

Manhattan Beach Sun

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Weekend Weather Forecast

Friday

Partly Sunny

75°



Saturday

Partly Sunny

72°



Sunday

Partly Cloudy

72°



Mustangs Take on Palos Verdes



Senior Bryce Miller wins the sprint at the beginning of the second quarter. Photo by Shelley Kemp. www.kemp.photorelect.com

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City Council Approves Water and Sewer Rate Hikes

By Evan Ortega

The Manhattan Beach City Council voted unanimously Tuesday night to for a steep increase in water and sewer rates after conceding staff and previous councils have waited too long to address the city's aging infrastructure issues. Over the next five years, water rates will rise by 110 percent while sewer rates will jump by 150 percent. Households and businesses will be charged according to the size of their meter and at a tiered rate intended to favor those who use less water. "The large user pays for the higher proportion of these rates because they're paying for the higher cost of the water," Public Works Director Jim Arndt said. He added, "All rate increases are significant. I don't mean to say that any rate increases we're talking about are insignificant."

Arndt said the funds are needed to replace aging pipes and equipment, 35 percent of which are over 65 years old with some pipes built as early as the 1920s when homes were smaller. He explained residents have enjoyed low rates for a long time because the infrastructure hasn't been upgraded as the city's needs have grown. "We as a staff probably didn't do as good of a job as we could," Arndt said. "I'm certainly not saying the staff before me did something wrong. It was busy doing other things. This was not on anybody's radar."

Resident Lianne McGinley, an employee of a municipally owned utility, told the Council that deferring the maintenance to this point was an example of bad management practices. She said suggested the City issue bonds in addition to increasing water rates as a way to lessen the immediate burden on payers. She also took issue with the City's measurement of water consumption by hundred cubic feet (HCF). "Change the bill format to English, no one talks in HCF," McGinley said. "I doubt you even know what that is or how

many feet you have to use, [so] let's use it in gallons."

Arndt said that even if the City issued bonds as some have suggested, it would still need to invest \$7.5 million a year to maintain the infrastructure in its current condition. Councilmember Nick Tell agreed it was bad management, but said the Council had to fix the problem while acknowledging the financial impact on residents. "The fact that we got to this place is unfortunate, but we are at this place," Tell said. "We as a Council had to say we're going to start addressing it... we are getting it implemented over time in a way that we think is responsible."

Resident Alita Rothmeyer accused the

City of using scare tactics. She referred to conversations with people with experience in construction of water and sewer infrastructure who told her the situation was not as critical as City staff had indicated. Rothmeyer said people would have to cut back on watering landscaping to avoid high water rates. "We will have to have all of our trees die and the City won't let us take out these big trees," Rothmeyer said. "So all the trees are going to die, all the vegetables are going to die. Is this what you really want in this town?"

Another resident expressed concern for organizations like the Badminton Club, which owns a swimming pool that may become

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Guide Dogs Show Off for Neptunians

By Karen King Russo

Raising puppies to qualify as guide dogs for the blind is a long and selective process involving many volunteer hours. Pat Whitehead, leader of Los Angeles South West Guide Dog Raisers, and several other members of the non-profit organization, came to the Neptunian Women's Club's October meeting to show off their dogs and explain the program. L.A. Southwest Guide Dog Raisers is made up of volunteers from the South Bay who raise, train and socialize puppies that have been bred by Guide Dogs for the Blind. Originally in Los Gatos, Guide Dogs for the Blind was founded in 1942 to serve blinded World War II veterans. Since then, the training centers have been moved to San Rafael, California and Boring, Oregon.

These puppies, mostly Labs, Golden Retrievers, mixes of the two, and German Shepherds, are bred with the intent that they be guide dogs. Many don't make it. The ones that do, according to Whitehead, are valued at near \$50,000. At about two to four months of age, the most promising are sent to the volunteer dog raisers to spend a year. At around 16 to 18 months, they are returned to the training centers, in San Rafael or Boring, to spend another five months in guidework training. Once they have passed, they are matched with a qualified blind or visually impaired person, at no charge, and spend two to four more weeks in training with them.

Over two million people in the United

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