

San Luis water, sewer rates on council agenda

BY CESAR NEYOY - BAJO EL SOL | Posted: Monday, July 15, 2013 12:00 am

SAN LUIS, Ariz. — Residents here will have another chance Wednesday to speak out on proposed sewer and water rate increases before the city council decides whether to approve the hikes.

On the agenda for the council meeting will be a presentation by consultant Dan Jackson of the Texas-based firm Economists.com, who is recommending increases of up to 30 percent to make the utilities financially self-sufficient and to fund upgrades to the water and sewer plants.

Wednesday's session starts at 6:30 p.m. in San Luis City Hall, 1090 E. Union St., and city council members are urging residents to attend the meeting to find out about the proposals that are being considered.

“We decided to extend the timetable for making a decision,” Mayor Gerardo Sanchez said. “We need the people to know the details of the proposal and what we want to do with the funds. And we need them to tell us their opinions, so we decided to have this information session.”

A prior public hearing held by the council last week to gauge public opinion on the recommended hikes attracted few residents.

Under the proposal, the current water rate of \$10.49 for the first 2,000 gallons consumed would go up to \$12.03 this month, then would increase to \$13.08 over the following three years. The monthly sewer rate, meanwhile, would increase from \$24.49 to \$31.84 this month, then climb to \$39.21 through 2016.

San Luis currently subsidizes water and sewer services from the city's general fund, and the council is looking at shifting the full cost to consumers in the form of rate increases.

Apart from making the utilities financially self-sufficient, Jackson's proposal would raise an additional \$5.5 million to make what city officials say are needed improvements to the water and sewer plants and to utility lines.

So far, the council has been divided on the topic of the increases, with some members saying the city has no choice but to raise rates and others urging the council to continue looking for other options for funding the utilities.

The debate is expected to come to a conclusion on July 24, when the council is scheduled to vote on Jackson's recommendation.

The consultant's study is available for public review in the city clerk's office. For more information, call (928) 341-8520.