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**CORTEZ CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION/SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, JULY 23, 2024
5:15 p.m.**

CALL TO ORDER

- A. 5:15 p.m., Graves Consulting Compensation Study for the City of Cortez
- B. 5:45 p.m., Council will consider going into Executive Session for discussion of a personnel matter, and specifically to conduct an annual performance review of Patrick Coleman, the Cortez City Attorney, and to discuss possible amendments to Mr. Coleman's employment agreement as authorized by C.R.S. Section 24-6-402(4)(f)(I). The Executive Session will not involve any specific employee who has requested discussion of the matter in open session; any member of this body or any elected official; the appointment of any person to fill an office of this body or of an elected official; or personnel policies that do not require the discussion of matters personal to particular employees. A previous Executive Session for this purpose was held at the July 9, 2024, meeting.
- C. 7:20 p.m., Council General Discussion
- D. For Your Information
 - a. Minutes of the Board of Commissioners, Montezuma County, Colorado for July 2, 2024.
 - b. Letters from Citizens regarding Water Bills.

ADJOURNMENT of Work Session.



CITY OF CORTEZ
123 ROGER SMITH AVENUE
CORTEZ, CO 81321

07/23/2024

Agenda Item: 1. A.

MEMO TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: DREW SANDERS, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: 5:15 p.m., Graves Consulting Compensation Study for the City of Cortez

BACKGROUND

The City of Cortez, through the bid process, contracted with Graves Consulting to complete a compensation study for the City of Cortez. The study is complete, and Graves Consulting has been asked to present the findings to the City Council.



CITY OF CORTEZ
123 ROGER SMITH AVENUE
CORTEZ, CO 81321

07/23/2024

Agenda Item: 1. D. a.

MEMO TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: DONNA MURPHY, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Board of Commissioners, Montezuma County, Colorado for July 2, 2024.

Attachments

BOCC Minutes 07.02.2024

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MONTEZUMA COUNTY, COLORADO
July 2, 2024**

STATE OF COLORADO)
) ss.
COUNTY OF MONTEZUMA)

At a regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners, Montezuma County, Colorado, held on Tuesday July 2, 2024 at the Montezuma County Administration building in Cortez, Colorado, there were present:

- Jim Candelaria, Chairman
- Kent Lindsay, Vice Chairman
- Gerald Koppenhafer, Commissioner of Deeds
- Travis Anderson, County Administrator
- Ian MacLaren, County Attorney
- Kim Percell, County Clerk

CHAIRMAN CANDELARIA opened the meeting of July 2, 2024 with the Pledge of Allegiance

MINUTES: Commissioner Koppenhafer moved to approve the Proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners of Montezuma County, for Tuesday, June 25, 2024 as presented. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Lindsay and carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No public comment was made.

SPECIAL EVENT LIQUOR LICENSE: Chief Deputy Clerk, Malinda Fuller presented for approval a Special Event liquor license application for the **Mancos Valley Summer Brewfest**. The event is scheduled for August 17, 2024 from 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The discussion was postponed until the July 9th meeting. (See attached)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

DISCUSSION: The discussion related to the **Fixed Route Service Feasibility Study** was continued to a later date. (See attached)

DISCUSSION: The discussion related to the **Data Use with Chestnut Health Systems Agreement (JBBS Grant)** was postponed to the July 9th meeting. (See attached)

DISCUSSION: During the Monday Workshop a discussion was held related to the **Asphalt / Blade Patching Project** along with the proposed **Road Project Agreement between Montezuma, County and the USDA Forest Service San Juan National Forest.** Commissioner Koppenhafer moved to approve the Road Project Agreement between Montezuma, County and the USDA Forest Service San Juan National Forest. Second by Commissioner Lindsay and carried. (See attached)

COUNTY ATTORNEY REPORT: County Attorney, **Ian MacLaren** gave an update on the Leaf Properties lawsuit and the Fair Board complaint.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT: County Administrator, **Travis Anderson** discussed 2025 Department budget presentations, Private Activity Bond information, Title 3 funding, CIP fund reallocations, and discussions with County Administrators related to the costs for collective bargaining.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER REPORT: Topics within the Commissioners reports included: **Commissioner Koppenhafer** discussed the attended Mancos Town Board meeting. **Commissioner Lindsay** reported on the attended Cortez City Council meeting. **Commissioner Candelaria:** discussed budget presentations, the attended Housing Authority meeting, the attended Energy Conference, gave an overview of the Monday Workshop, a meeting with the Emergency Manager, Title 3 funding and the SRS funds.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Commissioner Lindsay moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Koppenhafer and carried.

