

Nipomo water rates to rise 50%

By Cindy Blankenburg

NIPOMO — Water customers in the Nipomo Community Services District will pay about 50 percent more than they did last year.

The proposed water rate increase was given preliminary approval recently by the board of directors at a regular district meeting. The rates will come back before the board for final approval at the 7:30 p.m. Aug. 19 meeting.

The board adopted a two-tiered water schedule which raises the basic rate from 50 cents to 75 cents for the first 20 units. It also changes the basic water fee from a variable fee based on the size of the water pipe to a standard \$6.50 per month for all users.

Additionally, it eliminates the 5-unit base amount which was included in the base fee.

Those residents or businesses who use more than 20 units will pay \$1.15 per unit.

The district needs to generate \$670,000 for operational and administrative costs of the water department.

The proposal will bring in \$707,546.

District water users have been paying 50 cents per unit since 1978. Water system fees have been in-

creased, but use fees have not.

Ryder Ray, general manager of the district, said pumping costs to the district from PG&E have increased by about \$90,000 since 1978, he said. The district is projecting it will pay \$140,000 in pumping costs for the fiscal year 1992-93.

Ray said the rate increase is necessary because the district will be losing about \$300,000 to the state due to recently-passed state laws which allow the state to take property taxes from special districts.

"Proposal No. 2 (the two-tiered system) seems less painful to me from where I sit," said Gene Kay of Summit Station Road.

Currently, that area is not part of the district, but will be considered for annexation by the Local Agency Formation Commission on Aug. 20.

A couple other audience members were also in favor of the two-tiered proposal.

Another proposal called for charging 95 cents per unit along with the \$6.50 base rate.

"I like the two-tiered approach," said director Steven Small, but he expressed concern that a two-tiered approach would encourage conservation and may not generate enough income for the district.

Ray, however, said the income generated by the increase is \$37,547 more than needed which could make up the difference if people start conserving water.

Income figures were based on 576,471 units, which is what was used last year. One unit equals one hundred cubic feet of water.

In other action, the board:

- Approved negotiating a lease with Jim Miller for 1900 square feet in the professional building at 271 W. Dana Street, across from the current offices at 148 S. Wilson.

The two rooms will be used for the office and as the board meeting room.

The lease will be \$1 per square foot per month.

"My recommendation is to sell the current facility and roll the money over into the new building wherever that might be," Ray told the board.

Officials from the county have approached the district about using the facility for a county library. No details have been made.

Board president David Manriquez said the current building is not up to code and the cost to renovate it would be as much as to build a new building.

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