



Audit, Finance and Enterprise Committee Report

Date: March 14, 2016

To: Audit, Finance and Enterprise Committee

Through: Michael Kennington, Chief Financial Officer
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From: Candace Cannistraro, Management and Budget Director
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Subject: Fiscal Year 2016/2017 Utility Rate Recommendations

Strategic Initiatives



PURPOSE AND RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations for utility rate adjustments. The rate adjustments are recommended to be effective July 1, 2016 and are consistent with the revenue requirements of the Proposed Budget Plan for Fiscal Year 2016/17.

The forecasted expenses for each utility are compared to the forecasted revenues based on the current rates. The increase in revenues needed to accommodate the increased costs for each utility and the Enterprise Fund as a whole are:

<u>Utility</u>	<u>Revenue</u>
Electric	\$211,000
Natural Gas	\$605,000
Water	\$5,548,000
Wastewater	\$3,107,000
<u>Solid Waste</u>	<u>\$2,447,000</u>
Total	\$11,918,000

The method of implementation of rate adjustments can vary from year to year based on the needs and goals of the individual utilities. The impact on individual customers can vary based on the method of implementation and the customer consumption.

For FY 2016/17, the following rate adjustments are being recommended:

Solid Waste:

- All residential rates, bulk item pick-up and appliance collection: 4% increase
- Mesa Green and Clean rate: \$0.10 increase per month
- Front-load rates: no adjustment
- Roll-Off rates: 4.9% increase
- Added Non-City of Mesa Bulk & Appliance rate
- Homeowner Landfill Fee Increase: \$2 increase per visit

Electric:

- Residential customers: system service charge increase of \$1.50 per month
- Residential customers: no adjustment to the energy usage charge
- Non-residential customers: no adjustment to any components

Gas:

- All customers: system service charge increase of \$1.00 per month
- All customers: no adjustment to the usage charge

Water:

- 5% across most customer classes and rate components
- Interdepartmental and Large Turf: no adjustment
- Restructure of Residential Water Tiers: Implement year two of five-year plan
- Lower usage threshold of Commercial/Industrial Incentive rate to 6,000 kgal per month

Wastewater:

- 5% increase across most customer classes and rate components
- Interdepartmental: No adjustment

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Each utility is operated as a separate business center. As such, rate schedules are adjusted annually in a manner consistent with costs of capital, as well as the fixed and variable costs of operation and maintenance within each utility. Reserve balances are combined in the Enterprise Fund and are managed to maintain a targeted ending reserve balance of 8-10% of the following year's estimated expenditures. The reserve balance allows for the smoothing of rate adjustments. This smoothing avoids large rate increases and minimizes the impact to customers in any single year.

The Forecast Analysis Model (Attachment 4) includes projections of growth. The Water, Wastewater, and Solid Waste utilities have a citywide service area and are expected to grow by an average of about 1-1.2% per year during the forecast. With the inclusion of the Magma service area, the Natural Gas utility is expected to grow by 779 accounts next fiscal year. The Electric utility, with a smaller and largely built out service area when compared to the other utilities, is expected to grow by 65 accounts next fiscal year.

The Forecast Analysis Model also includes expenditures that are increased by inflationary factors in future years. Some inflationary factors are unique to the individual utilities, such as those used for chemicals or purchased water. Other citywide expenditure pressures that are included in the forecast are listed below.

Capital Investment

The City continues to place a high priority on infrastructure investment to attract and service future development. The proposed capital improvement program (CIP) includes the planning for an expansion of a water reclamation plant and the design and construction of a new water treatment plant and associated distribution infrastructure. The bond funding authorization for these projects was approved by Mesa voters in November 2014. The debt service on utility revenue bonds is funded through the utility rates paid by customers. The City issues bonds on an as-needed basis in order to minimize the interest cost. Anticipated future debt service has been included in the forecast and rate recommendations.

Review of the transfer to the General Fund

Based on direction from the City Council, the transfer to the General Fund is reviewed annually. The amount of the transfer throughout the forecast period is adjusted based on anticipated inflation. The adjustment for FY 2016/17 is an increase of \$4.2 million, moving from \$99.7 million to \$103.9 million.