Chairman Candelaria announced the meeting would reconvene at 1:30 p.m., as the **Board of County Health.**

CORRESPONDENCE: The following correspondence was read and noted: the Southwest Health System's Care Close to Home presentation.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:21a.m.

Clerk

July 2, 2024

Chairman



CITY OF CORTEZ
123 ROGER SMITH AVENUE
CORTEZ, CO 81321

07/23/2024

Agenda Item: 1. D. b.

MEMO TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: LINDA SMITH, CITY CLERK

SUBJECT: Letters from Citizens regarding Water Bills.

Attachments

Letters from Citizens

Wednesday, July 17, 2024

From: Brent & Donna Pharo

[REDACTED]
Cortez, CO 81321

To: Cortez City Manager
Public Works Director
Honorable Mayor
Cortez City Council

Subj: 2024 Water Rates

Dear Mr. Drew Sanders, Mr. Brian Peckins, Madam Mayor Medina, Councilmembers DeHaven, Dobry, Keefauver, Spruell, Randle and Lewis:

Years ago I had the privilege of serving on the City Council of King City, CA, a small municipality much like Cortez. I served for 7 years, 2 of them as Mayor. So I think I have somewhat of an awareness of and appreciation for what you do and the challenges you deal with. So thank you all for your service.

In all my years of public service, I can't remember ever experiencing a backlash like the one generated by this recent "progressive" water rate increase. I'm not saying they didn't happen. I just don't remember any.

I'd like to believe I'm speaking for every homeowner on a fixed income who are just trying to maintain our lawns and enhance the appearance and value of our property. Many of us are retired and live very conservatively. These newly imposed "progressive" rates we are now being charged are, in a word, exorbitant. Please revisit the tiered rate increase.

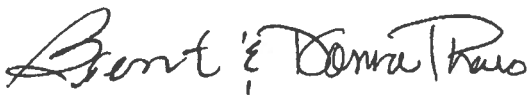
When I addressed the council at the July 9th meeting, I said the tiered rates for larger water users seem punitive. We've lived at this address somewhat affordably for 20 years. Now for the first time ever we can no longer afford to water our lawn, shrubs and trees. In 2005 we paid \$10K for landscaping and our estimate to remove turf and xeriscape our front exposure is \$25K-\$35K.

We have no way to monitor our usage other than our monthly bill. We can't access our meters anymore. You however seem to be able read our meters remotely, which gives rise to a question. Is there technology that would enable us to access our meters from our home computer? That would at least give us a day by day glance at our consumption, thereby promoting voluntary conservation. For now we'll call the Cortez Water Department and request periodic meter readings.

In conclusion, a reasonable, equitable rate increase is understandable and no doubt necessary. But charging more per gallon for people who use larger quantities of water is decidedly unfair. It seems that your primary goal is revenue generation rather than water conservation. Meter readings on our recent water bill were taken 5/15/24 and 6/15/24. We were charged 74% more than the same period in 2023 with 1,000 gallons less used. We were out of town 4/29/24 to 6/6/24 and 40 of those days the inside water was turned off. It's a conundrum to us.

As homeowners we desire to contribute to our city's beautification. Please help us afford the water to do our part. We have continually complied with the city's voluntary conservation and we have read the Turf Management program which is not an option for us.

Thank You all for your consideration of our concerns.



