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Sewage rate remains in limbo

Effort to increase customer costs meets resistance

By [Reid Wright](#) Journal Staff Writer

The Cortez Sanitation District Board of Directors approved a more than \$1.7 million 2012 budget, but the increased customer sewer rates on which the budget was built remain in limbo.

The move to raise residential and residential multifamily rates encountered resistance at a Dec. 12 meeting, and was further postponed at a special meeting that following Friday where the board still did not reach a consensus on the rate increase, Kyle Schreckenbach, district manager said.

The motion to accept the budget was made by newly-sworn board member John Stramel. Stramel is replacing Jodie Henley, who resigned in September.

Henley appeared at the Dec. 12 meeting, speaking as a community member in opposition to a rate increase. She said instead of raising rates, the district should not have waved tap fees for the fire district and city of Cortez.

“That’s all taxpayer’s money,” she said.

Schreckenbach said the district faces a nearly \$300,000 shortfall due to increasing costs for electricity, fuel and insurance.

The approved budget also includes a 3 percent raise for district employees, something Schreckenbach said is in line with cost of living and necessary to retain staff.

District Vice President Dave Waters argued against the proposed increase in rates as well as a salary increase, saying district employees are already at the top of their pay scale for the area.

“It’s hard to justify when you’re giving your employees raises,” he said, pointing out the district is making increased contributions to employee insurance to make up for rising costs.

As it currently stands, the budget reflects a \$2 per month increase from \$30 to \$32 for residential and multifamily housing customers.

The move would also change the billing structure back to a fixed rate structure for

multifamily residential customers as opposed to a usage rate.

The district continues to study ways to improve the billing structure, Schreckenbach said. The next board meeting is scheduled for Jan. 9.

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