

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

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Bay Point water provider considers 9.7 percent rate hike

By Paul Burgarino
East County Times

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Tap water with fluoride and lower levels of hazardous byproducts could come at a cost for Bay Point residents.

Golden State Water Co., the community's private water supplier, plans to ask the state Public Utilities Commission to raise customer rates 9.7 percent for the treated water it purchases from the Contra Costa Water District. That water would be pumped from Oakley's Randall-Bold Water Treatment Plant, stored in Golden State's reservoirs, and distributed through its pipelines to customers.

Paul Schubert, district manager for Golden State Water Co., said the proposal meets residential demand for fluoridation along with regulatory standards for trihalomethanes — a byproduct of the water-treatment process that studies have linked to higher rates of miscarriage and cancer.

"We feel this is the best alternative for our customers," he said.

The rate increase would be the second for Bay Point customers in about three years. Rates also would climb an additional 10 percent over the next 19 years, Schubert said.

In the past few years, some Bay Point residents have

complained that they pay the highest rates in Central and East Contra Costa County for water, even though a third of the town's population lives below the poverty line.

County health officials have also said that Bay Point has some of the poorest water quality in the area, including no fluoride and the highest levels of trihalomethanes.

Residents will have a chance to vet the current proposal during a community meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Ambrose Community Center.

Assuming the use of about 270 gallons of water per day, rates for Bay Point customers would increase from \$63.65 per month to about \$69.82.

In March 2008, water rates climbed 6.18 percent. As a condition of the increase, the utilities commission required Golden State to submit a plan to fluoridate Bay Point's water. Around the same time, levels of trihalomethanes exceeded regulatory standards.

After weighing several options to improve existing facilities, Golden State agreed to purchase additional treated water from CCWD. The agreement became permanent in January. Schubert said Golden State may seek a customer surcharge to recoup the added costs for the treated water delivered to residents before the rate increase takes effect.

Golden State Water hopes to submit its application to the utilities commission by Aug. 1, Schubert said. The approval process could take anywhere from nine months to a year, he said.

Reach Paul Burgarino at 925-779-7164 or pburgarino@bayareanewsgroup.com.

If you go WHAT: Golden State Water Co.

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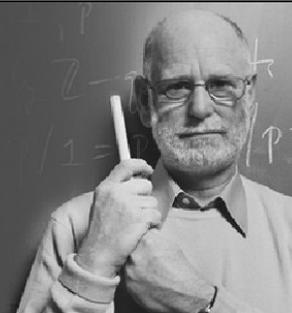


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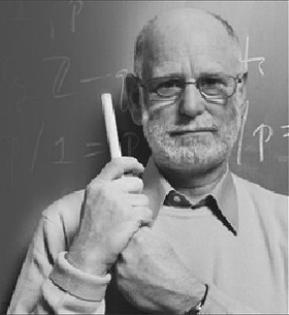
community meeting **WHEN:** 7 p.m. Tuesday
WHERE: Ambrose Community Center, 3105 Willow Pass Road, Bay Point **MAJOR TOPIC:** Rate increase of 9.7 percent for Bay Point customers **INFORMATION:** Call the Golden State Water Co. 24-hour customer service number, 1-800-999-4033 or visit www.gswater.com .

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