Brent & Donna Pharo

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www.cityofcortez.com

44,000 * D.D.D. = 180.40
2023 rate

1274 *****AUTO**S-DIGIT 81321 3



KATHY CLARK

CORTEZ CO 81321-3000



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ACCOUNT NUMBER 6328.02
 READING ROUTE 5-0
 PREVIOUS BALANCE \$0.00
 CURRENT CHARGES \$371.73
 TOTAL AMOUNT DUE \$371.73

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City of Cortez

July 7, 2024

We just received a ~~trash~~ water bill for \$290.19. We are living on our social security, which has been difficult. We moved from Durango to Cortez in 2014, because we thought we could actually retire here. Our elec bill has gone up in the past 3 years, our gas bill has increased as well. What has not increased is our income. What are seniors supposed to do with this huge increase. We cannot afford to do different landscaping, we have tried to keep our house looking nice, but many people will just begin to let things go to weeds, because they cannot afford such a huge water bill. (including us) We have considered letting half our lawn in front die, & just use for parking. I love our green parks and beautiful landscaping, and Cortez is known for taking such great care of their parks. It will be a shame to see all the brown lawns, turned to weeds, because you have made it unaffordable to do

anything else. I'm sure you are inundated with complaints - but these environmental protection "projects" are killing people financially, and passing the costs on to the community makes it difficult to live here. Our monthly income stays the same, but everything else is doubling or ~~the~~ more. There should be some kind of help for seniors in the community - other than forcing them to go out and find a job to pay their monthly bills. We try to keep lights off and water only when necessary. Please consider an exemption for senior citizens who are struggling to make ends meet. Gas, food, insurance and utilities have all increased drastically, and our income remains the same.

Kristy Rodin

Water costs

Janet Knisley [REDACTED]

Wed 7/17/2024 9:50 AM

To:Linda Smith <lsmith@cortezco.gov>

I am writing this letter to the City Council regarding the increase of water in the City of Cortez.

My first concern is that the majority of residents within the city are on a set income. Was this even a consideration in December when this decision was made? I get it.. you are trying to save water but the communication with residence was not made clear. Maybe a door to door flyer would have been more appropriate as many do not have internet access or computer availability. Please look at your population and not just your needs! Are you going to donate to food banks now? As water bills are being paid but now they can't afford to buy food.

This is really sad! Shame on you!!

What are your plans for the surplus of money? Do you have a strategic plan for this money for the next year, 5 years, 10 years? How much is in this account? Maybe you should replace all the trees that are dying due to lack of water..

Property values will also be declining due to lack of water.

Did anyone present a plan on the effects of increasing water costs?

Seems like not all the ducks were in line..

Sent from my iPhone

Fwd: New Water Rates

Rachel Medina <rmedina@cortezco.gov>

Wed 7/17/2024 4:59 PM

To: Drew Sanders <dsanders@cortezco.gov>; Linda Smith <lsmith@cortezco.gov>; Donna Murphy <dmurphy@cortezco.gov>

Rachel Medina, Mayor

Cortez City Council, 2020-2024

123 Roger Smith Ave, Cortez CO 81321

****Council Meetings every 2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 7:30pm****

Under the Colorado Open Records Act (CORA), all messages sent by or to me on this city-owned e-mail account may be subject to public disclosure.

(Sent from my iPhone)

Begin forwarded message:

From: Darlene Kot [REDACTED]
Date: July 17, 2024 at 16:51:19 MDT
To: Rachel Medina <rmedina@cortezco.gov>
Cc: Brian Peckins <bpeckins@cortezco.gov>
Subject: New Water Rates

This letter is addressed Mayor Rachel Medina and Public Works Director Brian Peckins. Please share this information with the rest of the city council. The new water rates are not affordable for the community. If the rates stay as is less money will be available to be spent in the retail business community, etc. When I have a water bill that is more than my car payment I will not be able to afford water.

Before your plan was adopted did you look at the following (if you didn't then this is a good time to reevaluate the decision)?

Did you look into ALL Grants from the State or from the Federal government that would help pay for infrastructure? Are there any funds potentially available from the federal governments Infrastructure funding?

