

Indian Creek-Westridge Community Services District Public Hearing
October 23, 2024
Jill Kinmont Boothe School, 166 Grandview Road, Bishop, CA

The hearing was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Board Chairperson Luis Elias. Present were Directors Casey Dean, Dave Mappus, Sarah Petersen, Ted Williams; District Manager Terry Tye. Approximately forty community members attended the hearing.

Mr. Tye gave a presentation. He explained the process and background of the proposed rate increase. The State has required districts to install meters by 2032. The estimated cost to meet this requirement by our District is currently \$1,200,000. These costs are likely to increase as time goes on, so it would be best to install meters sooner rather than later.

The proposed rate increase includes increased hourly wages for District staff, starting October 1, 2024.

According to Proposition 18, if there is a 51% or greater opposition by District residents to the rate increase, the rate increase cannot be implemented.

A member of the audience asked if the District has explored the possibility of grants to help pay for the meters. Mr. Tye responded that he looked into this but they are not available now and probably for the next two years. He said loans are available but the repayment could necessitate a rate increase. In answer to a question about brainstorming with other small districts, Mr. Tye answered that so far there has not been a lot of concern because the deadline is years away.

An audience member asked if there will be a penalty if our District does not approve the rate increase. Mr. Tye responded that right now there is no penalty stated. The State says “we will find you in violation” without further explanation. Mr. Tye’s personal opinion is that the State wants our District to consolidate with Bishop.

Mr. Elias noted that, unlike ours, sometimes small districts run out of water or encounter other problems. We have good water quality and are able to provide water for fire suppression. Our District allowed water to be used in the Fairview Fire in 2022. The City of Bishop adds chlorine to its water.

Ms. Petersen explained that, even if we consolidated, this would only be for drinking water, not water for fire suppression.

Mr. Tye answered several other questions from the audience. One member stated that not enough planning went into the metering requirement.

District resident Randy Gillespie said he has lived in the neighborhood over forty years. He and others collected signatures opposing the rate increase. He likes our water. He noted that if meters are installed there would be additional ongoing costs to service and maintain them.

Mr. Tye explained that a 5-page notice about today’s hearing, including an explanation of the proposed rate increase, was included in the July billing. The notice went to all District customers, including those who pay on an annual basis instead of monthly. Mr. Tye advertised the hearing

on local television, radio, the District website, and three editions of the Inyo Register.

Mr. Tye answered a question by clarifying that without the rate increase the District has enough funding to support the salary increases.

Mr. Elias stated that the last rate increase was in 2018. The District has a four-stage drought plan. The fourth stage is severe. When the District put out the word, residents cut back on water usage. This was proven by the well metering numbers that are monitored by the District. Mr. Elias said the District is conscientious, has a plan, and does not need meters.

Inyo County District 3 Supervisor Scott Marcellin stated that some local water districts are in the process of consolidating with Bishop. They have not discussed how meters will be paid.

Mr. Mappus said that he has lived in the neighborhood 30 years and has seen many changes, including consolidation of Indian Creek and Westridge. The District board felt it was important to consult the community on the issue of metering. He thanked District residents for participating on this topic. The District is well run, well funded and solvent. Staff deserves proper compensation.

Board secretary Stephanie Sheltz announced that the proposed rate increase was rejected. There were 220 votes (74% of district residences) against, none in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.
Minutes submitted by Stephanie Sheltz