

Donala Water and Sanitation District, Oct. 20

First draft of 2017 budget includes water rate increase

By Jim Kendrick

On Oct. 20, Donala Water and Sanitation District General Manager Kip Petersen presented the first draft of the 2017 Donala budget to the board, which included a Jan. 1 water rate increase of 4 percent that is estimated to increase water revenue by \$108,000 and a \$1 per month increase in the sewer charge that is estimated to increase water revenue by \$33,276. These increases are intended to help the district finally meet the board's long-standing goal of paying for all current water and sewer services with current rates and charges as the district nears buildout and the resultant loss of further significant tap fee revenues. **Note:** The 2017 budget hearing will be held at the next regular Donala board meeting on Thursday, Dec. 8, to ensure that the approved 2017 budget is forwarded to the state by the Dec. 15 deadline.

Public comment

At the start of the meeting, Donala resident Phil Book said he wondered about the board's practice of setting aside property tax revenue for capital growth rather using it to defray the district's operating and maintenance costs as has been done in the past. Director Bob Denny responded that this practice is "recommended and traditional." Director Ken Judd said this is a "best practice." President Dave Powell noted that property tax is now being used to buy additional renewable water rights and putting in new pipelines.

Petersen added that the district's property tax revenue, about \$1.6 million per year, is now being used to replace older pipes that have been in the ground for 50 years or more and that he plans to replace 10 percent of these pipes per year over the next decade. Office Manager Betsy Bray stated that Donala will no longer be receiving significant tap fee revenues as the district nears buildout and the board had adopted the policy of working toward funding operations and maintenance entirely with service fees five years ago.

Financial reports

Petersen noted that Donala's budget items remain in line with the 2016 budget through the first three quarters. Summer water sales had increased due to irrigation during the recent dry spell. He expects to complete more capital projects in the fourth quarter that will be financed with a low-interest state loan. There will also be some capital projects completed in the fourth quarter at the Upper Monument Creek Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility (UMCRW-WTF), which Donala operates for itself and the two co-owners, Triview and Forest Lakes Metropolitan Districts.

Of note was a brief discussion of how to build new water tanks or rebuild existing tanks if the board decides to begin reuse of its treated effluent from UMCRW-WTF, which would require a new separate potable reuse water treatment plant and distribution piping for this reuse water supply. No decisions were made on this option.

Petersen stated that the Triview board had provided a full single-payment reimbursement of \$151,943 for the emergency water Donala supplied July 4-9. (See ocn.me/v16n8.htm#dwsd0721 and ocn.me/v16n9.htm#dwsd)

Manager's report

Petersen reviewed the first draft of the Donala 2017 budget. He noted that he had sent individual emails to each of the directors with an electronic copy of this draft

2017 budget as an attachment on Oct. 15, along with a three-page narrative detailing each change from 2016. He recommended that the water service rate, the availability of service fee, and all water and sewer tap charges remain unchanged for 2017.

Petersen said the Latrobe-Holbein water tank connection line construction project was proceeding on schedule. All concerns from Donala customers neighboring the construction have been addressed in a timely and satisfactory manner to date. The contractor estimates that the project will be completed in November.

The board unanimously approved the final draft of the proposed counter offer from the Gray Family Trust for purchase of the Laughlin Ditch Water Right of 324 acre-feet per year that was presented to the district by the trust's water broker Gary Barber at a special district board meeting on Oct. 5. The purchase price for this "firm water right" was \$3.8 million. This renewable ditch surface water could be reused to extinction, adding another potential 162 acre-feet of annual use, 486 acre-feet in all. The trust also offered to provide seller financing for Donala's purchase.

The Laughlin Ditch is located near Colorado Springs Utilities' Las Vegas Wastewater Treatment Facility by the U.S. Highway 24 exit on I-25. (See http://pubs.usgs.gov/sir/2007/5028/pdf/SIR07-5028_plate1.pdf)

Petersen stated that Yocam Construction LLC had completed rebuilding the Monument Creek streambank reinforcements next to UMCRW-WTF, and the secondary access road to the facility that goes under the adjacent railroad track trestle, before the Sept. 30 deadline for winter hibernation noise restrictions for the adjacent Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat imposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The streambank and road were damaged by a stormwater event earlier this year. Future flood waters will flow over the reinforced banks, along the new roadway, and back into the channel.

Petersen also reported that El Paso County will not repair the adjacent portion of its Santa Fe Trail in 2016, but plans to perform this work in 2017. He noted that the county's repairs are critical to prevent overtopping the trail and a recurrence of the damage to the double culverts under the trail that Yocam just repaired.

Operations report

Petersen said the district's Holbein and R. Hull water treatment plants would be shut down in turn for annual cleaning and rehabilitation.

There will be no regular board meeting in November due to the board's traditional annual long-range planning workshop with the district's engineering and legal consultants, which will be held on Nov. 17 at 9 a.m.

The next regular board meeting will include the final 2017 budget hearing and will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Dec. 8, in the district conference room at 15850 Holbein Drive. Information: 488-3603 or www.donalawater.org.

Jim Kendrick can be reached at jimkendrick@ocn.me.

One Man & a Little Lady Cleaning Services

FREE ESTIMATES

Because we're not new, We know what to do!

Family Owned & Operated Since 1996

Homes • Move-Outs • Move-Ins • Weekly • Bi-Monthly Monthly • Quarterly Deep Cleaning

ROCKY FORRY
Pgr: 719-386-1814

719 495-1798

SHARON FORRY
Pgr: 719-386-9117



Alpaca Holiday Extravaganza

Join the Southeastern Colorado Alpaca Breeders celebration of the 11th Annual Holiday Alpaca Extravaganza.

- + Meet alpacas and experience the luxury of alpaca
 - + Alpaca garments, fashion apparel & accessories will be available for early holiday shopping.
 - + Crafters will find fleeces, roving, batts, and yarn in a wide variety of colors.
- This FREE event is open to all.

Mark Your Calendar

Saturday, Nov. 19 from 9AM to 5PM

Sunday, Nov. 20 from 10AM to 4PM

Black Forest Community Club is located at 12350 Black Forest Rd. just north of Shoup Rd. For latest information see our web page at <http://secab-extravaganza.weebly.com/> or call 719-495-6693



MONUMENT ACADEMY CELEBRATES VETERAN'S DAY HONORING ALL WHO HAVE SERVED

Friday, November 11, 2016

9:45 a.m.

Monument Academy Gymnasium

Join us for a tribute performance by students and a keynote speaker.

Breakfast will be served at 8:30 to all Veterans and active duty in attendance along with one guest. Your RSVP is appreciated.

Monument Academy Charter School
1150 Village Ridge Point
Monument, CO 80132
(719) 481-1950, ext. 1240

