

## Tri-Lakes Wastewater Treatment Facility Joint Use Committee, Dec. 14

# Another successful year appreciated

By Lisa Hatfield

The Tri-Lakes Wastewater Treatment Facility (TLW-WTF) Joint Use Committee (JUC) met on Dec. 14 to review 2021 and plan for 2022.

TLWWTF is owned in equal one-third shares by Monument Sanitation District (MSD), Palmer Lake Sanitation District (PLSD), and Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District (WWSD).

The three-member JUC acts as the board of the facility and consists of one director from each of the three owner districts' boards: PLSD board member Reid Wiecks, JUC president; MSD board Treasurer John Howe, JUC vice president; and WWSD board Secretary/Treasurer William Clewe, JUC secretary/treasurer.

Facility Manager Bill Burks said in 2021, the TLW-WTF treated 471 million gallons of wastewater. The successful year with the plant included 93% phosphorus removal, 83% removal of total inorganic nitrogen, 98% removal of ammonia, 97% removal of total suspended solids. They installed a new UV generator and a new phosphorus monitoring system. "I can't say enough about the people working here. They're making this facility operate successfully," he said. "We're doing what we're supposed to do, exceeding it really."

### Plant manager reports

MSD Manager Mark Parker said contractor DRC is evaluating which of the MSD collection lines need to be cleaned or repaired this year. WWSD Manager Jessie Shaffer and PLSD Manager Becky Orcutt had nothing new to report.

Burks said he had to do a \$2,148 emergency repair on the power supply of one effluent flow remote transmitter since the last JUC meeting.

Burks also asked the JUC to approve removing and replacing the current unreliable non-potable wa-

ter pressure regulators—that are used to pump water in many parts of the facility—with a different type of pressure regulator system. This would cost \$10,772 for new transmitters and new programming that would enhance remote monitoring capability and be able to remotely notify operators of a leak within the facility any time of day through an existing supervisory control and data acquisition control and management (SCADA) system. The 2021 reserve contingency budget could pay for this upgrade. The cost would be split by thirds between the three owner districts since it's a capital expense over \$5,000. The JUC members voted unanimously to approve Burks' recommendation.

Burks had no anomalous readings to report in October's TLWWTF Discharge Monitoring Report. He said that the facility is easily meeting its limits for the state's nutrient incentive program for total phosphorus removal. See [www.ocn.me/v20n10.htm#tlwfjuc](http://www.ocn.me/v20n10.htm#tlwfjuc).

MSD Environmental Compliance Coordinator Jim Kendrick discussed how members of the state's Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) had proposed new additional regulatory limits that continue to be "unaffordable, unattainable, and unsustainable" at the Dec. 13 regulation review hearings. He also explained that some additional rules have been proposed by the state's Water Quality Control Division (WQCD) but do not have a legal basis, because the proposed limits for some trace elements of constituents of concern cannot even be detected, much less reliably and accurately measured, with currently available technology. All of these new unattainable limits are now being opposed statewide by the affected Colorado wastewater treatment facilities, he said.

Kendrick also noted that during these Dec. 13 hearings, WQCD supervisory officials had recommended that several wastewater regulations not be

reviewed by the WQCC every three years through 2029. There are and will continue to be substantial budget and staffing shortfalls at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) that are resulting from the bulk of the CDPHE water quality and clean water staffs being shifted to working primarily on the completion of Gov. Polis's new Colorado 10-year Water Conservation Master Plan over the next eight years.

### Animal encounters

Burks said a big beaver visited the plant, jumped into the phosphorus clarifier, swam through the pipe and into the UV building. Burks contacted the Division of Wildlife, which could not help. Burks then contacted local contractor K2 Kritter Solutions, which provided help but couldn't catch the beaver because it started swimming through internal plant pipes. Finally, the beaver emerged and climbed up on a basin ledge and the contractor put him in a trap to be relocated.

Burks also reported that TLWWTF employees saw a raven hanging upside down, seemingly on purpose, on a power line near a hawk perched on the adjacent power pole. The staff took photos of this event. The raven flew away, but returned to land on this same power line and hang upside down again, perhaps "to freak out the hawk." Kendrick said the raven was "trying to drive the hawk batty."

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The next meeting is scheduled for 10 a.m. Jan. 11 at the Tri-Lakes Wastewater Treatment Facility, 16510 Mitchell Ave. Meetings are normally held on the second Tuesday of the month and are open to the public from all three owner-districts. For information on virtual meeting access, call Bill Burks at 719-481-4053.

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## Donala Water and Sanitation District, Dec. 9

# Board considers volume-based sewer rates

By James Howald and Jackie Burhans

On Dec. 9, the Donala Water and Sanitation District (DWSD) board considered moving to a volume-based approach to sewer rates. The board voted on resolutions addressing an upcoming board election, funding for bonds, the proposed 2022 budget and appropriations, rates for 2022, and mill levy certifications. The board also heard a report from District Manager Jeff Hodge and other operational reports.

