

**From:** Ben [REDACTED]  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** Fwd: Water & Recycled Water Rate questions  
**Date:** Monday, July 31, 2023 4:08:28 PM

---

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

Can you post this as a public comment for tonight's meeting? I can't find the meeting materials on the normal city meetings page

Thanks

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Ben P [REDACTED]  
**Date:** Sat, Jul 29, 2023 at 2:51 AM  
**Subject:** Water & Recycled Water Rate questions  
**To:** Bolt, Christopher <[cbolt@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:cbolt@cityofpetaluma.org)>, Flynn, Peggy <[pflynn@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:pflynn@cityofpetaluma.org)>, McDonnell, Kevin <[kmcdonnell@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:kmcdonnell@cityofpetaluma.org)>

Hello Mr. Bolt, I have a few questions about the upcoming water rates meeting.

1. I understand the city has installed water tank filling equipment to support farmers and other irrigation needs which were critical during the last drought. Is information available on this equipment and future drought efforts? Are both potable and recycled water available? How are the water rates set for these type of drought emergency measures?

2. Where can the public find information on recycled water rates? A search of the city website yielded no results. From the last City Council water agenda item, my understanding is that the recycled water rate is 50% of the public rate, is this accurate? I'm assuming recycled water rates are not regulated in the same way and thus this information is harder to find, however I do think it's in the public interest to show recycled water rates on the same 3 page water rate sheet for water and wastewater.

3. It would also be informative during the rate setting process to understand the forecasted recycled water utilization and budget impacts. My assumption is the City of Petaluma is the majority user, purchasing recycled water at 50% of the regular rate. Some might consider this a subsidy or incentive to encourage more recycled water use and investment.

Knowing the rough percentages of non city recycled water users will also inform these policy decisions.

While I don't have a specific opinion on this policy (largely because of lack of data and budget implications), it does seem opaque and it is in the public interest to make this information known as part of the rate setting process. If the city and other recycled water users can afford to pay 75% (as an example), what impact could that have on our rates?

Thank you

<https://cityofpetaluma.org/event/learn-about-proposed-water-rate-increases/>

--

Benjamin Peters -->

The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard.

\* Gaylord Nelson, founder of Earth Day

--

Benjamin Peters -->

The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard.

\* Gaylord Nelson, founder of Earth Day

Janice and John Cunningham

[REDACTED]

Petaluma, CA 94952

July 18, 2023

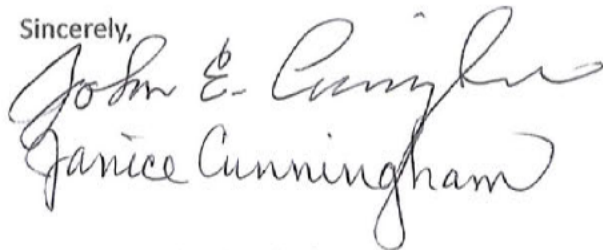
[REDACTED]

Dear City Clerk and Council,

We have read the proposal for water/sewer increased costs. We have considered all the changes that are noted and yet it still comes down to you want us to use less water still and pay even more for the ability to have clean water. We understand that things need to be maintained but it feels like the wish list keeps on going. Even trying to be water conscious in using efficient appliances and removing our lawns years ago, it doesn't seem to make a difference. Our water bills keep increasing. That fact makes one wonder about management and actual necessities. It seems like every time we turn around, our wastewater plant needs more money. The situation reminds me of the Golden Gate Bridge that was to be paid off and then free to use. How did that work?

I hope that we can maintain what we have and be budget wise, especially in this time of inflation. Please reconsider our needs versus your wants.

Sincerely,

  
Janice Cunningham

Janice and John Cunningham

**From:** Nickola Frye <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 31, 2023 8:28 PM  
**To:** Jessica Medina <[jmedina@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:jmedina@cityofpetaluma.org)>  
**Subject:** Water/Wastewater fee increase

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

Jessica:

Thank you for providing me your email address and suggesting that I let you know some concerns I have and which I expressed at the Zoom meeting on Monday evening, July 31, 2023.

As a retired engineer, I understand the need to increase fees for water/wastewater, but I am seriously concerned about the burden these increases will place on Petaluma seniors and families who live on limited incomes.

