



MEMORANDUM

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD

Rely on us.

TO: Commissioners Carlson, Barofsky, McRae, Schlossberg, and Brown

FROM: Jen Connors, Communications Supervisor; Laura Farthing, Senior Engineer; Wally McCullough, Water Engineering Supervisor

DATE: July 20, 2023 (August 1, 2023, Board Meeting)

SUBJECT: College Hill Public Outreach & Participation

OBJECTIVE: Information

ISSUE

Earlier this year, EWEB determined and announced that based on recent assessments of the base-level reservoirs, College Hill will be the next reservoir to be replaced, pending completion of the replacement storage at E. 40th. This memo provides information about EWEB's plans to inform and engage College Hill neighbors and the general public about this critical project. Commissioners are encouraged to provide staff with feedback and questions prior to the allocated agenda time at the September Board Meeting.

BACKGROUND

After serving Eugene for over 80 years, the 15-million-gallon (MG) College Hill Reservoir has reached the end of its useful life. It is unlikely to survive a major earthquake, resulting in Eugene losing critical supplies of safe drinking water in the event of a disaster. In addition, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is requiring EWEB to rehabilitate or decommission the reservoir by the end of this year because of leaking roof joints, which creates the potential to degrade the water quality.

For reliability and resiliency, EWEB will dismantle the leaky and antiquated reservoir and replace it in the next few years with new, modern drinking water storage tanks built to withstand major earthquakes.

Beginning in 2020, EWEB informed neighbors of plans to take College Hill out of service and has spent nearly three years evaluating a demolition and construction schedule as part of larger and on-going assessments of the entire water system.

Replacing the College Hill Reservoir is included as a risk-based project in the Water Utility's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This work, largely driven by Master Planning efforts, in the last five years has transitioned from work at the Hayden Bridge Intakes and Filtration Plant to base level reservoirs and transmission system upgrades.

Pending completion of the replacement storage at East 40th, EWEB can move forward with the next steps in EWEB's Water System Master Plan, which aims to replace all of the base level reservoirs with new, seismically resilient storage tanks. Based on recent assessments of EWEB's base level reservoirs,

we determined that College Hill will be the next reservoir to be replaced, with construction beginning as early as 2024.

At this time, EWEB anticipates that the public will continue to have access to the top of the existing reservoir at least through 2023, but the new tanks, once constructed, will be fenced to protect drinking water quality and access to the top will be prohibited. Areas not used for drinking water storage and protection will remain open to the public, and EWEB will invite public input on landscaping, recreational amenities for the remaining open space, and historic mitigation.

DISCUSSION

Removing the existing College Hill Reservoir will be a highly visible project that will create big changes for the surrounding neighborhood. The 2.5-acre concrete top of the reservoir has served as a unique public space for decades. Additionally, Oregon’s State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) identified the facilities at the College Hill Reservoir as historically significant, and EWEB is therefore required to take steps to mitigate adverse effects of removing the structures.

These aesthetic, recreational, and historic interests are important to EWEB and to area neighbors. But they are not the only aspects of the College Hill replacement project. In planning the new water storage facilities, EWEB must satisfy public safety and water quality standards and consider broader customer needs and expectations, including responsible and equitable use of public funds.

EWEB’s communication efforts must take into consideration these multiple, sometimes competing interests.

With that in mind, EWEB’s public outreach and engagement for the College Hill project is based on the following principles:

- 1. Communicate early and often, using a variety of channels to collect input and raise awareness of the crucial role College Hill serves in Eugene’s water supply system, and the benefits to all customers from planned improvements.**

As we listen to and consider public input about construction impacts, recreational opportunities, and historic interests, we must ensure our community also hears the story of drinking water infrastructure and EWEB’s obligations to ensure safe, reliable water for drinking, fire suppression and public health while keeping costs reasonable.

The anticipated and planned public engagement efforts include:

Project Website - Virtual hub on EWEB’s website that holds all project information, documents, events, and announcements, such as answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs), and details about multiple ways to provide input.