Every drop of water is important, but driving down Montezuma Ave. and Main street the sidewalk and roads are wet from business and city landscaping and even if some of these water rates are based on irrigation/agricultural sources, I have been told the common source for them is McPhee Reservoir. And residential water rates are geared toward higher fees for less water compared to the commercial rate: the residential rate is \$9.06 for each 1000 gallons over 24, 000 gallons with 16,001 gallons to 24,000 gallons being charged at \$7.36 per thousand gallons; whereas the commercial rate is \$3.85 for up to 36,000 gallons and \$5.01 per thousand gallons over 36 thousand gallons.

Property taxes have increased drastically, further squeezing the budgets of local residents. The increased cost of utility bills due to climate change and warmer temperatures is also impacting residents. The possibility of putting an initiative on the ballot to pay for infrastructure over time with a bond issue would be wise and is

probably being looked at. We do not know where any extra tax revenues may be earmarked but perhaps some could be applied to the City's pipeline infrastructure future costs. I would think people within the city limits would think these measures would be a better idea than what is going on now.

Maybe all new commercial buildings and houses should xeriscape before a permit is issued if this is part of the solution to the current water crisis.

Recent studies show cooling properties of grasses and trees. From the University of Utah 2020 study of grasses and trees reduce the heat generated from xeriscaping. Xeriscaping increases summer peak energy demands, air pollution and gas emissions according to the study.

I do not agree with the direction of the water increases, as such. Why didn't you introduce this water increase in stages over 3-5 years? Taking out grass and shrubs is expensive to transition to prepare for a xeriscape which will also be quite expensive if professionally done. Some might say "do it yourself and save money" but many residents are senior citizens or handicapped and now they are stuck between a rock and a hard place. Plus the residents paid for the installation of their of their present irrigation systems and now are expected to tear them out, start all over and pay for another high priced landscaping system.

Additional info: last year one of my monthly summer water bills for 47000 gallons of water was \$194.0: so our bill should have been \$232 for the month for this year but a similar bill of 44000 gallons is \$367.00. I know the gallon comparison is a little different but this is close to at least a 50% increase. The local paper said the City's base water increase was 4X more than 5% of the recent base water rate increases which would be 20%.

Thank you for any consideration you and the City Council may provide the residents of Cortez in this matter.

Leon and Darlene Kot

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ACCOUNT NUMBER 308.01
 READING ROUTE 6-15600
 PREVIOUS BALANCE \$0.00
 CURRENT CHARGES \$371.73
 TOTAL AMOUNT DUE \$371.73

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 MEMBER FDIC

Overall Water Discussion

First, I want to thank you for all the work and effort you have put in to assist in making Cortez the community that accomplishes all the functions necessary to make this a city of “choice” to live in.

I also want to introduce myself and husband. Ron and I moved here from California in 1977. My family homesteaded here and we wanted to raise our family here. Over the past 47 years we have raised 3 children. We started a business, “Office Outpost”, purchased 4 downtown properties that we renovated and are still housing successful enterprises. We have always been committed to water conservation, having lived through numerous significant periods of drought, (before and after the McPhee reservoir was put in). We currently are responsible for the water bills for 3 properties (1 commercial, 1 rental property, and our home address).

We would also like to express our appreciation for the work the city has put into our ongoing water problems. Understanding that water is essential for growth and sustainability of any community. Water management is a complex issue. We are impressed with the amount of effort needed to:

- Procure a Water Rate Study
- Develop the Drought Manage and Mitigation Plan
- Acquire Turf Replacement grant

However, we have some concerns regarding the current water situation, and the methods being employed to address them.

Understanding the current water situation:

The current water situation is unclear to us.

- Do we have a current water shortage, or is it a matter of not being able to process the water that is available from McPhee?
- If we are in a drought condition, why have we not implemented stage 1 of the Drought Manage and Mitigation Plan?

-Is this an issue of water or the necessity to generate revenue?

Enclosed are two (2) options of the water rate reports. Option 1 includes annual water fund spending, plus capital improvement projects of \$2.2M per year for the next ten years (fiscal years 2024 to 2033). Option 2 includes annual water fund spending, plus capital improvement projects of \$3.8M per year for the next ten years (fiscal years 2024 to 2033). Capital improvement projects include annual funding for water treatment plant and conveyance improvement costs. seh

Infrastructure

It appears that we have water lines needing replacement dating as far back as the 1950s.