### Board considers

#### new approach to sewer rates

Currently, DWSD charges a flat monthly rate of \$37.85 per residence for sewer service. Roger Sams of GMS Inc. Consulting Engineers (GMS), gave the board a presentation on volume-based rates for the sewer service to consider.

Sams said a volume-based cost of service approach would improve equity among users but would require an annual assessment of each customer's usage of sewer service. Volume-based rates would need to cover daily operational costs and administrative costs, Sams said. Capital improvements that expand the system should be funded by the customers who make that expansion necessary. Improvements that benefit all customers, such as radium removal, should be funded by all customers. Maintenance costs should also be funded by all customers. Financial reserves also need to be considered when choosing an approach to rates, he said.

For 2022 through 2024, Sams estimated annual wastewater operating expenditures would be \$1.53 million and annual debt service, capital improvement projects, and renewal and replacement costs would be \$306,502. Sams calculated wastewater treatment costs at \$6.80 per 1,000 gallons, wastewater collection costs at \$4.36 per 1,000 gallons, and customer service costs at \$8.42 per month per customer.

Sams said the guiding principles for developing user charges were:

- Rates must be just and reasonable.
- Rates must relate to the district's purpose and operating and capital costs.
- Rates must not be discriminatory and should provide revenues proportional to the cost of service.

Sams presented a revenue model that divided customers into three classes: single-family detached, multi-family attached, and commercial. His model

estimated total annual user revenue would be \$1.85 million.

Sams proposed wastewater rates for 2022 that would have a \$5.50 service charge and an \$8.38 charge for each thousand gallons of wastewater generated. He suggested the wastewater rate be increased to \$8.77 per thousand gallons in 2023 and to \$9.16 in 2024. The proposed rate for 2022 would mean a 5.28% increase for the typical user, he said, noting that the district's planned resolution to set rates, discussed below, increases the flat sewer rate to \$39.55, which is a 4.49% increase, an amount very close to his recommended rate.

In discussions following the presentation, the consensus of the board was to do a feasibility study of volume-based rates as a next step and to consider going to the approach beginning in 2023.

### Board election scheduled

Resolution 2021-9 calls for a district election to be held on May 3, 2022, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. The polling place will be the DWSD office at 15850 Holbein Drive, Colorado Springs. The seats currently held by Directors Ed Miller and Wayne Vanderschuere will be on the ballot. The designated election official is Christina Hawker. Self-nomination forms are available at the district office and must be returned before close of business on Feb. 12. If only two people submit forms, the election can be canceled.

The board voted unanimously to approve the resolution.

### Bond rules amended

Resolution 2021-10 allows the district to use funds from capital accounts for projects that will be funded by bonds before a bond is passed and then reimburse the capital accounts from bond revenues. The intent is to allow certain capital projects, such as renewable water rights acquisitions, well construction, and maintenance projects, to begin before the bond is passed. The district currently has no bonds planned, but Piper Sandler, the district's bond counsel, recommended the district put the policy in place to improve flexibility.

The resolution passed with a unanimous vote.

### 2022 budget adopted and funds appropriated

Resolution 2021-11 proposes a DWSD budget for 2022 that includes total expenditures of \$25.6 million

and estimates revenues of \$32.3 million. Resolution 2021-12 appropriates funds as required by the proposed budget.

Both resolutions passed on unanimous votes.

### Most rates unchanged for 2022

Resolution 2021-13 proposes rates for 2022. Only the following rates will change in 2022:

- The minimum water service rate will increase to \$29.06.
- The water usage rates for all tiers will increase 3%.
- The charge for construction water will increase to \$16.76 per 1,000 gallons.
- The sewer service rate will increase to \$39.55 per month.
- The Disconnect Letter Fee will increase to \$8.
- The Unauthorized Hydrant Use Penalty will increase to \$50 plus \$25.15 per 1,000 gallons used.

The board voted unanimously in favor of the resolution.

### Mill levies certified

Resolution 2021-14 sets mill levy rates for the DWSD service area A (all customers outside of Chaparral Hills); Resolution 2021-15 sets mill levy rates for DWSD service area B (customers in Chaparral Hills). The two areas have different rates because Chaparral Hills uses septic only and does not need sewer service from DWSD.

The mill levy for area A is 21.296 mills; the mill levy for area B is 10.648 mills.

Both resolutions passed on unanimous votes.

### Highlights of operational reports

In his Manager's Report, Hodge told the board:

- Planning for radium removal is proceeding.
  - Filter media has been removed at the Holbein Plant.
  - Wells 2A and 2D have been assessed by Leonard Rice Engineers and may be back in production as early as January.
  - Water tank inspections showed more deterioration than expected. GMS is focusing on the Latrobe tank first, followed by the Holbein tank.
- The Financial Report showed no issues and was approved by a unanimous vote.

The meeting ended with an executive session to discuss real property negotiations. No business was conducted after the executive session.

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