Presentations and community events - Provide information at existing meetings of Neighborhood Associations, social/civic groups, and other organizations. Table at existing community events to inform, listen to, and engage with customers. Host tours and celebratory/educational events at College Hill.

Email Distribution List - EWEB will maintain an email distribution list to keep the public informed and send notifications about public events, surveys, draft documents, and other project updates.

Video - Long-form educational videos and short project updates shared online.

Surveys and comment forms - Online and in-person questionnaires to assess awareness and gather random samplings of opinions and input.

Public meetings - Monthly board meetings provide opportunities for public input. When the College Hill project is on the Board agenda, advance notice will be provided to interested parties.

Targeted Conversations - Informal group conversations with organizations and individuals representing diverse perspectives, including recreation organizations, equity and access organizations, and underserved community members.

Feedback/Input Summary - Ongoing documentation of comments received and if/how they are being incorporated.

Mail, flyers, newsletters, social media, and local news media outreach - A mix of print and digital communication methods to reach a diverse audience across Eugene, with project updates and engagement opportunities.

2. Engage a diverse group of customers, including those who live and play at the reservoir as well as customers who live outside the College Hill neighborhood but are impacted by the project through water rates, quality, safety, and reliability.

Equitable input that reflects the demographic diversity of EWEB customers, including underrepresented groups, is important for all EWEB projects. For this project, EWEB is targeting strategies that will reach and engage deeply interested audiences, including site neighbors, neighborhood associations, site users, and elected leaders and staff (EWEB and City of Eugene), as well as community members who are often underrepresented in public processes.

Examples of communities we want to involve include:

- Residents of the College Hill area
- Neighborhood associations
- Recreation groups such as Eugene Astronomical Society, Tai Chi practitioners, and City of Eugene Adaptive Recreation
- Historic preservation groups
- Underserved groups such as youth and young families, Spanish-speaking community members, people experiencing disabilities, low-income residents, LGBTQ community members, and residents who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color.

3. Clearly define and adhere to parameters for public input.

The safety and security of the water supply is EWEB's top priority, and keeping costs reasonable is also vitally important. Therefore, decisions that affect water quality, safety, and engineering (such as tank size, siting, elevation, and security measures) must be made by qualified EWEB staff; there is no opportunity for the public to influence these decision points.

The valuable opportunities for public input involve site aesthetics and amenities. For property retained by EWEB and not used for storing and protecting drinking water, site neighbors and other residents will be invited to participate in decisions that involve:

- a. Landscape design such as trees, shrubs, berms and other vegetation features
- b. Public amenities (outside the fenced tanks) such as paths, ground surfaces, and spaces for recreational activities
- c. Honoring College Hill's history such as documenting the site, interpretive displays, and educational events

Anticipated Public Outreach Timeline

EWEB will approach public outreach and participation in two phases.

Phase 1: July – November 2023 will focus on historic mitigation.

Working with a consultant Historic Research Associates (HRA), EWEB will invite neighbors and other interested parties to participate in developing designs for mitigation. The desired outcome is an Historic Mitigation Plan, which will be formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SHPO and other signatories, as appropriate.

Phase 2: Beginning spring-summer 2024 will focus on landscaping and public amenities.

EWEB will invite neighbors and other interested parties to participate in the design process for landscaping and public amenities at the site. The desired outcome is a Landscape and Recreation Plan. Once a final plan is developed, EWEB will use a bidding process to implement the plan and construct its elements. Landscaping and construction of public amenities will likely begin in 2026-2027 (after tank construction).

REQUESTED BOARD ACTION

This item is information only and accordingly there is no requested Board action.

