

# Fresno City Council adopts Water Conservation Act

By George Hostetter

The Fresno Bee November 6, 2014



Fresno City Councilman Lee Brand. ERIC PAUL ZAMORA — Fresno Bee Staff Photo | [Buy Photo](#)

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- Fresno Water Forum

**What:** Fourth and final public forum on Fresno’s water challenges

**When:** Monday, 6 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

**Where:** Fresno City Hall, 2600 Fresno Street



City Hall has taken a big step toward what one council member calls “the greening of Fresno.”

The City Council on Thursday adopted the Water Conservation Act, a detailed piece of policy designed to get Fresnoans on the water-saving bandwagon.

The act was written and championed by Council Members Lee Brand and Paul Caprioglio.

The act “will have a huge impact on the entire city,” Brand said.

The act, added Caprioglio, puts Fresno “on the right track.”

The vote was 7-0, but came only after Council Members Blong Xiong and Oliver Baines asked that the act’s rebate program for water-saving devices be more equitable to the disadvantaged.

The act comes at a challenging time. The entire state is in the midst of a lengthy drought. The past 12 months have been unusually dry. There’s hope but no guarantee for a wet winter. California’s millions still love their water. State officials love to wield a mean regulatory stick.

The act’s particulars came as no mystery. Brand and Caprioglio unveiled their work last week in considerable detail.

Three points stick out:

- 1.) City Hall will commit itself to a new approach to the irrigation of public spaces. The first priority is an effective, tech-savvy system for watering trees and play areas in city-owned parks.
- 2.) Winter regulations for landscape irrigation should be tweaked. Current rules prohibit any watering of the front or back yard from December to March. One day a week is both fair and wise, Brand and Caprioglio said.
- 3.) The city has a low-profile customer rebate program for water-saving devices funded at \$225,000 a year. The pot will be boosted to \$250,000 annually. The list of qualifying devices will expand. The program’s public profile will soar.

No. 3 caught the notice of Xiong and Baines.

Xiong wondered if the rebates might end up in the pockets of the well-heeled. He feared poverty and language barriers could exclude some Fresnans. He wasn’t pleased by the lack of details on how current rebate funds are spent.

Baines strongly seconded Xiong’s comments.

City Manager Bruce Rudd asked for a month or so to craft a rebate program that addresses the council members’ concerns while obeying state law that limits how ratepayer money is spent.

Everyone agreed to revisit things as the winter holiday season kicks into high gear.

Caprioglio, usually a man of few (if generally frank) words, was quite the advocate on Thursday.

It was he who said the act would lead to “the greening of Fresno.” He chose not to note that a bestselling book by Charles Reich, published in 1970, is titled “The Greening of America.” Caprioglio was around in 1970.

More importantly, Caprioglio was relentless on the importance of public participation. The city has a free consultation program to help residents turn their homes into models of water efficiency. Then there’s the expanded rebate program.

The water conservation office phone number is 621-5480, Caprioglio said. Then he repeated the number. Then again.

“Pull out that phone,” Caprioglio said. “Make that call.”

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