ELECTRIC UTILITY

Rates for electric service are comprised of three major components: System Service Charge with a flat monthly rate, Energy Usage Charge based on units of consumption, and the Electric Energy Cost Adjustment Factor (EECAF) which passes the cost of the purchase of the electric commodity to the customer.

The electric program is experiencing normal inflationary pressures. For residential customers, staff is recommending a nominal rate increase of \$1.50 to the system service charge and no increase to the energy usage charge for FY 2016/17. Staff is not recommending a rate increase for non-residential accounts.

Residential System Service Charge: increase of \$1.50, from \$8.00 to \$9.50, 18.8%

Average residential bill with customer charge, energy usage charge, and EECAF: from \$92.92 to \$94.42, 1.6%

As the recommended increase is a flat amount, the dollar impact would be equal on each bill but the percentage impact would vary based on consumption. The higher the consumption, the lower the percentage impact would be.

Adjustments to the system service charge component of the electric rate allows for a more stable revenue source for the program and insulates customers from higher energy costs during peak demand periods such as the summer. Currently only 17% of the revenues (excluding EECAF) from residential electric customers are fixed revenues. The program is heavily reliant on consumption to cover fixed expenses. Rate adjustments applied to the system service charge allows for a movement toward a more balanced rate structure.

Salt River Project (SRP) comparison:

Service Charge: annual: \$20.00 per month (\$10.50 more than Mesa's proposed)

Mesa's average residential customer:

Monthly bills during calendar year 2015 (at FY 2016/17 Mesa rates) were approximately \$8.47 less per month (\$101.64 less per year) than if served by SRP.

The proposed increase results in an annual cost approximately 8.2% percent less than if served by SRP. Lower use customers' bills (i.e. first quartile with an average consumption of 449.8 kWh per month) would be more than 14% less than if they were served by SRP.

The EECAF is adjusted monthly to "pass-through" the cost of electric energy supplies acquired to meet customers' needs. This rate component has varied between \$0.04300 and \$0.06381 per kWh in the most recent twelve months and is \$0.04300 for February 2016.

The projected increase in annual revenue is approximately \$211,000.

NATURAL GAS UTILITY

Rates for natural gas service are comprised of three components: System Service Charge with a flat monthly rate, Usage Charge based on units of consumption, and the Purchased Natural Gas Cost Adjustment Factor (PNGCAF) which passes the cost of the purchase of the natural gas commodity to the customer. Those customers that reside in the Magma service area also have a Magma adjustment factor rate component. The adjustment factor benchmarks the City's rates to the rates of Southwest Gas to ensure market equity.

The natural gas program is experiencing normal inflationary pressures. For all customers, staff recommends a rate increase of \$1.00 to the system service charge and no increase to the natural gas usage charge for FY 2016/17.

System Service Charge – summer: increase \$1.00, from \$12.11 to \$13.11, 8.3%
System Service Charge – winter: increase \$1.00, from \$15.04 to \$16.04, 6.6%
Average monthly Mesa resident bill with customer charge, usage charge, and PNGCAF: from \$33.83 to \$34.83, 3.0%

As the recommended increase is a flat amount, the dollar impact would be equal on each bill but the percentage impact would vary based on consumption. The higher the consumption, the lower the percentage impact would be.

Adjustments to the system service charge component of the natural gas rate allows for a more stable revenue source for the program and insulates customers from higher natural gas costs during peak demand periods such as the winter. Currently only 39% of the revenues (excluding PNGCAF) from natural gas customers are fixed revenues. The program is heavily reliant on consumption to cover fixed expenses. Applying the rate adjustments to the system service charge allows for a movement toward a more balanced rate structure.

The Purchased Natural Gas Supply Adjustment component has been adjusted monthly to “pass-through” increases and decreases in the costs of natural gas supplies acquired to meet our customers’ needs. This rate component has varied between \$0.21000 and \$0.41411 per therm in the most recent twelve months and is \$0.23948 for February 2016.

Southwest Gas (SWG) comparison:

Service Charge: annual: \$10.70 per month (\$2.41 less than Mesa’s proposed summer system service charge and \$5.34 less than Mesa’s proposed winter system service charge)

Mesa’s average residential customer:

Monthly bills during calendar year 2015 (at FY 2016/17 Mesa rates) were approximately \$0.72 less per month (\$8.64 less per year) than if served by SWG.