ATTACHMENT

College Hill Reservoir Information for Staff & Commissioners | June 2023

Project Info/Contacts

- Website: eweb.org/WaterStorage
- Email: water.storage@eweb.org
- Phone: 574-685-7899
- Project Manager: Laura Farthing, Senior Civil Engineer
- Public Affairs & Communications Contact: Jen Connors, Communications Supervisor
- Project Sponsor: Mike Masters, Water Operations Manager
- Executive Sponsor: Karen Kelley, Chief Operations Officer

Summary

As part of EWEB's Water Storage Improvement Projects, we plan to replace the existing 80-year-old, 15-million-gallon (MG) College Hill Reservoir with 15 MG of new storage. The project will be completed to meet the following design criteria:

- Provide secure facilities with open space
- Protect water quality
- Meet current seismic design standards
- Enhance operational and hydraulic efficiencies
- Limit visual impacts

Key Messages

- After serving Eugene for over 80 years, the 15-million-gallon (MG) College Hill Reservoir has reached the end of its useful life. EWEB will dismantle the leaky and antiquated reservoir and replace it in the next few years with new, modern drinking water storage tanks built to withstand major earthquakes.
- EWEB is in the early phases of planning future work at the College Hill Reservoir. No construction activity is scheduled to take place this year and we anticipate maintaining public access to the surface of the reservoir through 2023.
- College Hill Reservoir serves all of Eugene – 200,000 people and thousands of businesses, schools, and hospitals need this infrastructure for drinking water, firefighting, irrigation and more.
- College Hill Reservoir does not meet current seismic standards. It is unlikely to survive a major earthquake, meaning it could not be relied on to supply safe drinking water, or could fail completely.
- Citing risks to drinking water quality from leaking roof joints, the Oregon Health Authority is requiring EWEB to rehabilitate or decommission College Hill in 2023.
- There is no cost-effective way to bring the existing structure up to current codes.
- EWEB intends to maintain areas of open space for public recreation at the site and take steps to honor College Hill's historic features and role in our community, while ensuring responsible use of public funds.
- EWEB customers will have multiple opportunities to provide input on future landscaping, public amenities, and historic mitigation. Opportunities for public input will be widely advertised on EWEB's website, through neighborhood association newsletters, email communications, and other channels.

FAQ

Why can't EWEB repair tank?

The 100-year-old structure would require significant retrofitting and expensive maintenance to protect the drinking water inside. Even after these investments, the tanks would still be vulnerable to earthquake damage.

Is there any way to drain the tank and leave it in place?

No. Our community needs the stored water at College Hill to meet demand and ensure there is sufficient pressure in the system for firefighting and other public uses. To ensure everyone in Eugene has safe, reliable water, the existing tanks must be replaced with new storage.

Can we build replacement storage somewhere else?

No. College Hill is part of a network of tanks that must be at exactly 607 feet in elevation for Eugene's gravity-fed water system to function. Vacant property at the right elevation is nearly impossible to acquire and it would not be practical or a responsible use of customer dollars to abandon College Hill.

What is the timeline for construction?

We plan to take College Hill out of service by the end of 2023 (permanently drain the water), per OHA requirement, pending completion of the replacement storage at East 40th. But EWEB has not yet determined a demolition and construction schedule for the College Hill tank, but we anticipate construction activity could begin in 2024.

Once decommissioned, what are the plans for the existing tank?

The entire College Hill reservoir system will eventually be removed. This includes the large rectangular concrete reservoir, the pump house, the small buried concrete tank on the north side of the site, and the elevated steel tank located south of the main reservoir.

Where will the new tanks be located and what will they look like?

It's too early to say for sure, but one of the options we are evaluating is building the new tanks mostly within the footprint of the existing reservoirs on the site with about the same amount of the tank visible above ground as the existing structure. Final design will determine exact tank placement. EWEB will provide architectural renderings to help show what the site will look like with the new tanks in place.

Will there be blasting or explosives used as part of the earthwork?

Blasting is allowable as part of a project like this but comes with a lot of additional safety precautions like who can perform the work, vibration monitoring, etc. We won't know if blasting will be utilized until final design is complete and a contractor is awarded. If blasting is utilized, EWEB will follow all local guidelines and work with nearby neighbors regarding impacts.

