

City Council

from front page

Water Rate Increase to Go to Ballot

On August 4, a consultant told the Council that in light of rising costs and an ongoing drought, the City must significantly increase both capacity (fixed costs and emergency monies) and consumption charges on local water bills to keep or else face a \$3.6 million revenue loss. Under the initial recommendation which detailed annual hikes over the next five years, the average single family water bill would swell from \$31.18 to \$44.28.

During that discussion, Council asked staff to add consumption tiers to the proposed rate structure to incentivize potable water conservation and create more savings possibilities. The Council favored the first of two new options presented on Tuesday, an eight-tiered rate structure that actually reduces fixed rates (seen as a more fair arrangement for low-end users) while increasing consumption charges. Under this option, the average single family water bill will only jump to \$36.64, an amount still lower than any of the neighboring agencies. According to projections for this scenario, the City's water enterprise fund will be self-sustaining and even generate \$188,000 in reserves.

As prescribed by Proposition 218, the City will mail out protest ballots to affected property owners. If a majority of the total responds in protest, the rate hike will not go into effect.

On a related note, the Council also introduced a revised water conservation ordinance seen as a compromise between the previous ordinance and new policies prescribed by the Metropolitan Water District. Provisions of the new ordinance include requiring persons to adopt drought water conservation programs; requiring leaks to be repaired within 72 hours (note: Jacobson asked to change this to 48 hours since that was the timeline in the existing ordinance); prohibiting water landscaping between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.;

prohibiting wasteful use of water such as watering sidewalks or washing cars without a bucket or shut-off nozzle; requiring car wash facilities to use water recycling equipment; requiring restaurants to serve water only upon request; and allowing the Council to impose water use reductions in emergency situations. The ordinance also gives the City some enforcement latitude, with penalties depending on severity of the infraction and number of violations.

Noting among other things that the ordinance won't financially benefit the City (i.e. it won't help El Segundo qualify for future MWD grant monies) Mayor McDowell opposed the move. "The ordinance says 'you must' instead of 'you should,'" he said. "My goal from the start is not to criminalize or otherwise mandate water conservation in El Segundo." Calling it a policy question and not a money issue, Mayor Pro Tem Busch thought the new ordinance would "provide more teeth" and set a useful policy direction for the City.

Early Retirement Program Adopted

The Council moved forward with an early retirement program designed to save the City over \$300,000 a year in salaries. Under the plan, the City will increase its employer rate through the California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS) by 0.327 percent.

Currently 60 City employees meet the eligibility requirements (they must be 50 years of age or older, in the system for at least five years and not be department heads or public safety personnel) and 19 initially expressed some level of interest in retiring. Human Resources Director Bob Hyland called it fairly likely that nine of those will actually retire. If four of those positions are left vacant, the City will then see the \$300,000-plus savings.

The City's costs will include a \$5,000

initial payout to each retiree who enters into a date-certain retirement separation agreement (the retirement period will run from October 5 to January 1) and annual fees of about \$25,000 annually for the next 20 years. The \$500,000 cash outlay (based on the nine retiree assumption) will be made up in less than two years by the salary savings.

Boeing Gets Zoning Go-Ahead for Consolidation Project

The Council granted a zoning change to aerospace giant Boeing so the latter can consolidate its operations at a six-acre site on Imperial Highway on the north, Sepulveda Boulevard on the west, Selby Street to the east and Walnut Avenue to the south. The project entails extensive renovations and landscaping added to four buildings as well as construction of a new, three-story, 40,000-square foot structure that will link all the buildings together. Boeing plans to move about 500 additional employees to the site and will house its executive leadership there. The company will provide 283 off-site parking spaces as part of the plan. The project will also strive for LEED certification to achieve environmental sustainability.

The requested zoning change from "general commercial" to "corporate office" is consistent with that of nearby buildings and will actually lower the current floor to area ratio from 1.0 to 0.8--a plus according to Councilmember Jacobson. However, Jacobson also suggested that the entire block in that area be rezoned in order to avoid having to "spot zone" one small section just for Boeing.

Ice Cream Vendor Gets Permit

Two weeks ago, the Council debated a request by Marina del Rey resident Chekesha Palmer for a permit and business license to operate an ice cream truck in El Segundo. Councilmember Don Brann said at the time that ice cream trucks "create problems" such as taking money out of kids' pockets and out of local sport league snack bar coffers. He was also concerned about such trucks sell-

ing dangerous items like firecrackers. The story unexpectedly garnered press coverage from the likes of the *Los Angeles Times* and other news media. Meanwhile the item was continued to the next meeting. On Tuesday night, Palmer quickly got approval for her license with virtually no Council discussion on the matter. Brann was the lone dissenting vote. Mayor Kelly McDowell merely asked Palmer if she had any intent to sell items that might be harmful to children, to which she responded no. McDowell then apologized to her that the approval process took so long.

New Housing Element

As mandated by the State to accommodate local housing needs and new policies and programs, El Segundo, as approved by the Council, will move forward with an updated housing element covering the eight-and-a-half-year period between January 2006 and 2014. During that timeline, the City must provide 168 new dwellings, including 44 very low income, 27 low income, 28 moderate income and 69 above moderate income. Thirty of these units have already been built, leaving another 138 to go. The stated goals of the housing element are to preserve the existing housing stock, provide affordable housing opportunities, look for new construction opportunities, remove governmental constraints and promote equal housing opportunities.

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2009 Herald Publications Best of the Best Awards

Herald Publications Best of the Best Awards gives the community an opportunity to let their voices be heard. The rules are very simple. All one has to do is submit a completed entry form to Herald Publications' office by **September 10, 2009. Results of this survey will be published in the September 17, 2009 issue.**

Each individual in the community is invited to vote one time only. The completed form must be on an original page of the newspaper. No photocopied entries will be accepted. To include your entry in our contest, simply fill the name of your favorite

establishment(s) and the city in which they are located, in the blank below each category. Then, mail or bring in your completed entry form by **September 10, 2009 at noon to:**

Herald Publications
 Attn: Best of the Best
 312 E. Imperial Ave.
 El Segundo, CA 90245

Entry forms that are partially completed will be accepted however at least 20 of the categories must have entries.

BREAKFAST

JAPANESE

LUNCH

DONUT SHOP

DINNER

SANDWICH SHOP

HAPPY HOUR

GIFT STORE

PIZZA

PHYSICAL THERAPY/WELLNESS

ITALIAN

FLOORING/CARPET

CHINESE

YOGURT SHOP

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ICE CREAM SHOP

REALTOR - MALE

REALTOR - FEMALE

HANDYMAN

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BANK

NAIL SALON

DENTIST

BEAUTY SHOP

PHYSICIAN

JEWELRY STORE

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