

For Immediate Release

May 20, 2021

Media Contact: Heather Sumagaysay,

Public Information Officer hsumagaysay@cityofventura.ca.gov

Ventura City Council approves water and wastewater rates adjustments

Ventura, Calif. — On Monday, May 17, 2021, at the Public Hearing for Water and Wastewater Rate Adjustments, Ventura City Council unanimously approved five-year water and wastewater rate increases. A second reading of the ordinances will take place on May 24, 2021 for approval. Beginning July 1, 2021, the average Ventura household will see a \$7.76 increase on their monthly bill.

Over the course of eight public meetings and nearly a year of deliberation, the Water Commission, in partnership with City staff and a third-party financial consultant, underwent an extensive water and wastewater rate study to evaluate the City's water rate tiers, water shortage rates, wastewater rate structure, and financing options for major projects.

The results of the study showed that an annual rate increase of seven percent for water service and six percent for wastewater service is needed each year to continue to operate and maintain the systems, repair, and replace aging infrastructure, secure water supply, improve water quality, and meet legal and environmental regulations.

"These are difficult decisions that will impact our community for years to come. After careful consideration, City Council recognizes that we can no longer defer investing in water and wastewater systems," commented Mayor Rubalcava. "As leaders, it is our responsibility to ensure our existing residents and future generations have access to safe, clean, and reliable water."

On March 22, the Ventura City Council reviewed the proposed rate adjustments and approved to move forward with the Proposition 218 Public Noticing process. On April 1, a detailed notice was mailed to Ventura Water customers and property owners outlining the proposed changes and instructions for customers that oppose the adjustments. According to State Law, if a majority of customers or parcel owners submit a written protest within the 45-day review period, rate increases cannot be adopted. At the close of Monday's Public Hearing, a total of 1,076 protests were received in opposition to water service increases, 1,054 for wastewater service increases, and 1,018 for water shortage surcharge rate increases, with 13,470 needed to constitute a majority protest for water service and water shortage rates and 12,517 for wastewater service.

"City staff and the Water Commission made a concerted effort to lead a collaborative and transparent rate-setting process, with the continued goal to communicate early and often," stated Assistant City Manager Akbar Alikhan.

Leading up to City Council's decision, Ventura Water conducted over 20 community presentations and hosted several virtual town hall meetings where information about anticipated rate impacts was shared with community members, neighborhood groups, clubs, businesses, and economic development stakeholders.

Rate increases will support both daily operation and maintenance of the City's existing water and wastewater systems, along with approximately 36 planned capital improvement projects, including the long-anticipated State Water Interconnection Project and VenturaWaterPure Program.

"For many years, our local water sources have been impacted by drought, regulatory and legal constraints," shared Ventura Water General Manager Susan Rungren. "Now is the time to continue to invest in our aging infrastructure and projects that will help meet regulatory requirements, help secure sustainable water supply for existing and future customers and improve our water quality."

For more information on rate changes, visit www.VenturaWaterRates.net.

###