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Citizens Protest at Hearing, Utility Rate Increases Pass by 3-2 Vote

One week from today (March 1) water and sewer ratepayers in Yountville will experience an annual increase of 7 percent for water and 12 percent for sewer every year for the next five years. The

new rates will be reflected on bills received in April. Following a public hearing Tuesday evening and by a 3-2 vote of the Town Council, the controversial new rates proposed in December were

passed. A protest movement mounted by residential customers which appeared to gain momentum as the public discussion continued, drew 268 written protests from ratepay-

ers, but fell short of the 441 needed to stop the increases under the provisions of Proposition 218.

The protest was initiated by residents of the Washington Park neighborhood, where res-

idents were successful several years ago in opposing changes to parking configurations proposed by Town staff.

The public hearing was preceded by a 40-minute overview by Town staff of how the proposed rate increases were determined, the infrastructure improvements to be funded in addition to recovering the actual day-to-day costs of providing water and sewer services as well as how rates must be structured according to existing law and a recent legal decision.

The public hearing drew eight citizens to the podium.

"It's just an out and out fib that you're telling everyone," charged Mary Cammarota of Washington Park. She speculated that along with the 2015 increase she will see a 400 percent increase in her bill by 2022. She questioned the costs associated with installing new meters and called the rate increases "unfair."

Old Town resident Pam Reeves stressed she was not there to complain about increases to her bill, but to protest the categorization of the water and sewer infrastructure improvements as a direct responsibility of the ratepayers. Reeves explained she believes the delivery of water and wastewater services should be charged on a break even basis but that capital improvements are basic infrastructure to the Town that should be built into the Town's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget.

"We don't expect to be treated as adversaries," she also told the Council, criticized the Council and staff for spending so little time on citizen input and suggested ratepayers should have been included on the ad hoc committee which studied and recommended the new rates.

Rick Tooker of Washington Park encouraged the Council to study other alternatives that could bring costs down. He suggested working with larger communities in the area or collaborating with neighboring municipalities. "Let's take the (Continued on Page 11)



Mustard Madness

A vibrant display of mustard blooming in a field off of Highway 29 just north of Yountville proves a spectacle too hard to resist for dozens of motorists, causing a wine country Presidents' Day Weekend traffic jam last Sunday as they stopped, parked and got waist deep into the natural beauty. (Photo courtesy of Liz Moffitt.)

Rector Water Supply Analysis in Preliminary Stage

CalVet Secretary Dr. Vito Imbasciani made an unscheduled appearance Tuesday evening at the meeting of Yountville's Town Council and spoke to the standing-room-only crowd during Citizen Comments. His topic was the on-going effort to determine if there will be a shortage of water late this summer at Rector Reservoir.

Both the Veterans Home and the rest of the Town of Yountville rely on Rector for water.

Last week an engineer from the Drinking Water Division of the State Water Resources Control Board advised that upon a preliminary evaluation of certain assumptions the reservoir will not be able to meet the demands of the Home or the rest of the Town of Yountville after mid August.

Imbasciani explained CalVet requested that assessment earlier this month to



DR. VITO IMBASCIANI determine water supply at the reservoir.

"The Water Board began gathering information on the Veterans Home's water commitments to help determine whether our existing supply is adequate to meet the need. This information gathering process is in its earliest stage and will take several more weeks to finalize," Imbasciani said in a statement issued earlier on

Tuesday.

CalVet, Town of Yountville and Water Resources Control Board staff met Tuesday and visited the reservoir to gather more information.

For now, the three agencies agreed it is important to use the monitoring equipment at the reservoir, monitor the overall situation and improve communications.

"As a precaution, the Water Board suggested that we all begin planning for a possible shortfall and identify alternate supplies. This recommendation is standard protocol for water systems that are facing potential supply issues and is not unusual. The Veterans Home and the Town have several options, including importing water from another supplier, such as the City of Napa. Under current assumptions, Rector Reservoir should continue to serve the local community

until mid-August 2018. This plan provides us with ample time to develop and implement a mitigation plan," said Imbasciani.

One of the issues is that sediment has built up in the dam causing its capacity to decrease from 4,500 acre feet to about 3,100 acre feet, he said.

"We have done nothing to that reservoir in 70 years," he told the Council.

Late in 2016 Water Audit filed a suit against CalVet alleging Rector Reservoir does not divert enough water to the downstream reaches of Rector Creek to maintain a viable fish habitat. That suit has not been settled.

All indicators point to 2018 being a dry year. So far this year Yountville has received 8.67 inches of rainfall, compared to 45 inches at this time last year, an exceptionally wet year.



sundial

	High	Low
Wednesday 2/7	63	33
Thursday	67	35
Friday	72	32
Saturday	72	34
Sunday	58	33
Monday	53	29
Tuesday	52	26
Precipitation =	nil	
Season Total =	8.67	
Last Year =	45.03	