The projected increase in annual revenue is approximately \$605,000

SOLID WASTE UTILITY

Solid waste services are charged flat monthly rates for the various services provided.

Residential Rates

Staff recommends a 4% increase on all residential rates. The standard black barrel refuse service includes a blue barrel recycling service.

90-gallon Black Barrel: increase of \$1.07 per month, \$26.72 to \$27.79

60-gallon Black Barrel: increase of \$0.95 per month, \$23.86 to \$24.81

Additional Black Barrel: increase of \$0.50 per month, \$12.62 to \$13.12

Currently there are over 7,000 customers who receive two or more black barrels. The proposed \$0.63 per month increase is to help fund landfill disposal fee increases.

As an incentive for customers to recycle, a green waste barrel may be obtained for half the cost of an additional black barrel and additional blue barrels are provided at no additional cost.

Green Barrel Service: increase of \$0.25 per month, \$6.31 to \$6.56

There are currently over 44,000 customers participating in the green waste recycling program. The recommended increase will fund new barrel purchases, expansion and increases to processing costs.

The projected residential increase in annual revenue is approximately \$2,276,000.

Mesa Green and Clean

Staff recommends an increase of \$0.10 per month, from \$0.74 to \$0.84.

The Mesa Green and Clean fee funds both the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) program and the Clean Sweep/Green Sweep (CS/GS) program, which are administered by the Environmental Management and Sustainability Department.

The HHW portion of the fee funds 4 HHW collections events each year, at which residents can safely dispose of hazardous materials. The Environmental Management and Sustainability Department uses contractors with expertise in hazardous material collections and handling to participate in the events and ensure that materials are properly disposed of. Contractor costs have risen and the recommended \$0.06 increase is needed to cover the increased costs. The HHW share of the fee would increase from \$0.35 per month to \$0.41 per month. The Clean Sweep/Green Sweep program has seen an increase in demand for service. In order to increase services to citizens and provide support for code enforcement, an increase of \$0.04 per month is needed. The Clean Sweep/Green Sweep share of the fee would increase from \$0.39 to \$0.43 per home per month.

The projected increase in annual revenue is approximately \$88,000 for the HHW portion and \$58,000 for the Clean Sweep/Green Sweep portion.

Bulk Item and Appliance Collections

Increasing bulk item and appliance pick-up rates by 4%.

Bulk Item Service: increase of \$0.84 per load, from \$20.99 to \$21.83.

Appliance Pick-Up: increase of \$0.69 per appliance, from \$17.31 to \$18.00.

“Not Out” Fee for both Bulk Item and Appliance: increase of \$0.43, from \$10.74 per occurrence to \$11.17 per occurrence.

A new rate for bulk item and appliance collection for Non-City of Mesa refuse customers is being recommended as follows:

Bulk Item Service: \$35.60 per load.

Appliance Pick-Up: \$26.92 per appliance.

"Not Out" Fee for both Bulk Item and Appliance: \$11.17 per occurrence

The projected increase in annual revenues is \$7,000 for both bulk item and appliance pick-up services for City of Mesa customers. The projected increase in revenue to non-City of Mesa customers has not been determined.

Homeowner Landfill Fees

Staff recommends increasing the homeowner landfill fee by \$2.00 per transaction, from \$11.00 to \$13.00. This program allows residents to use landfill and transfer station sites to dispose of one load of garbage per month. The fee is then charged to the customer's utility bill. The increase is needed to cover the increased cost for disposal at the landfills.

The projected increase in annual revenues is \$20,000 for homeowner landfill fee increase.

Commercial Front-load

There are various rate factors related to Front-load service. Staff recommends not adjusting the rates. The Front-load program serves customers in competition with private waste collection companies.

An adjustment to the monthly and installation charges for customers that have casters on their front-load bins is being recommended. Caster installation charges are being adjusted to fully capture installation cost. This involves increasing the caster installation charge by \$13.99 per initial installation of casters, which would increase the install charge from \$20.15 to \$34.14. In order to remain competitive, the monthly caster charges would be decreased from \$7.99 to \$4.99 for smaller than 6-yard bins and from \$20.15 to \$5.99 for 6-yard and 8-yard bins.

