

Triview Metropolitan District, Dec. 13

# 2024 budget public hearing presented; rate increases discussed

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Triview Metropolitan District (TMD) meeting on Dec. 13, the board held a public hearing for the 2024 budget, deferring its approval until after the district property tax assessments are received on Jan. 3, discussed future rate increases, and approved a participation agreement for Forest Lakes Metropolitan District (FLMD) to participate in the Northern Delivery System (NDS). The board also approved multiple resolutions and agreements for 2024.

President Mark Melville was excused.

Note: Due to snow affecting travel in the region, a quorum could not be reached until 5:48 p.m.

District Manager Jim McGrady confirmed that the district had posted the public hearings in The Gazette, to include the issuance of additional debt in the form of a Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) loan and the switch to Zoom-only attendance.

## 2024 budget

McGrady said the district would not receive the final property tax assessment from the El Paso County Assessor until about Jan. 3, and the district would need to certify the mill levy no later than Jan. 10. Under normal circumstances, the district usually certifies the mill levy by Dec. 15 and a special meeting to certify the 2024 mill levy would be needed on Jan. 8 or 9. Before the change in the state Legislature, the district was planning to lower the debt service mill levy to 16 mills for 2024, for a total of 20.5 mills, down from the 24 mills assessed in 2023. The change may need to be revised after the property tax assessed valuation is received from the assessor.

He suggested the board consider the following items:

- A 10% rate increase to the Tier 1 water rates to cover the cost of conveying water from Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU).
- A sewer utility rate increase in February or March of about 9% to 10% before the heavy water use season that usually begins in April/May.
- The district expects an increase of wastewater flow through the Upper Monument Creek Regional Waste Water Treatment Facility from 640,725 to about 957,838 gallons.
- A potential lease of 300 acre-feet of water with Pueblo if 2024 is a dry year, budgeted at \$70,000.
- An increase in the Amcobi National meter reading service fee.
- The budget allocates \$500,000 to purchase land for a future office building. The district office lease expires in 2025, and no buildings are available for lease or purchase within the district.
- \$150,000 is allocated in the budget for Burke Hollow Park.
- Well transformer and pump replacement costs.
- Northern Monument Creek Interceptor for the 30% design cost for \$350,000.
- About \$564,000 for the annual availability of service fee for CSU to convey, treat, and deliver the district's water through the NDS.
- An additional storage tank at Plant B to be built behind the existing tank. The purchase is made possible with a matching \$1 million through the American Rescue Plan Grant. The design for the tank is budgeted at \$250,000. The extra storage will assist fire-fighting needs and will allow the blending of surface and well water. It will be the last tank the district builds.
- Arkansas Valley Irrigation Co. water rights utilization (annexation into Buena Vista) for \$2.5 million. About 528 acre-feet of water is available to run through the NDS.
- The NDS pump station is budgeted at \$4.5 million. The district has spent about \$16.7 million to date, and upon completion it is expected to total about \$22 million (the total includes Segment D connecting to the west side of I-25 near Old Denver Road).

The budget allocation will decrease for:

- Engineering fees—as the district nears buildout and plan reviews are fewer.
- Development services and water attorney fees.
- Water testing now that all tests have been

completed for radium, and it is under control.

- Electric utilities are expected to decrease when the NDS pump station is online and the well operations decrease. The cost to run the NDS pump station will be less than 100% of well operations.
- The Vac truck is paying for itself quickly by avoiding costly outsourcing for sewer line cleaning.
- The district expects about 75 tap fees to generate about \$903,000 in 2024.

McGrady said every district has different costs, and typically the district's rates are lower than most, but fixed costs are driving rate increases and the district needs to ensure debt can be paid. The district is considering an increase to the tap fees that have not increased in three years, but it is important that growth pays for itself with tap fees, he said.

Water Attorney Chris Cummins said the board is not approving the mill levy until Jan. 3 due to the failure of Proposition HH and the outcome of the state Legislature special session in late November. The board will adopt the 2024 budget by Jan. 10 based on the new El Paso County Assessor's property tax assessment numbers, expected on Jan. 3. The rate increases will be approved separately in early 2024 after a public hearing.

