

Forest. The PPRWA regional water system proposal generated a lengthy technical discussion. PPRWA is still in the planning and collaboration phase with seven potential partners including the Town of Monument, Triview, Donala, the Town of Palmer Lake, Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District, Cherokee Metro District, and the City of Fountain. It will be 15 to 20 years before anyone could receive any water from it.

Murphy asked repeatedly why Monument could not instead just ask Colorado Springs Utilities if it could connect to the Southern Delivery System (SDS), which also brings water from the Arkansas River. Koger and Smith said it would be much more efficient to collaborate with partner water districts on big projects.

Note: SDS was completed this spring after decades of planning and collaboration. It cost \$825 million.

Koger's theme was that if the town prolonged the delay in raising funds, it would never catch up with where it needed to be. Also, delaying decisions and actions could cause the town to miss out on multiple opportunities to partner with other entities on big projects and make more efficient use of the money required.

His recommendation was that board adopt the five-year program of automatically increasing water rates that had been proposed this year. On March 7, the trustees approved just the first increment of

those new rates, which for example increased the base rate for three-quarter-inch taps by 252 percent, 1½-inch taps by 620 percent, larger taps increasing even more, and also roughly doubling the volumetric tier rates (price per gallon). See www.ocn.me/v16n4.htm#mbot0307.

The automatic increases over the next five years after the initial shocking jump were intended for the town to accomplish its goals of making the water enterprise operation and maintenance self-sustaining, begin to build a reserve fund for emergencies, provide money to transfer back to the general fund, and provide revenue for needed capital repair and replacement expenditures.

For several hours, the trustees and members of the public asked questions of Koger, Smith, and Tharnish about where the money would come from, why the financial figures kept changing, why the rate increases could not be spread out over more time, how financing projects would help with the situation, and what, specifically, the extra revenue from the new water rates would be used for.

Coopman said he had yet to see justification for such a high increase that passed on March 7 and why it had to be crammed into six years. He also did not like the idea of money being accumulated that could lead to "continued excessive spending," and he repeated that the water enterprise fund needed to lower costs instead of in-

creasing expenses and spending money "recklessly."

The consensus was that it was confusing and made it hard to trust the spreadsheets when there was so much data, including spreadsheets that kept being updated, and unaudited and audited numbers that did not match. Smith said the 2015 audit figures were now final, and that would help.

Coopman said, "No one is debating we need a water rate increase, but we need to spread this out as much as possible to not hurt residents." Murphy agreed that the board was no longer trying "to 'go back to go forward' with the rates... We are not going to change those unless we have a basis to do it on."

Monument water customer Nancy Swearingen's comments included:

- If I want to do a big project on my house, I know I have to save money and figure out how to pay for that project even before I have a specific plan.
- If you do not have a viable source of water in the future, how will you sell your business or pass it along to your kids?
- The longer you put it off, the more expensive and more difficult it will be.
- We are sitting close to the edge of a crisis. The aquifer is really not a viable long-term solution, but reuse is a very viable option.

Business owner A.B. Tellez asked again why the town did not seem to consider

the high costs of irrigation for the types of commercial landscaping that town ordinances required him to install and irrigate to keep them alive. Tharnish said Planning Director Larry Manning was looking at the existing ordinances and that the landscaping issue would come before the board in the future. See related Monument Planning Commission article on page 16.

The consensus among Koger, Tharnish, and a majority of the trustees was that the most urgent priority, after getting the drinking water enterprise fund operating in the black, is to focus on making the water reuse plant a reality.

The board also agreed that at the next water forum, the town manager should invite the town's water attorney, Bob Krassa, to answer some of the public's legal questions.

The public water forum ended at 9:04 p.m.

The Monument Board of Trustees usually meets at 6:30 p.m. on the first and third Mondays of each month at Monument Town Hall, 645 Beacon Lite Road. The next meeting is scheduled for July 18. Call 884-8014 or see www.townofmonument.org for information.

To see upcoming agendas and complete board packets for the Monument Board of Trustees, see <http://monument-townco.minutesondemand.com> and click on Board of Trustees.

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Monument Board of Trustees, June 27 2015 audit accepted; executive session agenda item rejected

By Lisa Hatfield

In a special meeting on June 27, the Monument Board of Trustees agenda included only a resolution regarding the 2015 audit and an executive session to discuss the purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer, or sale of any real, personal, or other prop-

erty, in this case for the water utility.

Mayor Jeff Kaiser and Trustee Kelly Elliott were excused.

Kyle Logan of Logan and Associates gave the 2015 town an unmodified or "clean" audit opinion with some suggestions for improvement in the future and

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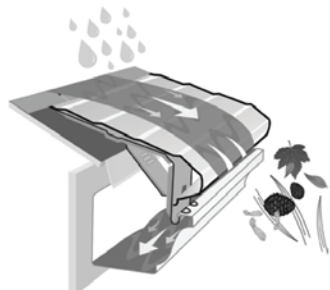
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