This projected annual reduction in revenues is approximately \$7,000.

Commercial Roll-Off

Staff recommends increases to Commercial Roll-Off services averaging 4.9% overall for FY 2016/17. The Roll-Off program serves residents and business customers in competition with private waste collection companies.

The projected roll-off increase in annual revenue is approximately \$93,000.

WATER UTILITY

Rates for water service are comprised of two components: a Service Charge, with a flat monthly rate based on the water meter size and a Usage Charge, based on units of water consumption.

The water utility forecast includes debt service associated with the new Signal Butte Water Treatment Facility, start-up costs, and annual operations starting in FY 2017/18. Significant costs within the utility are the cost of purchasing water, chemicals, and electricity, and the agreement with the City of Phoenix for the operation of the Val Vista Water Treatment Facility. Staff reviews and forecasts all costs each year to insure rates are sufficient to keep up with expenses.

Over the last few years the City has concentrated on aligning its fixed revenues with fixed costs. The goal is to achieve revenues from the service (fixed) charge at 35% to 40% of overall revenues. In the past, when rate adjustments were implemented, the service charge was increased at a greater percentage than the usage (variable) charge (to increase the percent revenues realized from the service charge). This changed last year, when estimated revenues from the service charge component were forecast at 36.3% of the estimated costs in FY 2015/16 (and the service charge was adjusted in the same manner as the usage charge). For FY 2016/17, revenues from the service charge component are forecast at 36.1% of estimated costs and Staff recommends to once again adjust the service charge in the same manner as the usage charge.

The variable rate component is based on water consumption rounded to 1,000 gallon increments. There are currently four tiers (or levels of usage). Each tier has a different rate. The tier structure allows for a demand based rate as customers with higher usage patterns create a greater demand for infrastructure and service capacity.

FY 2015/16 was the first year of a five-year phased in approach for aligning customer consumption levels with the new tier rate structure as well as balancing the associated rates with the relevant cost. The five-year phased approach was implemented to give customers time to assess their water usage and apply water conservation techniques if possible, allowing customers to ease into the financial impact of the new tier structure.

For FY 2016/17, it is proposed to implement year two of the five-year phased approach. Below are the current and recommended changes to the residential rate structure:

Current Tier Structure

The first 3,000 gallons are included in the service charge
Tier 1: 4,000 – 11,000 gallons; \$2.88 per 1,000 gallons
Tier 2: 12,000 – 22,000 gallons; \$4.32 per 1,000 gallons
Tier 3: 23,000 – 24,000 gallons; \$4.90 per 1,000 gallons
Tier 4: 25,000 gallons and greater; \$5.05 per 1,000 gallons

Recommended FY 2016/17 Tier Structure

The first 3,000 gallons are included in the service charge
Tier 1: 4,000 – 10,000 gallons; \$3.02 per 1,000 gallons
Tier 2: 11,000 – 20,000 gallons; \$4.54 per 1,000 gallons
Tier 3: 21,000 – 24,000 gallons; \$5.23 per 1,000 gallons
Tier 4: 25,000 gallons and greater; \$5.54 per 1,000 gallons

Attachment 1 illustrates the original plan as approved in the spring of 2015. The impact illustrated in year 2 is consistent with the FY 2016/17 recommendation. It is important to note that all customers pay the same amount for the same volume. In other words, a higher demand consumer only pays the higher tier rate(s) on the incremental volume.

The rate for the City's residential water customers in tiers one and two has a 5% increase while the rates for tiers three and four are greater as part of the phased alignment of cost with demand usage.

Residential Water Consumer Impact:

Service Charge: \$1.27 per month, from \$25.35 to \$26.62
Usage Charges (average monthly consumption, 8,000 to 9,000 gallons): \$0.77 per month
Total average monthly bill impact: \$2.23 per month, from \$45.03 to \$47.26

Commercial Water Customers

The City's Commercial water customers would also see a 5% increase to the water service and usage charges.

