

inflation each year as well as a 3 percent growth in population of the district.

Impact fees paid by developers would only help pay for growth-related projects, not operations, and those fees are not part of the current water rates discussion, Lowe said

- Koger's comments included:
- Recent audits indicated insufficient funds; \$400,000 needed to be transferred from the town's general fund to the water fund over the last several years for operations.
 - The 2013 water rates increase was minimal, and the last substantive water rates increase was in the 1990s.
 - The town needs to improve system reliability and address aging infrastructure.
 - The town needs to diversify its water portfolio away from nonrenewable water pumped from aquifers.
 - They need to add renewable water supplies, including building a reuse water system and regional water system to bring renewable water from as far as the Arkansas River.
 - They need to rebuild the water capital reserve fund.

The town "certainly has some catching up to do," Koger said. But even after the proposed increases, the town's water rates would still be "in the ballpark" with other water providers in the area, he said. Koger and

Trustee Jeff Smith agreed it is difficult to compare rates among districts due to differences in how each district produces its water, does its capital improvements, and plans for future water supply to its customers.

Lowe's answers to trustee questions included:

- This has nothing to do with economic development and more to do with the solvency of the residential water sys-

tem.

- We don't want to make ourselves non-competitive.
- Through 2020, the water fund would still be in the red, but by 2021 it would have a \$700,000 balance to put in either the reserve fund or transfer back to the general fund.
- Transferring the \$400,000 back to the general fund is up to the discretion of the

board but not required.

- This plan factors in the need

for infrastructure improvements and maintenance

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