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### **Water rates increase 10% to offset rising costs**

LITTLETON – The Water Department has adopted a 10 percent rate increase for all customer classes to help offset rising operations costs of the town's water system, according to General Manager Savas Danos, who added that the increase is effective immediately.

For residential customers, the rate increases from 2.38 cents to 2.62 cents per cubic foot of water. For all other customer classes, the rate rises from 2.56 cents to 2.82 cents per cubic foot of water. In addition, for residential usage in excess of 5,000 cubic feet per quarter, the rate on that amount of water rises another 10 percent to 2.87 cents per cubic foot, Danos said. This high use fee, he added, was instituted by Water Commissioners three years ago in an effort to encourage greater water conservation.

While water rates have remained stable for several years, a number of factors necessitates a rate increase now, according to Danos. Rising electric utility and materials costs, driven by record high oil and natural gas prices, continue to outpace the department's sales figures, he said.

Also, the state grant for the treatment plant runs out next year, which will force the department to make up the \$183,000 annual amount with greater revenues. Danos added that future capital projects, most notably the development of additional well sites, would require a bond. “We need to generate a moderate surplus in anticipation of our capital requirements,” Danos said, adding that the improvements “are essential to maintaining the integrity of our system.”

Danos explained that for a household of four, whose average usage is around 2300 cubic feet (17,250 gallons) per quarter, and whose bill is normally about \$55, this increase means an additional \$5 per quarter.

Danos added that the department decided to implement the increase now, during lower use winter months, to minimize the impact on customers and help to acclimate them to the new rates before the higher use months of the spring and summer. He said he hopes it will encourage greater conservation efforts.

“We are proud of our tradition of supplying drinking water of the highest quality at the greatest value and we remain committed to delivering outstanding customer service,” Danos said of the department.

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