A 0% increase (for both the service and usage charges) to the Interdepartmental and Large Turf Facility water rates is being proposed.

The projected increase in total annual revenue is approximately \$5,548,000.

In addition, it is recommended to lower the threshold of eligibility for the Commercial and Industrial Large Water Service rate (W31.1) from 8,500 kgal per month to 6,000 kgal per month. While these changes would have no immediate effect, it would allow for the City to develop a sustainability rate that is marketable and attainable by large water users.

WASTEWATER UTILITY

Rates for residential wastewater service are comprised of two components: a Service Charge, with a flat monthly rate, and a Usage Charge, based on wastewater demand volume. Wastewater volume is calculated for each customer based on 90% of the average monthly water use for the three lowest water usage months from December through March (also known as the “winter water monthly average”). This approximates indoor household usage and the resulting demand on the wastewater system. A City-wide winter water monthly average is used for new customers until an individual customer average can be determined.

The wastewater utility forecast includes debt service associated with the expansion of the Greenfield Water Reclamation Facility and start-up costs and annual operations starting in FY 2019/20. Significant costs within the utility are the cost of chemicals, electricity, and the agreement with the City of Phoenix for operation of the 91st Avenue Wastewater Treatment Facility. Staff reviews and forecasts costs each year to insure rates are sufficient to keep up with expenses.

Across most customer classes, a 5% increase is being proposed to the service charge and the usage charge for residential and non-residential customers.

Residential Wastewater Consumer Impact:

Service Charge: \$0.86 per month, from \$17.22 to \$18.08

Usage Charges (based on average monthly water consumption): \$0.41 per month

Total average monthly bill impact: Approximately \$1.24 per month, from \$24.77 to \$26.01

Commercial Wastewater Customers

The City’s Commercial wastewater customers would also see a 5% increase to the wastewater service and usage charges.

Interdepartmental wastewater rates are proposed to be held constant for FY 2016/17.

The projected increase in total annual revenue is approximately \$3,107,000.

Utility Service Fees

Staff recommends an increase of \$1.00 from \$2.00 to \$3.00 to the credit check fee. The fee is used to verify a customer’s credit when a utility deposit waiver is requested by a customer.

ALTERNATIVES

Modify the FY 2016/17 utility rate adjustment proposal.

Examples include but are not limited to: increase, reduce or eliminate a recommended percentage.

The budgetary impact would need to be calculated by staff based on the modification requested.

FISCAL IMPACT

The projected increase in FY 2016/17 revenues in the Enterprise Fund from the recommended utility rate adjustments is \$11,918,000. The projected increase by individual utility is as follows:

<u>Utility</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Electric	\$211,000
Natural Gas	\$605,000
Water	\$5,548,000
Wastewater	\$3,107,000
<u>Solid Waste*</u>	<u>\$2,447,000</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$11,918,000</u>

* Household Hazardous Waste Revenue not included

The City's financial policies call for an ending reserve balance target of 8-10%. The projected ending reserve balance for the Enterprise Fund with similar adjustment to rates each year is:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Ending Reserve Balance</u>
15/16	14.2%
16/17	12.8%
17/18	10.0%
18/19	8.8%

The projected increase on the typical residential customer for FY16/17 by individual utility is:

<u>Utility</u>	<u>Monthly</u>	<u>Annual</u>
Solid Waste	\$1.07	\$12.84
Water	\$2.23	\$26.76
<u>Wastewater</u>	<u>\$1.24</u>	<u>\$14.88</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$4.54</u>	<u>\$54.48</u>
Electric	\$1.50	\$18.00
Natural Gas	\$1.00	\$12.00

The average financial impact of the rate adjustments on residential customers is included in an overall comparison with other cities in the valley (Attachment 2). The impact of property taxes, city sales tax, and utility rates (excluding electric and natural gas) on the municipality's typical resident was calculated. Comparison results revealed Mesa's overall cost for the average resident is currently the fourth lowest city. Mesa would move to fifth lowest if the rate recommendations are approved as presented and the other municipalities do not make any adjustments to their rates.

Attachments:

1. Residential water consumer: Demand Rate Implementation
2. Average Homeowner's Charges Comparison
3. Forecast Analysis Model