal rate reviews that Texas courts have concluded significantly restrict city jurisdiction, participation, and input. Shortly after GUD No. 9400 was decided in 2004, Atmos Energy purchased TXU Gas and created what is known as Atmos Energy Corp., Mid-Tex Division. The City is within the Atmos Mid-Tex Division.

Atmos Mid-Tex filed four GRIP cases before filing a traditional rate case in September, 2007. As part of Cities' Settlement Agreement with Atmos of the 2007 rate case, ACSC and Atmos created a substitute process for annual piecemeal GRIP cases. That substitute process was called a Rate Review Mechanism ("RRM") and was intended as an expedited but comprehensive rate review that included a number of fixed values and constraints. The RRM was intended as a three-year experiment. Last year, it was extended for a fourth year with some slight modifications to the original formulas. ACSC negotiated with Atmos in the final quarter of last year to further extend the RRM process, but no agreement was reached. Atmos has expressed a desire to reach a settlement of the January 31, 2012 filing that includes a revised RRM process.

Enclosed are frequently asked questions ("FAQ") on ACSC and the RRM ratemaking process.

**Discussion and Purpose**

Atmos Mid-Tex filed a Statement of Intent on January 31, 2012, seeking to increase system-wide base rates (which exclude the cost of gas) by approximately \$49 million or 11.94%. However, the Company is requesting an increase of 13.6%, excluding gas costs, for its residential customers. Additionally, the application would change the way that rates are collected, by increasing the residential fixed-monthly (or customer) charge from \$7.50 to \$18.00 and decreasing the consumption charge from \$0.25 per 100 cubic feet ("ccf") to \$0.07 per ccf.

The law provides that a rate request made by a gas utility cannot become effective until at least 35 days following the filing of the application to change rates. Atmos has proposed an effective date of March 6, 2012. The law permits the City to suspend the rate change for 90 days after the date the rate change would otherwise be effective. If the City fails to take some action

regarding the filing before the effective date, Atmos' rate request is deemed administratively approved.

The purpose of the resolution is to extend the effective date of Atmos Mid-Tex's proposed rate increase to give the City time to review the rate-filing package. The resolution suspends the March 6, 2012 effective date of the Company's rate increase for the maximum period permitted by law to allow the City, working in conjunction with the other ACSC cities, to evaluate the filing, determine whether the filing complies with law, and if lawful, to determine what further strategy to pursue, including settlement and ultimately to approve reasonable rates.

### **Explanation of "Be It Resolved Paragraphs"**

Section 1. The City is authorized to suspend the rate change for 90 days after the date that the rate change would otherwise be effective so long as the City has a legitimate purpose. Time to study and investigate the application is always a legitimate purpose. Please note that the resolution refers to the suspension period as the "maximum period allowed by law" rather than ending by a specific date. This is because the Company controls the effective date and can extend its effective date and, therefore, extend the deadline for final city action to increase the time that the City retains jurisdiction (for example, if necessary to reach settlement on the case). If the suspension period is not otherwise extended by the Company, the City must take final action on Atmos Mid-Tex's request to raise rates by June 4, 2012.

Section 2. This provision recognizes the City's membership in ACSC and authorizes the City to participate with other similarly situated cities served by Atmos Mid-Tex in order to more efficiently represent the interests of the City and its citizens.

Section 3. By law, the Company must reimburse the cities for their reasonable rate case expenses. Legal counsel and consultants approved by ACSC will present their invoices to the City of Arlington which will then seek reimbursement from Atmos Mid-Tex. The City will not incur liability for payment of rate case expenses by adopting a suspension resolution.

Section 4. This section merely recites that the resolution was passed at a meeting that was open to the public and that the consideration of the resolution was properly noticed.

Section 5. This section provides that both Atmos Mid-Tex's designated representative and counsel for ACSC will be notified of the City's action by sending a copy of the approved and signed resolution to certain designated individuals.

### **Recommendation**

The City Staff recommends adoption of the resolution suspending the effective date of Atmos Mid-Tex's proposed rate increase.