

although a large water rates increase was needed, staff "did not want to put a greater financial burden on town

residents and businesses" in addition to the effects of the recession, so just a small increase was instituted then. See www.ocn.me/v13n3.htm#bot0219 for a discussion of the 2013 water rates increase.

The town provides potable water to Monument customers on the west side of I-25. Customers on the east side are served by Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District (WWSD) and Triview Metropolitan District (Triview).

The town's water system includes four water treatment plants, a 1 million gallon storage tank, miles of water mains, five pressure relief valves, nine wells, and over 1,000 water taps, all of which are aging and require more maintenance every year, but because funding levels are low, maintenance has been reactive instead of proactive, Tharnish said.

Three sources provide revenue for the water enterprise fund:

- Residential and commercial customers, for operations, maintenance, and improvement to existing aging infrastructure
- 2A Acquisition, Storage, and Delivery (ASD) Funds, for purchasing renewable water rights, from a 2005 voter-approved 1 percent sales tax. Currently, 35 percent of it is being used to pay off the loan for construction of Town Hall. In 2017, 100 percent of the 1 percent tax will be available for acquiring new water rights.
- Tap fees paid by developers to connect new construction

The town could also finance costs not covered by these sources, Pamela Smith said.

The current residential base fee for a three-quarter-inch tap is \$8.80 per month, and customers pay for the volume of water consumed in addition, based on a tiered rate system in increments of 1,000 gallons and starting with 1,000 gallons, so the lowest monthly residential amount currently invoiced could be \$13.79. A significant change in the proposed water rates and fees is to use a minimum \$60.24 per month base fee for all customers. This would automatically include the first 6,000 gallons of water.

Trustee John Howe said that for residents using less

than 6,000 gallons a month, this change would constitute a 78 percent increase in their water bills; he referred to the chart distributed at the water rates workshop on Sept. 21. Howe's point was that he never uses 6,000 gallons, a 78 percent increase in one year was too high, and that there was not much feedback from the public because they did not know about the proposal.

However, Tharnish said typical users of water use around 6,000 gallons/month, that they now pay \$38.74 a month, and so they would see a 35 percent increase with the new structure.

The proposed rates and fees the first year would then also include annual increase of 8 percent the next four years, both on the base rates and additional volumetric rates. Rates would be re-evaluated by the board in 2020. Betancourt said the first year's proposed rates "are lower than they need to be" to meet operations expenses, "because we didn't want to shock everyone with raising rates as much as they needed to go up right away."

Tharnish said low-income families would be encouraged to apply for help from local "private, non-profit aid groups" to get help paying their bills, which he estimated would increase \$20-\$30 in winter and more in summer based on volume of water used for irrigation.

Examples for residential customers with three-quarter-inch tap:

| | Current invoice | Proposed 2016 invoice |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 2,000 gallons/month | \$18.78 | \$60.24 |
| 6,000 gallons/month | \$38.74 | \$60.24 |
| 14,000 gallons/month | \$88.66 | \$119.24 |

The volumetric rates per 1,000 gallons would also increase with the proposed plan.

Commercial water rates and fees would also increase based on the meter size and volumetric tiered rates. For details, see www.townofmonument.org/.

The proposed changes would include an increase in tap fees for new construction. For example, a three-quarter-inch tap fee is currently \$9,000 and would go up to \$19,440, a 116 percent increase. Tharnish said the Lake of the Rockies development under construction now, which will include about 156 total homes eventually, would get the opportunity to purchase 50 taps in advance at the 2015 rate.

Tharnish and Koger said the proposed increase in water rates is comparable to other water utilities of similar size and structure such as Triview Metro District, Colorado Springs Utilities, Donala Water and Sanitation District, Woodmen Hills Metro District, and Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District. The range for comparable districts' monthly rates was between \$35 and \$80 a month, according to the data Forsgren Associates gathered from their websites. Trustee Kelly Elliott asked that Tharnish double-check the figures listed in the chart for comparable districts, because the Triview number seemed incorrect.

No citizens presented public comment on the issue. Tharnish said Monument's water bills referred residents to the town website for information, but it was not published in the newspaper, he said. He asked the board for direction before presenting this issue at the next Board of Trustees meeting. However, several trustees and Lowe asked for more time to evaluate the proposal before Lowe makes his recommendation and the trustees vote on it. The exact date for the vote was not determined. The proposed rates, if approved by the board, would take effect as soon as Jan. 1, 2016.

If approved, the rates and fees increase would cover operations and maintenance but not any purchases of

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