



By JENNIFER DENEVAN, Needles Desert Star
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Changes to water rate structure contemplated

NEEDLES — Both the city council and the Needles Public Utilities Authority approved a proposal during the Feb. 11 council meeting to possibly change the rate structure for wastewater services so as to ensure the \$3 asset replacement fund charge is equitably applied.

Robert S. Schulz P.E., managing member of Experienced Engineering Enterprise LLC, provided a proposal to the city in developing a waste water rate structure based on what are called Equivalent Dwelling Units.

EDUs are a unit of measure that standardizes all land type uses (housing, retail, office, etc.) to the level of demand created by a single-family detached housing unit within a water system. One EDU is the equivalent of 200 gallons of water per day.

During the meeting, city manager Rick Daniels said there are about 1,400 residential hookups and 314 commercial connections. The commercial customers generate about twice as much revenue, he continued.

Going to an EDU system is about trying to use one common denominator for the amount of wastewater used, Daniels said.

A commercial customer would pay based on the number of EDUs assigned. For example, a business designed to use five times as much water as an average single-family home would have a demand of five EDUs.

If that system would be used, it would also dictate how much a commercial customer pays toward the asset replacement fund. The cost would be \$3 per EDU, not per room like it is now.

David Brownlee, assistant city manager, said an example would be, if a local business had a demand of 12 EDUs, that business would pay \$36 per month toward the asset replacement fund.

The idea is to make it more equitable, he said. If a hotel is only charged \$3 per month like a residence, that charge doesn't take into account all the extra wear and tear a hotel puts on wastewater services versus a single-family residence.

He said it's also about charging for what's being used and not basing it on the number of rooms in a hotel, school, hospital or other business. Overall, changing the system makes it equitable for all but also represents best practices in the industry.

Cost to residential customers is likely to stay the same, he said. There is a possibility of a slight increase to commercial customers, but overall the change to EDUs will generally be revenue neutral, he continued.