

**Borrego Water District
MINUTES
Conservation
Standing Committee
Wednesday, February 6, 2008
9:00 a.m.
806 Palm Canyon Drive
Borrego Springs, CA 92004**

Attendance: Directors: Mendenhall, Shimeall, Smiley
Staff: Richard Williamson, General Manager
 Jerry Rolwing, Operations Manager
 Wendy Quinn, Recording Secretary
Public: Jim Engelke Rebecca Falk
 Rudy Monica Jim Wilson, CCCD
 Larry Johnson, CCCD Al Thompson, CCCD
 Robert Bull, CCCD Alex Nagy+, CCCD
 Erin Hawkins Hal Hawkins
 William Sanders Robert Viora
 Dennis Daoust Ginger Dunlap-Dietz
 Blythe Cavanaugh Jim Hamilton, Vista Villas HOA
 Thomas Fredericks Beth Hart
 Becky Sanders Jeff Miller
 Jill Kennedy Jane Daniels
 Kerin Shugart, RHCA@Montesoro

1. TIERED WATER RATES

- HOAs
- Christmas Circle.

2. CONSERVATION INVESTMENT SUBSIDIES

3. PROGRESS REPORT ON CIMIS STATION IN BORREGO

Those present introduced themselves. Jerry Rolwing narrated the Powerpoint presentation regarding the tiered rate proposal. He emphasized that the new rates are designed to save water, and affect those who exceed the average usage. If approved, they will be effective July 1, and varied rates are contemplated for summer and winter. Revenues will be returned to the customers. Mr. Rolwing showed comparisons among the Improvement Districts, and pointed out that those using less than 10 units per month would receive a 25 percent discount. Examples of typical water bills under existing rates versus tiered were presented. Commercial rates would be based on usage history, with new businesses billed at Tier 1 until a history is established. Irrigation rates would apply to homeowners' associations, golf courses, mobile home parks, community parks and schools. HOAs and mobile home parks would be based on the number of units, while golf courses, community parks and schools would go into Tier 2 if exceeding four acre feet per year per acre.

Mr. Rolwing explained the proposed conservation investment subsidies, designed to return any tiered rate profits to the customers, conserve water and perhaps expand the sewer system. Subsidies would be offered for installation of low flow toilets and

washers, turf removal and irrigation efficiency audits. Projected costs and water savings for each were presented, except the audits, which will be evaluated after the first year. Mr. Rolwing emphasized that the District is the steward of the Borrego Valley Aquifer and offered to answer questions.

Board, staff and Committee members responded to several questions regarding the difference between the proposed commercial rate, which is based on historical usage, and irrigation, which is based on typical usage of four acre feet per year per acre. Mr. Rolwing offered to review individual water bills upon request.

In response to a suggestion that residential rates be based on historical use, Director Smiley explained that commercial usage varies much more depending on the type of business. An audience member proposed a phased program and increased education for residents.

Responding to a question regarding conservation incentives for golf courses and farms with their own wells, Mr. Rolwing replied that the District would install a meter free of charge if the owner would share the information gained. The District will also offer a California Irrigation Management Information System (CIMIS) station soon, whereby irrigation needs may be identified via the internet. Instructional workshops are planned. Director Smiley pointed out that agricultural businesses are motivated by cost concerns to conserve water. Director Shimeall explained that the District is attempting to avoid the necessity of adjudicated rates by instituting the tier system.

Rich Williamson noted that in Arizona residents are so concerned with water conservation that the water districts are experiencing budget problems. He expressed support for the District's tiered rate proposal. Lane Sharman pointed out that if tiered rates are implemented, it will help the District in its grant applications by showing we are serious about conserving water. Director Smiley concurred, noting his recent visit to Washington, D.C. supported the notion that the government helps those who help themselves.

Beth Hart expressed concern regarding neighbors who must water trees planted by others on their property or create a fire hazard. Mr. Rolwing assured her that such situations would be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Jim Wilson, speaking on behalf of Christmas Circle, expressed support for water conservation but requested an audit to recommend saving strategy. He explained that money is not available to change the configuration or infrastructure of the park, and pointed to its value to the community. He recommended an exemption from the tiered rates for Christmas Circle. Mr. Rolwing promised to work with Christmas Circle to arrange an irrigation efficiency audit, which includes some subsidies.

Tom Fredericks reported that he had achieved less than four acre feet per acre per year usage for The Springs golf course through the use of CVX, a combination of micro organisms and enzymes. The material is injected through the irrigation system, neutralizes salts and causes more water to be absorbed into the turf. In less than three years, 20 percent water savings are projected. Introduction of CVX into an 18-hole golf course would cost approximately \$18-\$20,000 per year. Mr. Sharman noted this translates to an estimated \$200 per acre. It can also be used in agriculture and residential. Rebecca Falk expressed concern regarding allergic reactions, but Mr. Fredericks had not known that to be an issue. Director Smiley suggested including information on CVX in the upcoming CIMIS workshops. Mr. Fredericks added that polymers can also be effective, if injected into roots, in abating weeds and reducing irrigation requirements. Ms. Falk suggested obtaining a second opinion on the value of CVX and the polymers.

Director Shimeall announced the upcoming annual groundwater management meeting, March 19, 4:00 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center. In response to further inquiries regarding use of any tiered rate profits, she explained that if used to expand the sewer system, reclaimed water could be used for golf course irrigation. Another suggestion was to use income to fund CVX. Director Smiley pointed out that groundwater management funds could also be used for this purpose.

Jim Engelke pointed out the suggested one dollar per square foot subsidy, included in the tiered rate proposal, for turf removal, as an alternative for Christmas Circle. Mr. Wilson viewed this as a last resort, not his preference. He explained that while sprinklers sometimes malfunction, they are repaired promptly and are continually monitored. Mr. Sharman suggested that the Christmas Circle Board meet with the Conservation Committee again, including Mr. Fredericks, to discuss alternatives.

An HOA representative expressed interest in CVX and asked to attend a future meeting with other homeowners and their landscape contractor. She suggested a committee of HOA presidents to address possible turf removal and other options.

A representative of the Borrego Art Institute introduced Ginger Dunlap-Dietz, a pottery instructor, and offered to present examples of her work. She suggested getting the community involved in replacing turf with decorative tiles. Mr. Rolwing invited her to attend the March 5 Committee meeting, and Director Smiley invited the Christmas Circle Board to return.

4. REVIEW FOLLOWING POLICY

This item was not discussed.

5. CLOSING

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m. The next Conservation Committee Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 5, 2008 at 9:00 a.m.