Will the public be able to use the surface of the new tank(s)?

No. Contemporary public health standards require secure drinking water facilities. And that's just common sense for protecting water quality. The new tanks will have a small access road around them and decorative fencing/landscaping around the perimeter.

Will the public be able to use other areas of the site?

Yes. We plan to maintain open public space at College Hill.

Can I provide ideas and suggestions for public uses of the site?

Yes. However, decisions that affect water quality, safety, and engineering (such as tank size, siting, elevation, and security measures) must be made by qualified EWEB staff.

The valuable opportunities for public input involve site aesthetics and amenities. For property retained by EWEB and not used for storing and protecting water, site neighbors and other residents will be invited to participate in decisions that involve:

- Landscape design such as trees, shrubs, berms and other vegetation features
- Public amenities (outside the fenced tanks) such as paths, ground surfaces, and spaces for recreational activities

At this time, we anticipate beginning a public process on landscaping and recreation alternatives in mid-2024. Opportunities for public input will be widely advertised on EWEB's website, through neighborhood association newsletters, email communications, and other channels.

What about the site's historic significance?

The facilities at the College Hill Reservoir are identified as historically significant. EWEB is working with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and a consultant to meet SHPO's recommendations to honor the historic nature of the site after the reservoir and elevate tank are removed.

The public will be invited to provide input historic preservation opportunities at this site, such as interpretive signage. We plan to begin inviting formal and informal input on historic mitigation measures in mid-2023. We will launch an online comment form, collect input at community events, and issue a community-wide survey to ask the public to ideate and comment on potential historic mitigation measures.

What is the status of the elevated tank to the South?

The elevated tank is not in use and was disconnected from the water distribution system several years ago – the few dozen residents that were served from that tank are now served from a different area of the system. EWEB's intent is to remove the structure in the near future although specifics on timing and site use following tank removal have not been finalized. We will communicate the plans and opportunities for public input on final site use well ahead of any work occurring.

What would happen to College Hill in an earthquake today and will the new reservoir be built to withstand a Cascadia level event?

The current facility was built without any consideration of seismic events, and we can't say for sure what will happen, but it would likely fail to hold water under any significant earthquake event. However, concrete tanks are not likely to fail catastrophically in an earthquake. The new facility will be built to the highest level of resiliency to be immediately available for use after a major earthquake.

How much will the College Hill project cost and how will it be funded?

EWEB has budgeted \$20M for the College Hill replacement project and funding will include a combination of rate increases, reserve spending, and debt—borrowing and/or bonds. Ultimately, the cost to replace College Hill Reservoir is paid by EWEB customers through rates, which is why it is important for EWEB to take an efficient and financially responsible approach to the design and execution of the project.

Facts & Stats

- The average daily demand for Eugene is approximately 24 MG. The maximum daily demand is approximately 53 MG.
- EWEB currently has 70 MG in the base level water storage system and once all the improvement projects are complete, the total storage will be 60 MG.
- Current and future base level storage capacity:

	Current	Future
College Hill	One 15-MG tank	Two 7.5-MG tanks (15 MG total)
Hawkins	One 20-MG tank	Two 7.5-MG tanks (15 MG total)
E. 40 th	--	Two 7.5-MG tanks (15 MG total)
Santa Clara	One 20-MG tank	TBD
Hayden Bridge	One 15-MG tank	One 15-MG tank
TOTAL	Four tanks, 70 MG	Seven tanks, 60 MG

- Due to a leaking roof and potential water quality issues, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) Drinking Water Services requires EWEB repair or decommission College Hill in 2023.
- The College Hill site does not require any land use applications but does require a building permit.
- Over the past decade, EWEB has invested close to \$1 million on temporary fixes to the College Hill water storage facility.
- The 2014 structural evaluation estimated the cost to repair the reservoir to be between \$1.5 and \$3 million. These costs included some structural retrofits and the cost to repair the leaking roof to comply with the state requirements, but do not include retrofitting to meet current seismic codes.