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East Contra Costa communities may face garbage rate hike

By Rick Radin
Contra Costa Times

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Contra Costa supervisors on Tuesday will consider a nearly 14 percent garbage rate increase for 7,700 customers of Concord-based Garaventa Enterprises in parts of East Contra Costa County.

If supervisors grant the increase, it will be the second utility rate hike in a month for 2,300 Bay Point customers of Garaventa subsidiary Pittsburg Disposal.

San Francisco-based regulators approved an average 36 percent water rate increase for Bay Point customers of Golden State Water Co. in December.

Bay Point residents are tired of absorbing rate hikes in essential services when inflation is close to zero and incomes are flat, said Vicki Zumwalt, a member of the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council.

"We're not happy about a garbage rate increase, especially on the heels of the water increase," Zumwalt said. "We're not an affluent neighborhood that can afford to pay more."

According to census figures, 19.3 percent of Bay Point residents are below the poverty line.

The increase would also apply to Garaventa

customers in unincorporated Brentwood, Concord and Oakley, as well as Discovery Bay, Bethel Island and Knightsen.

About 1,500 Bay Point customers of Allied Waste of Contra Costa would not be affected.

Starting March 1, the cost of a 96-gallon can would go from \$31.85 to \$35.85 a month, while a 32-gallon can would go from \$28.85 to \$32.85.

Rates would come down slightly on Sept. 1 if supervisors approve the company's

request to move to a three-cart recycling program, according to Deidra Dingman of the county's Conservation and Development Department.

Under the three-cart program, residents would pay \$31.20 a month for a 64-gallon garbage cart and carts for recycling and yard waste.

Garaventa customers currently use open bins for recycling.

"We have found that only having a \$3 difference between the 96-gallon and 32-gallon can encourages people to throw recyclable material in the garbage, rather than using the bins," Dingman said.

Garaventa asked for a 20 percent increase, but county staff is recommending 13.88 percent based on increased labor, household hazardous waste programs and equipment costs, among other factors, Dingman said.

Supervisors may also decide to extend Garaventa's franchise agreement, which expires in 2015.

The company is asking for 20 years, while conservation and development is recommending 10,

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Dingman said.

Garaventa did not respond to a call for comment on Friday.

Contact Rick Radin at 925-779-7166.

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