-To what extent has the water line replacement been neglected over all those years?

-Is the extent of the water rate increase (through the tiered plan) expected to rectify this issue?

-How much of our infrastructure issues is a result of the financial difficulties Cortez has experienced over the last 5+years?

Water conservation

Water conservation is an ongoing goal. We think most of the community are in agreement and support of that goal. Our concerns are:

-The inability of water consumers to monitor their water use in a timely fashion, in order to take effect action. Currently, the water has been used and paid for by the time the consumer is given relevant information.

-That treated water is being used for landscape purposes being noted as if the residents have a choice, when untreated water is not available.

-We aren't clear how an average of 8,000 of water per household is feasible when our rental was billed for 6,000 gal. when it was unoccupied and almost no outdoor water was used.

-The Xeriscape Turf Replacement grant is a step in the right direction for many residents, however:

*The actual costs (\$10-\$15,000. Dollars for my front lawn) including removal, installation, water systems, and plant cost is prohibitive for many.

*The community hasn't been clearly informed about the difference between xeriscape and rockscape (which is prohibited, as is artificial turf).

*Water consumption is based on water tap usage, and doesn't take into account lot size, maturity of landscape, etc.

* Thirty years of investment in in a yard (tall fescue grass, 10 trees) for the grandchildren to play on when they spend the summers with us is heartbreaking to think of replacing with bushes.

Tiered rate increase

It appears that many in the community aren't clear that the 20% raise refers to the base rate. The tiered rate can elevate the water rate by percentages in the 100s. Our concerns are:

-How that rate was selected from the two options presented by she.

-In comparison of the she suggested options and the rate schedule approved by the city council, it looks like we have moved the proposed rate per 1,000 gal to fewer gallons and added a \$9.06/24,001 tier. (See attached sheets)

-Our concern is that Durango with a mean income of \$76,000 has lower water rates than Cortez with a mean income of \$55,000.

Durango Water Rates

Single Family Residential	Winter Summer	
0 to 6,000 gallons	\$2.41	\$2.41
6,001 to 21,000 gallons	\$3.64	\$3.64
21,001 to 36,000 gallons	\$5.45	\$5.45
Over 36,000 gallons	\$8.18	\$8.18

Impact on Community

The demographics of our community according to the City website:

Average mean income of \$55,000.

23% of our population is over 65

15% of our population is in poverty

3.5% are unemployed

Our population growth has steadily declined over the past 10 years from a high of 9.5% (2020) to 1.5% (2021).

Economic environment

Groceries up 20%

Household good up 20%

Inflation impacting almost all household expenses including rent

-Rentals are limited (resulting in the school system asking families to take incoming teachers into their homes.)

If one drives through our city they would see: numerous empty buildings, neighborhoods that were once being revitalized by young families falling into disrepair, and many yard turning into weed and dying lawns.

In Summary

We love our community and have invested our adult lives into it. We have no desire to be overly critical of our city government being fully aware of the tremendous amount of hours and effort have been put into this issue and well as too many others to count. We have no solutions either, but some ideas for consideration.

-Becoming involved with the developers and builders that are putting up new sites and perhaps providing incentives for xeriscaping.

-Working with nurseries to find ways to reduce water usage in landscapes as they age and need replacing.

- Providing sources for clear information to inform families how to cut down on household water (gal per dishwasher, shower, etc.)

-Inform families of other means to reduce water consumption: shower head, toilets, etc.

-Stricter enforcement of water restrictions, with resulting fines.

Hopefully we can create an atmosphere of cooperation to motivate our residents to work with the city and jointly make progress toward these issues.

