

Supervisor Wamhoff's Water in Riverstone Townhall Notes  
3/27/24

- Root Creek Water District
  - The Root Creek Water District (RCWD) is a local public agency and is classified as a California Water District. RCWD is not governed by any other agency, i.e. a county or city.
  - RCWD is mostly agricultural (80%), at full build out (~6500 homes), the Riverstone Development will equate to 20% of the entire district
  - Currently 1900 homes received services from Root Creek Water District
  - RCWD governed by a 7-member elected Board of Directors
    - Property owners in the District are eligible to serve on the Board of Directors
- Rates
  - Rates are set through a Proposition 218 Protest Election
  - Last one was Aug. 2022 when approximately 1100 homes were connected
  - Every homeowner was notified by US Mail, with an explanation of costs and proposed rates
  - Rate study was and still is posted on the website <https://rootcreekwd.com/meetings-and-policies/>
  - Agricultural and/or municipal property owners were able to protest against the rates
  - Unless 51% or more protest rates, rates stand—which happened in 2022
  - The Board of Directors doesn't set rates, all done by public election process
  - The initial 2016 rates set were an estimate to provide services and the rates were set for 5 years
  - In 2022, after 5 years, more actual/accurate costs were known and proposed rates were structured using the actual costs to provide services
- Colored water
  - RCWD takes this very seriously and responds as fast as possible to complaints
  - Best way to report colored water problem is to call customer service 559-255-2305
  - There is no easy/immediate fix
  - The State Water Resources Control Board is aware of the issue in Riverstone, which is not the only water system with colored water
  - Water supply meets primary drinking water standards, and is regulated by the State of California
  - Chemistry issue – naturally occurring minerals in water and when chlorine added (which is required by the State) to iron and manganese it can turn water yellow or brown
  - Issue not throughout the system: Last year: 1900 homes in service, 41 homes complained about colored water
  - As a result, RCWD is building a \$25m treatment facility which should be done by the end of 2025
  - For now, when a report is called in an operator will open a local hydrant and flush the water 10-15 mins—good results from this method of flushing lines out
  - Water that smells like sulfur
    - Sulfur smell is from hydrogen sulfide, sulfide gases naturally occur in groundwater
    - More common on the hot water side

- The water treatment facility will help address this issue, but will not eliminate
- Questions
  - What triggered recent rate increase?
    - Initial rates set in 2016 were an estimate
    - Rates were set for 5 years
    - In 2022, after 5 years, actual/accurate costs were known
    - Rates set through 2026, available on RCWD website on the General Information tab, and the Meetings and Policies tab
    - The District was always anticipated to operate at a deficit until there was a critical mass of homes to cover operation costs
    - Operational costs will be reviewed in the future to make certain rates cover the cost of providing services as homes are added to the system
  - Where will treatment plant be?
    - Water facility will be West of Road 40, adjacent the existing wastewater facility
  - Where does Riverstone water come from?
    - The water for Riverstone comes from ground water that is pumped
    - Surface water is purchased and delivered to agriculture
  - Why is there debris in water?
    - Water is being pumped from the ground from a well so it'll always have small amount of sand
  - What is the frequency of water testing?
    - Monthly
    - The testing schedule is set under Drinking Water Permit issued by the State Water Board
    - Results are available on the RCWD website In the Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) on the website. Results are available annually.  
<https://rootcreekwd.com/meetings-and-policies/>
    - Results are submitted to the State Water Resources Board for compliance
    - In-home testing available. Always looking for volunteers for this. Required by State Water Board. Call customer service if interested.
  - Purpose of treatment plant?
    - Remove minerals from the water, i.e. iron, manganese, address the colored water issue
    - Paid for by builders and master developer through connection fees for the homes they build, not from revenue from water rates
  - Hardness of water?
    - Treatment facility won't change hard water
    - Hard or soft water is a personal preference
    - RCWD discourages water softeners because of discharging as salt- the state requires the district to monitor for salt discharge, if salt builds up it will cost to clean it up. Property owners would have to pay to clean the salt through rates
  - Ways to make RCWD water more affordable?
    - Rates are comparable to neighboring cities/communities
    - Just above city of Madera and below Tesoro Viejo
    - Prices for everything going up
    - Chemicals i.e. Chlorine are very expensive
    - Like homeowners, the District is required to purchase insurance and PGE, both have increased, as have staffing costs

- Bimonthly comparison at 25 CCF of water: City of Madera \$131.01; Root Creek WD \$158.79; Tesoro Viejo \$181.01
- Rates are for operational costs, infrastructure facilities) paid for by builders, master developer
- Are there pesticides in the water?
  - Pesticides in the water has not historically been an issue, and it is tested for as part of regular schedule set by the State Water Resources Control Board
  - Pesticide testing is per the SWRCB monitoring schedule for drinking water
  - Pesticides can be identified in the Consumer Confidence Report as volatile organic compounds (VOCs)