#### Water Questions of the Week

We are taking notice of the questions submitted regarding the current water and sewer rate study. With each City E-Blast, two or three water related questions and answers are presented. The questions are selected from the questions we have received at the various community meetings, at City Council meetings, and from your phone calls. These questions and answers are also posted to the City's Facebook page and website.

This week's questions are:

## Has the City Council actually approved increased water and sewer rates? What is the timing of the Council's consideration of this matter?

The City Council <u>has not</u> taken action to increase water or sewer rates. The Council will receive the draft water and sewer rate study at their November 12<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting. The draft study will be available on the City's website at least 72 hours before the City Council meeting.

It is important to note that the City Council <u>will not</u> be taking action on November 12<sup>th</sup> to increase water or sewer rates. Before action can be taken to increase rates, a Proposition 218 written protest process must be conducted. At their November 12<sup>th</sup> Council meeting, the City Council may decide to initiate the Proposition 218 process. Once the Proposition 218 process is initiated, the City would mail notices to all water customers within the City's service area, at least 45 days before the City Council can consider implementing new water and/or sewer rates. The Proposition 218 ballot will be mailed in an envelope that states, "OFFICIAL BALLOT ENCLOSED." Please look at your water bill to make sure the "name and mailing address" on your water account is accurate. If it is not accurate, please contact the City's Water Billing staff, so that the information can be corrected.

After the 45 days has lapsed, the City will unseal and tabulate the ballots in public view. The Council will hold a public hearing to receive testimony on the proposed rate increases. Additionally, the results of the Proposition 218 process will determine if the Council can consider the rate increases. If a majority protest has occurred, the City Council cannot approve a rate increase; if a majority protest does not occur, the Council may approve the rate increase.

At the October 22<sup>nd</sup> City Council meeting, there was a staff report entitled "Proposition 218 Process for Proposed Water and Sewer Rate Increase" that further explains the process. You would go to "Search City Documents" on the homepage of the City's website to search for the staff report.

If the City Council authorizes the initiation of the Proposition 218 process, the City's water and sewer customers will receive instructions, a ballot, a fact sheet, and other information. Please take a moment to make sure the City's water billing information is accurate by looking at your water bill to make sure it is mailed in the name of the property owner, or the tenant responsible for actually paying the water bill.

# Are City water and sewer rates being increased so that City employees can get raises or increased benefits, such as pensions?

No, City water and sewer rates are not being increased so that employee salaries can be increased to "market" rates. Nor are the rates being increased to enhance employee benefits. Funding has not been included in the draft water and sewer rate study for any additional, new staffing. Additionally,

water revenues cannot be used to pay for the salaries of non-water related staffing, and sewer revenues cannot be used to pay for the salaries of non-sewer related staffing.

### How can I find out how much my water bill would increase, if new water rates are proposed?

First, general information will be included in the Proposition 218 ballot information that will be mailed to all Sierra Madre water customers. Secondly, a calculation tool will be available on the City's website that will allow you to input your water usage, so you can determine what the proposed increase would do to your bill. This calculation tool will be on the City's website <u>after</u> the City Council decides to initiate the Proposition 218 process, which will not occur before the November 12<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting.

For additional information about the current Water and Sewer Fee Study, please go to the City's website and click on "Public Works" then go to "Water".

### http://www.cityofsierramadre.com

You may also call City Hall at (626) 355-7135 during regular business hours, 11 am to 5:30 pm on Monday to Thursday. Please ask for the Public Works Director, Finance Director or City Manager.