

Commercial users and a few residential 2-inch pipe users will take the biggest hit from the changes at first because those rates have been frozen at an artificially low rate for years, Tharnish said.

Before this change, the town used the same bulk water rate for everyone who bought water at the bulk water station south of Safeway. This will change for commercial, government and contractor users. Bulk residential users will still be charged \$11/1,000 gallons, but commercial users will pay \$20/1,000 gallons. Tharnish said the bulk residential users outside the town actually need this water to live since their private wells have dried up or they never had one. Commercial users, such as developers, take water to suppress the dust kicked up from construction, and will pay more.

Trustee Jeffrey Bornstein said he thought the increases were very fair. Nancy Swearingin said as a Monument resident and water customer, she's happy to pay the increase knowing that the town's cost to produce water has increased.

Tonight, the board all agreed water rates need to increase to pay for increasing water provision costs but disagreed on how to get this done. Trustee Laurie Clark asked numerous times for a "pro forma" analysis of future costs of projects and asked if Tharnish had made inflationary considerations when developing the new rate schedule. Tharnish explained the rates are based upon an average of the high and low capital costs, but Clark was not satisfied, saying "a big chunk of the process is missing."

Trustee Jim Romanello disagreed with Clark, saying Tharnish's process seemed "quite detailed." Mayor Pro Tem Kelly Elliott said she trusts Tharnish and his staff's expertise in designing the rate increases but worried they would take effect during the summer when water use is highest. Tharnish said the new rates would show up on bills mailed in September.

Mayor Don Wilson said, "I agree we need a rate increase, but I don't agree with the way this one is done" but didn't specify his complaints.

Trustee Greg Coopman, who ultimately voted against the rate increase, was concerned that the schedule includes five years of planned increases. He agreed the 2019 rate increases should be approved but could not stomach future increases. He reasoned since the one-year increases will bring the water fund to solvency, future water rate increases should be decided by the BOT annually prior to the budget preparation so rates can be changed as needed. He was very upset that the fund would be "more than solvent," saying government shouldn't take more than it needs to cover costs, stressing "we have set a dangerous precedent tonight."

The ordinance passed 4-2 with Coopman and Clark voting against.

Annual town audit will be late
Finance Director Bill Wengert asked the board to extend the time to report and file the 2018 financial audit because the audit, scheduled for June, is not ready for review by the board at this meeting. Wengert must formally ask the state for a 30-day extension so the board can approve the audit at a July meeting.

Colorado Revised Statute 29-1-606 requires the town to submit its audit to the state six months after the close of the fiscal year.

Clark asked why the audit would be delayed, and Wengert said the town had to reschedule the auditor due to town staffing changes. Clark asked if he was "running into some problems?" Wengert, who became the town's finance director in May, said it was just a matter of timing.

The board unanimously approved the resolution requesting an extension of 30 days for submission of the audit to the BOT and an extension of up to 60 days to file with the state.

Broadband strategic discussions
The BOT heard a lengthy presentation from El Paso County Chief Information Officer Jeff Eckhart and Dave Zelenok of HR Green Inc. concerning the county's broadband strategic plan study and fiber optics/broadband/5G opportunities. County Commissioner Holly Williams said at the meeting that she is in favor of the broadband infrastructure plan. She said Zelenok's firm helped

to write a broadband strategic plan in conjunction with Eckhart's staff and input from the county commissioners.

Through the process of developing the plan, the county decided instead of committing money, it would be best for them to facilitate partnerships between public entities and private broadband companies to eventually cover the entire county with the new technology.

Background: "High-speed broadband" service is typically run over fixed fiber connections, receiving data at a rate of 25 Mbps and sending data at a 3 Mbps rate. When it is available in the U.S., fixed wireless access or 5G will use wireless connectivity at the final connection within a home or business, which will require close in, line-of-sight transmitters set hundreds of feet apart over a street.

The county review and final strategic plan found 46% of county residents are "underserved," relying on digital subscriber lines with speed rates significantly under the FCC "broadband" definition.


Colorado Senate Bill 152, passed in 2005, declared that local governments may not provide subscribers cable television, telecommunications service, or advanced service, including high-speed internet. Neither may local governments purchase, lease, construct, maintain, or operate a facility to provide these services either directly or indirectly.

Before the Town of Monument can consider partnering with a private broadband business, residents must first vote to opt out of SB 152. Zelenok said about 114 Colorado cities and counties have opted out of SB152, and suggested the town make this its first task. El Paso County already accom-

plished this in 2016.

During public comments, resident and Monument Sanitation District board member Dan Hamilton of local internet service provider Force Broadband asked the BOT to consider the expenses the town would incur if it were in the wireless business including fiber deployments. He said three businesses in Monument are able to provide 100 Mbps coverage to residents if they choose. He said the town should consider partnering with a private entity as the best way for residents and businesses to get broadband.

Zelenok said while average internet speeds in Monument are better

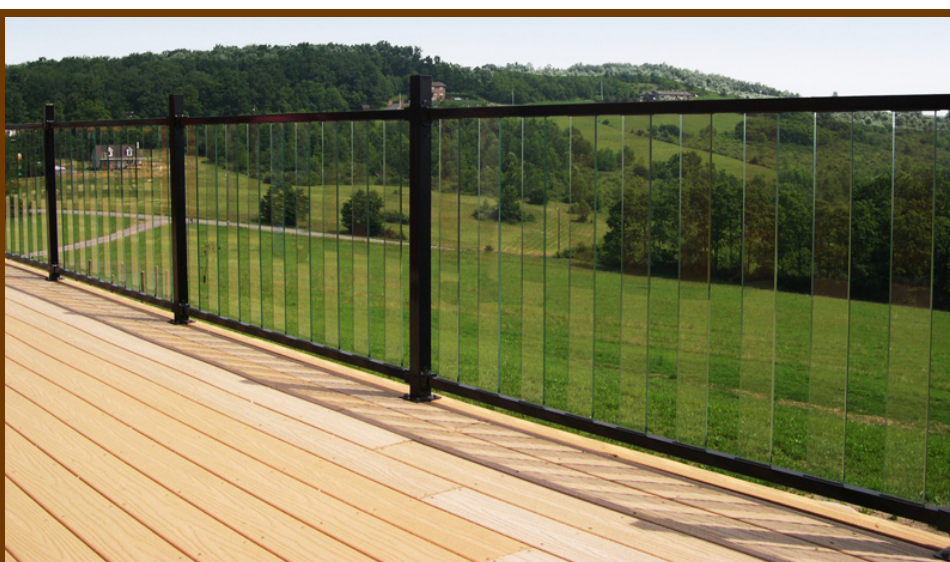


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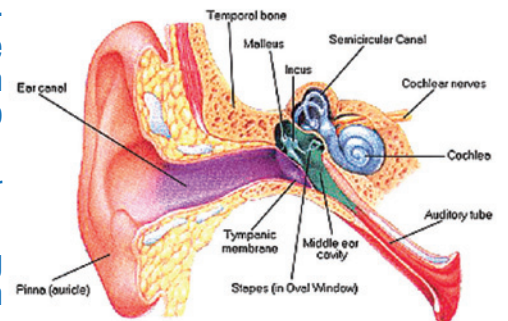
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