Patti and Ron Curtis

2715 Fairway Dr.

pattiacurtis@bajabb.com

970 560-4454

Executive Summary (continued)

Current and Proposed Water Rates

Base Charge (Monthly Fee)	2023 (Current)	2024 (Proposed) Option 1	2024 (Proposed) Option 2
Single-Family	\$26.50	\$48.50	\$66.50
Multi-Family/MH Park – Master Meter	\$25.20	\$46.20	\$63.20
Non-Residential (meter size)			
0.75 inches	\$26.50	\$48.50	\$66.50
1.0 inches	\$41.20	\$75.40	\$103.39
1.5 inches	\$59.35	\$108.62	\$148.93
2.0 inches	\$80.60	\$147.51	\$202.26
3.0 inches	\$116.80	\$213.77	\$293.10
4.0 inches	\$116.80	\$213.77	\$293.10
Volume Charge	2023 (Current)	2024 (Proposed) Option 1	2024 (Proposed) Option 2
All Customers			
Volume Charge per 1000 gallons	\$3.55		
Increasing Rate Block			
Single-Family			
0 to 7,000 gallons		\$2.25	\$3.35
7,001 to 16,000 gallons		\$2.93	\$4.36
16,001 to 28,000 gallons		\$3.80	\$5.66
Over 28,000 gallons		\$4.94	\$7.36
Multi-Family			
0 to 36,000 gallons		\$2.75	\$3.85
Over 36,000 gallons		\$3.58	\$5.01
Commercial			
0 to 36,000 gallons		\$2.75	\$3.85
Over 36,000 gallons		\$3.58	\$5.01

Proposed 2024 Water Rate Increase

2023 Single Family Rate

Base Rate	\$26.50
2000 Gallons	\$ 30.05
7000 Gallons	\$ 47.80
14000 Gallons	\$ 76.20
20000 Gallons	\$ 97.50
30000 Gallons	\$ 129.45

2024 Proposed Single Family Rate

Base Rate \$31.80

2024 Base Rate Plus Tiered Gallons Used

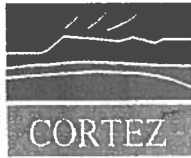
2000 Gallons	\$34.46
7000 Gallons	\$52.86
14000 Gallons	\$91.18
20000 Gallons	\$131.94
30000 Gallons	\$214.94

City revised option volume charges

\$2.66/1000 gallons up to 4000 gallons
\$4.36/4001 gallons up to 8000 gallons
\$5.66/8001 gallons up to 16000 gallons
\$7.36/16001 gallons up to 24000 gallons
\$9.06/24001 + gallons

Monthly Increase	Annual Increase
4.41	52.92
5.06	60.72
14.98	179.76
34.44	413.28
85.49	1025.88

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ACCOUNT NUMBER 3236.02
 READING ROUTE 1-38900
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 CURRENT CHARGES \$48.50
 TOTAL AMOUNT DUE \$48.50

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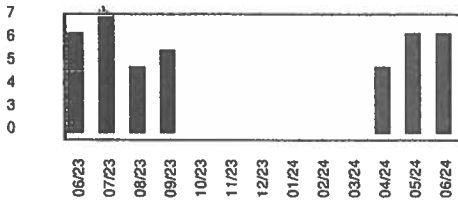
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CUSTOMER NAME		SERVICE LOCATION			ACCOUNT NUMBER		DUE DATE		
Ron/patty Curtis		332 S Linden St			3236.02		07/31/24		
BILL DATE	07/01/24	SERVICE FROM	05/15/24	TO	06/13/24	DAYS	29	READING ROUTE	1-38900
DESCRIPTION		PREVIOUS READING	PRESENT READING	USAGE		CHARGES			
Water		725000	731000	6000		\$48.50			
PAYMENT RECEIVED 06/30/24 39.78CR									
TOTAL CURRENT CHARGES (see above due date.)						\$48.50			
Past Due Amount (see reminder notice)						\$0.00			
Total Amount Due						\$48.50			



July 18, 2024

RE: Water Rates.

To Whom it may Concern;

I might not have a College degree but common sense tells us that these new water rates is a whole lot out of whack.

You are penalizing Single family Homes for wanting to have a nice yard/property. Multi-family homes and Commercial properties are not penalized as much as a Single family home for going over the 36 Thousand gallons.

Why do we as single family homes have 5 tier rate system, and Commercial & Multi-family properties only have 2 tiers for their rate system. Water Rates should be the same across the ~~board~~ board for everybody!

Don't get us wrong, we expected a rate increase but this is ridiculous.

Thank you

Derenda & William Solomon