

Donala Water and Sanitation District, Sept. 19

Residential water rates will rise 20 percent in 2014

By Jim Kendrick

On Sept. 19, the Donala Water and Sanitation District board formally ratified the previously approved across-the-board residential water rate increase of 20 percent in 2014 for all four use tiers in the current rate structure. Townhome irrigation rates were also increased by 20 percent.

The monthly wastewater fee was increased from \$28 to \$29 per month to fund a \$40,000 three-year study of effluent nutrient and organic concentrations that has been mandated by Colorado's Water Quality Control Commission. Annual water rate increases have already been approved through 2022. Wastewater rate increases have already been approved for the next five years.

Irrigation will continue to be restricted to twice weekly due to contractual obligations to impose the same restrictions that the Colorado Springs City Council imposes on Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) customers. CSU supplies supplementary drinking water to Donala by contract during periods of peak demand.

Donala General Manager Kip Petersen started this board meeting by introducing two new employees to the board. Aaron Tolman is the district's new waste plant operator. Tolman came to Donala after five years at CSU's Las Vegas plant. Sharon Samek is the district's new accountant. Petersen noted that Samek was a branch manager at People's National Bank.

Director Ken Judd was attending the annual Special District Association conference in Keystone and his absence was excused.

2014 rate resolution approved

Petersen noted that the board had previously approved a proposed series of annual residential rate increases designed to ensure that Donala receives enough annual revenue to meet its long-term needs. The rate increase approved for 2014 was 20 percent for all four tiers of water use rates. The annual rate increase would then drop to 15 percent per year for each of the four tiers tier in each of the next three calendar years. After that the rates will increase 10 to 12 percent each year after that until 2022.

However, the additional revenue from each of these rate increases may still not be enough to cover Donala's actual operation and maintenance costs due to rapidly rising operational costs. Any shortfall in rate revenues will be paid using property tax revenue. Once the annual fee increases produce enough revenues to pay all operation and maintenance costs, any leftover fee revenue will be used to fund additional water purchase purchases or water projects to enhance Donala's water portfolio.

Petersen also recommended a \$1 per month wastewater fee increase to \$29 per month for every Donala wastewater customer. This additional revenue will be used to fund a \$40,000 three-year state-mandated study regarding nutrients and other organics discharged to Monument Creek in the highly treated effluent of the Upper Monument Creek Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility. Annual \$1 monthly fee increases have already been approved for the next five years.

Petersen also noted that the trestle supporting the railroad tracks over the original access road for the Upper Monument Creek facility had experienced severe erosion during the heavy stormwater events earlier in September.

The board unanimously approved the proposed rate resolution. This resolution will also raise townhome irrigation service rates and construction water rates by 20 percent. Golf course water rates will increase by 5 percent.

Willow Springs Ranch renewable water update

Petersen noted that he had scheduled a meeting for Oct. 8 with personnel from the federal Bureau of Reclamation and CSU to resolve issues that Reclamation has regarding Donala's commitment to long-term storage of Donala's renewable Willow Springs Ranch water in the Pueblo Reservoir and CSU's commitment to a long-term water delivery contract for transporting Donala's stored via CSU's Southern Delivery System pipeline.

Petersen noted that he had discussed an agreement in principle during the previous week with CSU for long-term delivery, based on the negotiations that have occurred with CSU over the last several years. The deadline for signing the next storage contract with Reclamation for use of Pueblo Reservoir for storage and connection to the Southern Delivery System is 2016.

Petersen reported that Donala's metering and flow recording equipment on Willow Springs Ranch would be winterized by the start of October. He added that this metering equipment has shown that Donala will be able to use about 380 acre-feet of ranch water this year, compared to 129 acre-feet in 2012. Of this total, about 90 acre-feet will be used for providing required return flows, netting about 290 acre-feet of usable renewable water. The transit loss due to evaporation between the ranch and the Pueblo Reservoir is about 10 percent.

Donala's ranch water that is stored in the Pueblo Reservoir can now be used to supply return flows to the Pueblo Bureau of Water Works at a cost of \$50 per acre-foot. When Donala cannot provide water from the reservoir to the Pueblo Bureau of Water Works, it must pay \$350 per acre-foot for required return flows.

Flaming Gorge update

The board rejected a request for another \$5,000 contribution to the Flaming Gorge water transport enterprise. Petersen said that Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District was considering a similar request for additional funding. No useful water modeling deliverables have been provided to date that provide assurance that the next \$5,000 contribution for computer model verification runs would be money well spent.

Triview status

Triview Metropolitan District, a co-owner of the Upper Monument Creek Facility with Donala and Forest Lakes Metropolitan District, issued five new taps in August leading to five \$1,500 payments to Donala. This \$7,500 reduced the balance that Triview owes Donala through a facility management agreement to \$758,036. Donala lent about \$1.3 million so Triview could pay all its share of the Upper Monument Creek expansion costs when Triview did not have enough credit to borrow this money from any other source.

Petersen also reported that the Triview board had decided at its Sept. 10 meeting not to participate in a regional water reuse study. The first water reuse meeting for the remaining participants—Donala, Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District, and the Town of Monument—was scheduled for Oct. 3. Petersen noted that Donala's engineer, Roger Sams of GMS Inc., will also participate in the reuse study.

Development updates

A Kum and Go service station is being planned for the northwest corner of Struthers Road and Northgate Boulevard. The county zoning for that lot is Commercial Services. If Kum and Go purchases the lot, the current landowners would then pay Donala the remainder of what they owe for their share of the cost of Donala's Northgate lift station, which would service the Kum and Go facility.

Financial reports

There was a lengthy technical discussion of how Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority grant money for infrastructure construction is recorded as budgeted income and how interest revenue from grant funds is tracked. The board reviewed and accepted the August financial reports as presented by Officer Manager Betsy Bray and Accountant Sharon Samek.

DCAP administration transferred to Tri-Lakes Cares

Petersen said that Tri-Lakes Cares has offered to take over administration of the Donala Customer Assistance Program (DCAP) at the start of 2014 to assist customers who are having problems with their bills in these tough economic times of foreclosures and job losses. Customers looking for assistance can pick up an application from the Donala office at 15850 Holbein Drive or from Tri-Lakes Cares at 235 Jefferson St. in Monument. Applications for assistance should be submitted prior to disconnection of

service being initiated. Communication with Donala or Tri-Lakes Cares is the key factor in obtaining assistance. The major change Petersen proposed was to have

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