Vice President Anthony Sexton said the budget review reveals the things the district would like to do, but nothing is set in stone, it is simply a guideline except for the mandatory expenses. Funds for projects can always be reallocated and projects rolled over to 2025—it is a work in progress. He likes to see the district always tightening belts, and if there is extra cash the district gets to do things like the NDS. The district has done rate increase studies, and the cost of the goods is increasing. The only way to keep the district operational is to increase rates when necessary. The district rates are low to mid-tier within the area and the 2024 budget looks good, he said.

Director Jason Gross said he would need to look at the proposed rate tables, but a 10% increase considering inflation does not sound unreasonable.

Treasurer/Secretary James Barnhart said the expenses are higher as the district transitions from well water to deliver renewable water to the district. Renewable water is just more expensive and there is just no way to "shake" that it is a big contributor, he said.

McGrady said the district never knows how much revenue will be generated from water sales, and the budget can be trimmed and tightened as needed, but the district is projecting about \$5 million in cash at the end of 2023.

In a 3-0 vote, the board approved the following:

- An audit engagement letter between TMD and Haynie & Co. to perform the district's 2023 financial audit for a fee not to exceed \$27,500 (including expenses).
- The Northern Delivery System Joint Funding and Participation Agreement between TMD and Forest Lakes Metropolitan District (FLMD), with authorization for the district manager to sign. See FLMD article on page 12.
- An intergovernmental agreement between TMD and Lewis-Palmer School District 38 regarding the dedication of a 20-foot perpetual, non-exclusive easement to provide for future Higby Road improvements between Jackson Creek Parkway and Bowstring Drive. In exchange the district would make improvements to Creekside Drive and Leather Chaps Drive near Bear Creek Elementary School.
- Amendment 3 between TMD and FLMD to provide utility operations services for a monthly fee of \$18,150 in 2024. The terms and fee structure for the landscaping and snow removal services was extended to Dec. 31, 2024, with authorization for the district manager to sign.
- Resolution 2023-10, an amendment to a loan contract from the Colorado Water Conservation Board for the Stonewall Springs Reservoir Complex Loan Contract, up to a

maximum principal amount of about \$5.2 million at about a 3% interest rate.

Note: The board packet for the Dec. 13 meeting can be found under Board Meeting Agendas & Minutes at [www.triviewmetro.com](http://www.triviewmetro.com).

## Baptist Road intersection

Gross asked if Baptist Road was within the district's area of responsibility and if a change could be made to the intersection opposite 1st Bank to prevent motorists illegally cutting through the left-turn intersection to avoid travelling east to the Leather Chaps Drive intersection to turn around and reach the Kings Soopers shopping complex.

McGrady said the district has no jurisdiction over Baptist Road except for maintaining the north sidewalk and it does supply water and wastewater services to the commercial properties on the south side of Baptist Road and the corner of Struthers Road. El Paso County owns and maintains the road and the traffic lights on Baptist Road, he said.

## Executive session

The board moved into an executive session at about 8:20 p.m., pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute 24-6-402(4) (a), (b), (e), to discuss acquisitions and receive legal advice for negotiations regarding water acquisitions, strategic planning, and change cases. No actions were taken after the executive session. The meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

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Meetings are usually held on the third Thursday every month at the district office at 16055 Old Forest Point, Suite 302. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 18 at 5:30 p.m. For meeting agendas, minutes, and updates, visit <https://triviewmetro.com>.

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Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District, Dec. 12

# Board approves rate increases and budget

By James Howald

At its December meeting, the Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District (WWSA) board concluded public hearings on rate increases and on its proposed budget for 2024. Both hearings were opened at its November meeting. The hear-

ings were followed by votes on the rates and the budget. The board renewed the management contract between the district and the Chilcott Ditch Co. The board also heard financial and operational reports. The meeting ended with an executive session.