Utilizing the facts and figures provided by the Public Works Department I took some time to look at how the Sept 1 increase would affect a single household at various income levels if that household utilized the lowest level of water/wastewater (please see attached jpg chart). In addition, this is only the first of five increases over the next five years, each of which will significantly affect the ability of many seniors and families to continue to reside in Petaluma.

I have the LIHWAP application, but as I explained I am very hesitant to apply as I feel that the personal information that they require is inappropriate and because the application includes the following admonishments:

"ALL INCOMPLETE APPLICATION WILL BE DENIED!!!!"

"\*\*\*\*\*THIS IS NOT A GUARANTEED PROGRAM\*\*\*\*\*"

I would very much like to have a meeting scheduled with the Public Works Department, the City Manager, the City Council members, or any persons that you would suggest that would recognize that the low income residents of Petaluma, particularly those that live in mobile home parks or those living in other situations where the water/wastewater fees are passed through from owners, have been or will be adversely affected by the proposed water/wastewater increases.

Thank you for your assistance and consideration in this important matter.

Nickola Frye  
Board Secretary, Rebuilding Together Petaluma  
Secretary, City of Petaluma Senior Advisory Committee  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [rekb](#)  
**To:** [Flynn, Peggy](#); [Pocekay, Dennis](#); [Cader-Thompson, Janice](#); [Shribbs, John](#); [Karen Nau](#); [McDonnell, Kevin](#); [Healy, Mike](#); [Barnacle, Brian](#); -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** Water & Wastewater Proposed Rate Increase.  
**Date:** Sunday, July 23, 2023 6:56:15 PM

---

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

Dear Mayor McDonnell, Members of City Council, and City Manager,

If my questions are perhaps late please accept my apologies but I was traveling outside the country for a few months.

Thank you for the opportunity to address my interests in the Proposed Rate Increase.

I fully support a funded water utility that achieves maximum functionality at minimum cost to the recipients of the water. I am very much against postponing any capital or maintenance required to achieve the before stated goal. I am 100% for a utility being operated as a business using business principles. I am totally in favor of no debt encumbering the utility. Therefore, I am adamantly against burdening said utility with debt to be somehow paid in the future after current beneficiaries have skipped town. Below are my questions based on the foregoing.

Has the Sonoma County Water Agency provided a 5-year pricing scheme? I note that SCWA faces similar cost issues as Petaluma yet the increase is \$0.23 increase which seems to mean that SCWA maybe using a system that is different from that of Petaluma. Please explain.

Please address the issue of Petaluma Agency debt that is mentioned in your Water & Wastewater Rate Increase Being Proposed. Also, if the City of Petaluma is indebted to the Water and Sewer utility in any way, please lay this out to the public.

Invariably, "grants" come with strings attached by the agency granting the funds. Is the water utility in any way hamstrung or restricted by prior grants. If so please lay them out for the public.

Please clarify between capital investments, capital improvements, and maintenance of the system. Also please address the overall water delivery plan to accommodate future buildout etc. in the General Plan. As customers depend entirely upon a single system, we need to be apprised of how the City plans to impose costs of future capital improvements required by the General Plan that will be in addition to what each customer is currently paying.

The City residents face three issues. The first is SCWA limits on water provided to Petaluma. Second is the variability of supply provided by SCWA. The third is the City of Petaluma policy of adding greater demand/use and more customers. The first two have to be put up with. However, the third issue needs explanation. Please address the City policy of continuously adding more customers and greater use in terms of additional costs to the current users and loss of available water for their use.

Water is essentially free. To this are added system costs which in turn generate the costs that must be passed on to the consumer as the price of water. A rule of thumb for industry is that the greater the volume of units the lower the unit cost for each item. The water rates being proposed have that principle reversed. The reversal of the per unit cost principle clearly means other issues are at play that have no bearing on maintaining optimal efficiency and minimum cost to the residents. An argument can be made that "excessive" water use deprives others of essential water and rather than establishing limits on customer use, that the additional cost of using more water discourages "excessive" use. However, this argument seems not to apply to the City of Petaluma which is constantly allowing additional users to join the system. New users deprive current uses of water supply. Can you please tie together the obvious dichotomy between the purpose of a tiered cost system and the City Development plans.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to join in addressing Petaluma water issues.

Sincerely,

Richard Brawn

[REDACTED]

Petaluma, CA 94952