

## **Proposed Water Conservation Rates Meeting held 6/6/26**

by Armon McPherson Unit 5

On Saturday, June 6 2026, the North Ranchos de Placitas Water and Sanitation District held a public hearing to receive comments and suggestions regarding a proposed tiered rate change for the water district. This type of rate structure is commonly called a conservation rate and is used to encourage conservation. This proposal would be the first time that water rate changes have been considered since the district was founded in 1990. The meeting was well attended by members of the water district and hosted by two members of the water board. The water board members gave a brief overview of the proposed rate increase. Most of the comments and suggestions presented from the audience were in support of the proposed rate increase as a conservation effort. Several members voiced concern about changes to the fee schedule, feeling that the proposed changes needed better clarification. It was felt that the increase in the monthly fee for vacant lots was unreasonable since they use no water. One member proposed that each monthly bill include a curve of all water usage with the members usage indicated on the curve so that they could see how they compare to the rest of the community. The proceedings were recorded and will be presented to the members of the water board for discussion.

During the discussion and comment session such thought provoking terms as drought, aquifer strata and recharge, climate change, growth within the development and the value of our properties without properly managed water usage were raised. Several property owners voiced surprise that the water district has a mil levy that appears on each members property tax bill. It was learned that the water district presently does not take in sufficient revenue through the sale of water to cover the cost of operating the water district. The water district, a quasi-government entity, uses its operational mil levy to cover any short fall in covering the cost of operating the district as well as cover the cost of any future needed wells. It was pointed out by one member that the mil levy method of covering the district operating costs falls more heavily on new property owners than on property owners who have lived here for many years. This is due to how property is assessed for taxes by the assessor's office.

Also, during the discussion, it was disclosed that water usage by members of the district varies from about a thousand gallons per month on the low end to more than fifty thousand gallons per month on the high end. This high-end usage came as a shock to many in attendance.

So how will the proposed new water rate affect you. According to the rate schedule proposed by the water board to the members (each member should have received the new rate schedule in the mail), members using eight thousand gallons of water a month, or less, will see

no change in their monthly costs. This should cover about 80% of members. However, members using twenty thousand gallons of water a month will see their monthly cost double. As usage approaches fifty thousand gallons in a month, the costs soar to nearly a thousand dollars a month!

The next meeting of the water board will be held on the third Thursday of this month, 18 June, at 3 PM at the La Puerta Real Estate Conference Room.